

## **Attachment 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development**

### **Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development**

OVR staff qualifications are reviewed to identify educational and training needs that are required to enhance professional development. These needs are incorporated in individual staff development plans that conform to both CNMI personnel and VR standards as established in the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. All counseling personnel who do not meet these standards will be required to show significant progress towards compliance in FY'2010.

Activities that will continue to be conducted on an annual basis include:

- Projections on the number of VR consumers to assess staffing needs, and to maintain or plan appropriate and adequate staffing levels.
- Findings of monitoring reports, SRC recommendations, Customer Satisfaction survey results, and performance evaluations will be reviewed for staffing implications. Other documents, such as reviewers' comments on the state plan development, deficiencies noted in submitted quarterly/annual RSA reports, and audit reports will also be reviewed.
- Consulting with VR counseling staff to identify training topics
- Review of progress on the individual professional staff development plan.

### **Plan for Recruitment, Preparation, and Retention of Qualified Personnel**

There are no institutions of higher education within the CNMI, Micronesia, or Hawaii that offers a Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling. OVR's recruitment efforts have been limited to contacts at San Diego State University (SDSU) and Southern University at Baton Rouge for referrals or information about recent graduates in the field.

OVR will revive its efforts to obtain a list of CNMI students who are receiving local scholarship assistance who are majoring in related fields at off-island universities. These students will be sent information about careers in rehabilitation and invited to apply for the Summer Internship Program that is designed to introduce students to working in the area of rehabilitation.

Three VR counselors earned their Masters' Degrees from SDSU in FY 2005. OVR will continue to encourage its counseling staff who do not possess a Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling to enroll in SDSU's distance education program.

OVR will also continue exploring educational and training opportunities offered by other educational agencies that will assist the professional development of on-board VR staff.

Job skills development will be addressed by enrollment in appropriate Northern Marianas College and International Business and Professional College courses. Staff will also attend job skills training sessions conducted by other local agencies including the CNMI Office of Personnel Management.

Other Recruitment and retention activities include:

- Participating in job fairs and career day activities to generate interest and awareness among college and high school students of potential career opportunities in the field of vocational rehabilitation.
- Offering summer internships for Northern Marianas college students. The purpose of the internship is to provide exposure and experience to students interested in pursuing a career in the rehabilitation field. Students in enrolled in the Rehabilitation and Human Services program at Northern Mariana College will be considered as "preferred" candidates. (An individual with a disability who participated in the 2007 summer internship program was hired as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Aide in FY 2008.)
- Encouraging students who are ready to graduate to file resumes that may be considered if, and when, a VR vacancy is created through retirement, resignation, promotion, or transfer of existing staff or when additional counseling positions are established in the future.
- Conducting reviews of various departments' and organizations' counselor salary schedules to serve as a benchmark for these types of positions. Based on this review, a more attractive and competitive compensation plan for VR counseling positions could be established with OPM to recruit and retain the most qualified applicants. Applicants that represent the ethnically diverse community, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with alternative modes of communication skills will be given preference.
- Providing an attractive benefits package to off-island hires that includes a housing allowance, recruitment and repatriation transportation, and on-going staff development activities such as attending off-island workshops, conferences, and other opportunities for earning professional continuing education credits.

OVR has not developed a formal recruitment strategy to reach minorities and individuals with disabilities. **Since FY'2009, all employees of OVR have been representatives of minority groups. Currently, four of OVR's thirteen staff members are individuals with disabilities.** It has been a practice to contact and encourage qualified former consumers to apply for any vacant positions within the office.

## Personnel Standards

The CNMI did not have a state defined standard for VR Counselors in 1998, therefore, OVR must comply with the national standard established by the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. Because of the limited pool of qualified applicants for VR Counselor positions, individuals with a Master's degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling, OVR has hired individuals with a Bachelor's Degree in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling or related field from an accredited U.S. College or University with at least 3 years of experience in counseling or social work or other related fields for VR Counselors. Experience working with individuals with disabilities is also required. If the applicant does not have a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, he/she is informed that obtaining the graduate degree is a requirement of the position. An Individual Degree Plan is then developed to ensure that the Master's degree is obtained in a reasonable time frame.

Two of OVR's three VR Counselors who do not possess Master's degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling **are currently enrolled in the on-line course with San Diego State University beginning Fall 2008.** They have also been informed that if they do not meet this requirement, their rate of compensation may be adjusted to reflect their non-compliance. Counselor transcripts and grades will be reviewed to determine if progress is satisfactory.

## Staff Development

OVR's on-going staff development activities which incorporate both on and off-island opportunities, include:

- Enrolling in relevant courses offered at Northern Marianas College, the International Business and Professional College, and any other organizations or institutions that offer coursework that will enhance job skills.
- Attending training workshops and seminars offered by the Office of Personnel Management and other agencies.
- Attending conferences and workshops that cover specific VR related issues to enhance program knowledge and practices and to earn VR counselor professional certifications and Continuing Education Units.
- Coordinating intensive training sessions with Regional Continuing Education Programs designed specifically for VR staff covering a variety of subjects that will enhance work skills development and program knowledge.
- Initiating inter-agency training/awareness workshops covering VR issues with appropriate staff from partner agencies and other organizations.

## Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

The majority of OVR staff are multi-lingual, with personnel who can speak English, Chamorro, Carolinian, and Palauan. Two VR Counselors possess signing skills.

**Coordination of Personnel Development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act**

OVR will meet with PSS officials to discuss the coordination of personnel development activities through joint training sessions that involves OVR staff and PSS faculty. Relevant training topics and potential cost sharing arrangements will be identified.

**Attachment 4.11: Statewide Assessment; Annual Estimates;  
State Goals and Priorities; Order of Selection; Strategies for  
Achieving Goals; and Evaluation and Reports of Progress**

**(b) Annual Estimates**

Based on previous fiscal year caseloads, OVR estimates that approximately 150 individuals will receive VR services in FY 2010. Approximately 10% of these individuals may be eligible for Supported Employment services. The FY 2007 Comprehensive Statewide Assessment estimated that there may be as many as three thousand individuals of working age with disabilities in the CNMI. A significant number of these individuals may be eligible for VR services. The average cost of services is estimated at \$4,000 per consumer for FY 2010.

OVR does not operate under an order of selection.

**Attachment 4.11: Statewide Assessment; Annual Estimates; State Goals and Priorities; Order of Selection; Strategies for Achieving Goals; and Evaluation and Reports of Progress**

**(c)(4)Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds**

The OVR goals and plans for the distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds, Supported Employment (SE) Services are 5% for administrative costs and the balance for the provision and delivery of services to individuals with the most significant disabilities. These services will include, but are not limited to, consumer's assessment, transportation, job placement/training, job coaches, personal attendants, assistive technology devices, job and worksite modifications that may be required by consumers at employment sites, and other services needed by the individual to achieve employment outcomes.

The lack of community rehabilitation programs and extended employment service providers in the CNMI is a critical obstacle to providing a full range of services to these consumers. OVR will expend Title VI, Part B funds to qualified service providers who will assist the consumer in maintaining employment in an integrated setting.

**Attachment 4.11: Assessments; Annual Estimates;  
Goals and Priorities; Strategies; and Reports of Progress**

**(e)(2) Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals  
and Priorities and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion  
Activities**

In collaboration with the SRC, the effectiveness of OVR was measured by reviewing the achievement of stated goals and priorities; the extent to which the evaluation standards and performance indicators were met; and the use of Title I funds for Innovation and Expansion (I&E).

**Goals and Priorities and Activities**

The goals and priorities of OVR for FY 2008, developed in collaboration with the CNMI SRC were as follows:

**Goal 1. Strive to deliver quality and timely services to applicants and consumers.**

**Priorities:**

- a) Continue every effort to maintain an effective program management system;

**Activity:** Through constant review and monitoring, OVR continually identifies operational and programmatic procedures that could be improved. Revisions and changes are implemented when required.

- b) Improve internal administrative and fiscal controls;

**Activity:** see above

- c) Continue upgrading and expanding the OVR information system to allow immediate access and retrieval of reliable data;

**Activity:** Continued to work on refining and expanding the fiscal capabilities of the information system. Reporting and case management functions were expanded to enhance the quality and breadth of data;

- d) Continue the in-service professional and staff development program that offer regular job skills improvement and development;

**Activity:** OVR utilizes numerous resources, on-island, off-island and through electronic access for training, education, and other staff development activities. In-service training sessions utilizing on-island specialists and representatives from other disability-related agencies are held regularly at OVR. Training activities **under the Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) grant of SDSU Interwork Institute are being planned and coordinated.**

- e) Offer and provide training and educational opportunities to enable VR counselors and administrative staff to meet established standards;

**Activity:** see (d)

- f) Keep current "best practices" related to service delivery to VR consumers by other VR agencies and sharing information with staff;

**Activity:** Information on "best practices" obtained from attending conferences, trainings, workshops, etc as well as through electronic and hard copy correspondence is routinely disseminated to the OVR staff.

- g) Continue efforts to develop and expand the services provided by the Consumer Resource Center.

**Activity:** Establishment of the Consumer Resource Center (CRC) has been difficult due to the lack of an appropriate facility and funding. OVR will continue to work on this effort. One purpose of the CRC was to provide training and educational activities specifically for eligible Supported Employment consumers. Until the facility is established this particular Supported Employment program goal will be difficult to achieve.

- h) Continue to strengthen collaboration with a network of disability and disability-related partners in the community to maximize resources.

**Activity:** OVR maintains its membership on a number of community organizations and agencies. OVR regularly participates in activities conducted by partner agencies and other disability related organizations.

## **Goal 2. Serve as an advocate for individuals with disabilities**

### **Priorities:**

- a) Continue to work closely with policy leaders to recognize the valuable contributions of individuals with disabilities and provide incentives, through legislation, for employers who hire individuals with disabilities;

**Activity:** A proclamation signing ceremony was conducted at the Office of the Governor in September, 2007, at which time the Governor Benigno R. Fitial proclaimed the month of October as Disability Employment Awareness Month.

SRC members have informally contacted members of the legislature to discuss concerns and potential solutions.

- b) Continue to aggressively market and promote the VR program through memberships on other councils and through public education activities;

**Activity:** OVR continues to distribute and share its annual reports, including success stories of VR consumers, through attendance at meetings conducted with policy leaders (e.g., Legislature, Society for Human Resource Management, Chamber of Commerce, Public School System) to generate an increased awareness, recognition, and support for individuals with disabilities throughout the CNMI. Additionally, OVR continues to be very active in supporting the activities of disability agencies and disability-related organizations through direct participation and/or attendance (e.g., proclamation ceremonies, trainings/workshops, etc.).

- c) Increase employers' awareness of VR programs and services and the viability and benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities by conducting educational activities aimed at employers; and

**Activity:** 1) OVR promotional and awareness materials (consumer success stories/testimonials, employer information packets, press releases, annual reports, etc.) were disseminated via various media;

2) OVR coordinated the Employer Recognition Ceremony in October, 2008 for companies that hired and supported individuals with disabilities.

- d) Continue to expand and strengthen collaboration and cooperation with partner agencies on activities that promote the interests and contributions of individuals with disabilities.

**Activity:** OVR continues to collaborate with partner agencies addressing Call-a-Ride's financial problems.

**Goal 3. Continue to work closely with the Workforce Investment Board to maintain and improve the best features of our workforce development system and to initiate efforts to integrate services for consumers.**

**Priorities:**

- a) Maintain and utilize the representation of OVR, SRC, and WIA members in the partnering organizations and continue to strengthen the relationships.

**Activity:** OVR continues to be represented on the State Workforce Investment Board. WIA has designated a staff to work directly with OVR in placing VR consumers in jobs after having been properly screened.

- b) Pursue more cooperative and linkage agreements with other agencies and organizations providing related services to individuals with disabilities to avoid duplication of services.

**Activity:** The Executive Director of the Workforce Investment Agency (WIA) is an active member of the SRC. Other members of SRC represent disability related agencies and organizations. OVR and the Division of Employment Services, NMC, and the PSS/SpED have on-going interagency agreements.

**Goal 4. Facilitate and ensure the seamless transition of students with disabilities to employment or continued education.**

**Priorities:**

- a) Strengthen the existing collaboration with the Public School System/Special Education and to ensure appropriate services are provided to students with disabilities.

**Activity:** OVR and PSS/SPEd reviewed and revised their inter-agency agreement which took effect October 2006.

- b) Explore options and alternative service providers to expand and improve the quality and delivery of services to eligible transition students through employment related activities in the Consumer Resource Center and on job sites.

**Activity:** OVR continued working with the CNM Workforce Investment Agency to place students in appropriate job sites through the summer employment program.

- c) Continue to develop and expand job/work exploration activities to include mentoring, career shadowing, and internships.

**Activity:** OVR collaborated with PSS, public, and private agencies to provide career exploration experiences to high school transition students.

- d) Maintain and strengthen, whenever necessary, the interagency agreement with Northern Marianas College to ensure appropriate services and supports are provided to eligible students with disabilities.

**Activity:** The revised and updated interagency agreement between OVR and Northern Marianas College was finalized in February 2008.

- e) Continue to participate and initiate pre and in-service training activities for PSS/SPED and NMC staff and faculty.

**Activity:** OVR has made presentations to the teachers and administrators of the Public School System about the VR program. OVR also invites staff and faculty from

secondary and post-secondary educational institutions to attend relevant training session offered by the Office.

**Evaluation Standards and Performance Indicators**

An assessment of the CNMI OVR was done by using the Evaluation Standards and Performance Indicators established by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services/Rehabilitation Services Administration. The results are as follows:

CNMI Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluation Standard and Performance Indicators FY 2008		
	Score	Standard
<b>Evaluation Standard 1 - Employment Outcomes</b> A DSU must assist any eligible individual, including an individual with a significant disability, to obtain, maintain, or regain high-quality employment.		
<b>Performance Indicator 1.1</b> The number of individuals exiting the VR program who achieved an employment outcome during the current performance period compared to the number of individuals who exit the VR program after achieving an employment outcome during the previous performance period.	108	= or exceed previous year (39)
<b>Performance Indicator 1.2</b> Of all individuals who exit the VR program after receiving services, the percentage who are determined to have achieved an employment outcome.	74.48%	55.80%
<b>Performance Indicator 1.3 (primary)</b> Of all individuals determined to have achieved an employment outcome, the percentage who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage.	57.41%	72.60%
<b>Performance Indicator 1.4 (primary)</b> Of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage, the percentage who are individuals with significant disabilities.	33.87%	62.40%
<b>Performance Indicator 1.5 (primary)</b> The average hourly earnings of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earnings levels equivalent to at least the minimum wage as a ratio to the State's average hourly earnings for all individuals in the State	2.90	0.52
<b>Performance Indicator 1.6</b> Of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage, the difference between the percentage who report their own income as the largest single source of economic support at the time they exit the VR program and the percentage who report their own income as the largest single source of support at the time they apply for VR services.	3.23	53

<b>Evaluation Standard 2 - Equal Access to Services</b> A DSU must ensure that individuals from minority backgrounds have equal access to VR services.		
Performance Indicator 2.1 The service rate for all individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio to the service rate for all non-minority individuals with disabilities.	<b>0.98</b>	0.8

Note: Bolded scores indicate passing performance

OVR passed the required number of performance indicators in Evaluation Standard 1 and Standard 2.

### Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion

Title I funds for Innovation and Expansion were utilized to promote and generate awareness of individuals with disabilities and programs and services by:

- Sponsoring and participating in public recognition/awareness events
- Using the various media for announcements, advertisements, and press releases related to disability activities
- Developing promotional materials containing information about individuals with disabilities and programs and services that are offered
- Purchasing materials and supplies that will be available to consumers and general public and for distribution to other agencies including PSS/SPED for transition student support
- Continuing monthly outreach travels to the municipalities of Tinian and Rota

Funds were also used for Council activities such as:

- Staff support
- Travel by SRC members to attend conferences, meetings, and trainings
- Facilities rentals for SRC meetings and training sessions
- Consultant fees for training and policy development
- Meeting materials and advertising costs
- Printed materials for public awareness/information