

Archived Information

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION MONITORING

Q: How many Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) staff will work on monitoring?

A: Under the new RSA structure, the RSA State Monitoring and Program Improvement Division (SMPID) will have responsibility for monitoring state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies. The new division will comprise 41 program staff who will be directly involved in the monitoring process.

Q: How will RSA staff develop state-specific knowledge and expertise?

A: State profiles will be developed by the SMPID functional units and distributed to the state teams. The profiles will be updated regularly and will detail the fiscal and programmatic characteristics of each state VR agency and independent living center (ILC). In addition, the state liaisons will be in regular contact with the state agencies and ILCs.

Q: Will the same monitoring process developed for the public VR program be used with ILCs?

A: No. Although the monitoring process for ILCs may share some common objectives with the monitoring process for state VR agencies, such as being collaborative or performance-driven, the ILC monitoring process will be based on the statutory requirements governing ILCs, the unique operating environment of the centers, and the priorities and needs of the consumers served.

Q: What role will stakeholders play in the monitoring process?

A: Stakeholders will provide input to RSA on the needs and experiences of persons with disabilities in the VR service system as well as on the program improvements that will lead to high-quality employment outcomes for persons with disabilities

Q: How will compliance determinations be made in the monitoring process?

A: As the responsible federal agency, RSA will act exclusively to analyze information collected during monitoring and review activities and determine whether in the administration of the state plan, a state is complying substantially with the provisions

of the plan and with evaluation standards and performance indicators established under section 106 of the *Rehabilitation Act*.

Q: How will RSA avoid a conflict of interest if it involves stakeholders more in the monitoring process?

A: Stakeholders and state agencies will provide suggestions and information, but will not be involved in the analysis of the information gathered or compliance determinations.

Q: How will RSA ensure confidentiality of both consumers who receive services and stakeholders who provide input regarding performance?

A: To ensure that personal information regarding VR applicants and consumers is not revealed during the monitoring process, the new system design will include procedures to protect the confidentiality of applicants and VR service consumers, particularly information resulting from case file reviews and interviews with consumers and stakeholders.

Q: How will RSA ensure that stakeholders who provide input to RSA during its monitoring and review activities are informed about the requirements of the *Rehabilitation Act*?

A: The State Monitoring and Program Improvement Division's Technical Assistance Unit will provide State Rehabilitation Councils (SRCs), consumers and the organizations that represent them, community partners, and other interested parties involved in the monitoring process with training and information on the requirements of the *Rehabilitation Act*.

Q: How will the role of the SRCs be affected by the new monitoring process?

A: Under the *Rehabilitation Act*, the SRCs have important responsibilities with regard to state VR agency evaluation and performance. In the new system, the SRCs will play a more prominent role in sharing information with RSA about the needs and experiences of persons with disabilities in the VR service delivery system and in the process of improving agency performance.

AFTER THE MONITORING CONFERENCE:

Q: What happens to the information generated at the monitoring conference?

A: As a first step, the information generated during the conference will be compiled and disseminated through the RSA Web site and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services listservs to stakeholders and other interested individuals. Next, the Vocational Rehabilitation Unit of the SMPID will review the conference information in the development and implementation of the new monitoring process. The input generated by this conference will enable RSA to understand the concerns and priorities its stakeholders assign to its new monitoring process.

Q: What are RSA's monitoring plans for next year?

A. One of the first monitoring activities that RSA has planned is for each of RSA's state liaisons to travel to his or her assigned state to share information about the new monitoring process and establish a personal relationship with the state director and other state agency personnel, members of the SRCs, ILCs, disability advocates, people with disabilities, and other stakeholders. During the visit, the state liaison will follow up on the findings of the current monitoring system to ensure that corrective actions have been taken and that required steps to improve performance are under way.

Section 13 of the *Rehabilitation Act* requires RSA to submit an annual report to the president and to Congress with an assessment of the performance of programs carried out under the *Rehabilitation Act*. RSA's annual reviews and periodic on-site monitoring of State VR agencies pursuant to section 107 of the *Rehabilitation Act* provide much of the information that RSA needs to meet its reporting obligations under section 13 of the *Rehabilitation Act*. When RSA conducts its annual reviews or periodic on-site monitoring of the state VR agencies, section 107(a)(4) requires that RSA examine the following: the eligibility process, the provision of services, including the order of selection, if applicable, and other areas that may be identified by the public or through meetings with the State Rehabilitation Council. RSA also is required by section 107(a)(1)(B) to determine whether the state VR agency is complying substantially with the provisions of its state plan and with evaluation standards and performance indicators established under section 106 of the *Rehabilitation Act*.

In order to prepare its reports, RSA will review the following pursuant to section 107(a)(2): state policies and procedures; guidance materials issued by the state agency; decisions resulting from hearings conducted in accordance with due process; state goals established under section 101(a)(15) and the extent to which the state has achieved such goals; plans and reports prepared under section 106(b); consumer satisfaction reviews and analyses described in section 105(c)(4);

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information provided by the State Rehabilitation Council established under section 105 or by the commission described in section 101(a)(21)(A)(i), whichever is applicable; reports; and budget and financial management data.

If RSA issues a report detailing the findings of an annual review or periodic on-site monitoring, section 107(a)(5) of the *Rehabilitation Act* requires that RSA also make the report available to the State Rehabilitation Council.

Q: How will information from RSA’s monitoring process be made public? When will it be available?

A: The information that results from RSA’s monitoring will be included in RSA’s annual reports to state agencies. The annual reports will be posted on RSA’s Web site at the same time that the reports are issued to the state agencies.