

Programs Under The Rehabilitation Act

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RSA directly funds or supports through partnerships with other federal and nonfederal agencies, approximately 30 initiatives or programs that fall under the Act. For the purpose of this report, these initiatives or programs are organized into five major areas. Within each area, the report provides a description of the discrete programs and/or initiatives under that category. Each program description includes a budget allocation for fiscal year 2000; changes related to the 1998 Amendments, and major outcomes and accomplishments.

Employment

- State VR Services
- State Supported Employment Services
- American Indian VR Services
- Demonstration and Training
- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers
- Projects With Industry
- Business Enterprise

Independent Living and Community Integration

- Independent Living Services and Centers for Independent Living
- Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who are Blind
- Projects for Initiating Recreational Programs for Individuals with Disabilities

Technical Assistance, Training and Support

- Program Improvement
- Capacity Building for Traditionally Underserved Populations
- Rehabilitation Training

Evaluation, Research and Information Dissemination

- Evaluation
- American Rehabilitation Magazine
- Clearinghouse for Disabilities Information
- National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research

Advocacy, Enforcement and Compliance

- Client Assistance Program
- Protection and Advocacy of Individual Rights Program
- Employment of People with Disabilities in the Federal Government
- Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board
- Federal Contracts Compliance Programs
- Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted and Federally Contracted Programs
- National Council on Disability
- Electronic and Information Technology

Employment Programs

RSA administers seven programs whose overall goal is to assist individuals with disabilities to prepare for, obtain, or maintain employment. These employment programs either directly or indirectly provide VR and related services to individuals with disabilities. Two of these programs, the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program, are state formula grant programs. The American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Demonstration and Training, Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers and the Projects With Industry programs are discretionary grant programs that make competitive awards for up to a five-year period. RSA also provides oversight of the Business Enterprise Program operated by state VR agencies for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Each of these programs is described below.

State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program Program Administration Division Sections 100-111

The State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program assists states in operating a VR program as an integral part of a coordinated, statewide workforce investment system. The program is designed to provide VR services to individuals with disabilities so that those individuals may prepare for and engage in gainful employment consistent with their strengths, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities and interests.

**Federal Funding
2000 \$2,315,587,000**

This formula grant program provides financial assistance to states to cover the cost of direct services and program administration. An allotment formula that takes into account population and per capita income is used to distribute funds among the states and territories, including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands. Grant funds are administered by VR agencies designated by each state. All 56 states and territories have VR agencies. Twenty-four states also have separate agencies serving individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

The State VR Services Program is ultimately about employment. But the program is not only about getting jobs. It is about helping individuals with disabilities get jobs they find satisfying — jobs that anyone in society would be glad to have.

Each state works toward establishing a seamless service delivery system that can provide uninterrupted services to eligible individuals. For that purpose, state VR agencies establish collaborative relationships and partnerships with a broad spectrum of public agencies and the private sector to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of services.

The VR program is committed to assisting each consumer to achieve the best outcome possible. To that end, RSA has continued to emphasize high-quality employment outcomes and increased services to individuals with significant disabilities. Over 80 percent of the people who use state VR services have significant physical or mental disabilities that seriously limit their functional capacities to achieve or maintain employment. These individuals often require multiple services over an extended period of time. For them, the State VR Services Program is indispensable to their becoming employed and reducing their reliance on public support.

Nationwide, state VR agencies employ nearly 14,000 professional VR counselors who help individuals with disabilities prepare a plan for employment and obtain job training and placement services. The program may provide a variety of services, such as vocational evaluation, counseling, training, job placement, mental and physical restoration, education, rehabilitation technology and supported employment services. These services help individuals with disabilities maximize their employability, economic self-sufficiency and overall independence.

In fiscal year 2000, RSA implemented preliminary Title I program evaluation standards and performance indicators, as required by the 1998 Amendments. The standards and indicators are considered a crucial part of a comprehensive, integrated system of accountability for the VR program. Section II of this report provides a more detailed discussion of the evaluation standards and performance indicators.

During the fiscal year 2000 reporting period, RSA collected and analyzed data related to both evaluation standards and their corresponding indicators from the 80 state VR agencies. Table 1 on the following page presents a breakdown of state VR agency performance against the six performance indicators developed for **Evaluation Standard 1 – Employment Outcomes** and the performance factors developed for **Evaluation Standard 2 – Equal Access to Services**.

**Evaluation Standard and Performance Indicators
State VR Agency Performance
Table 1**

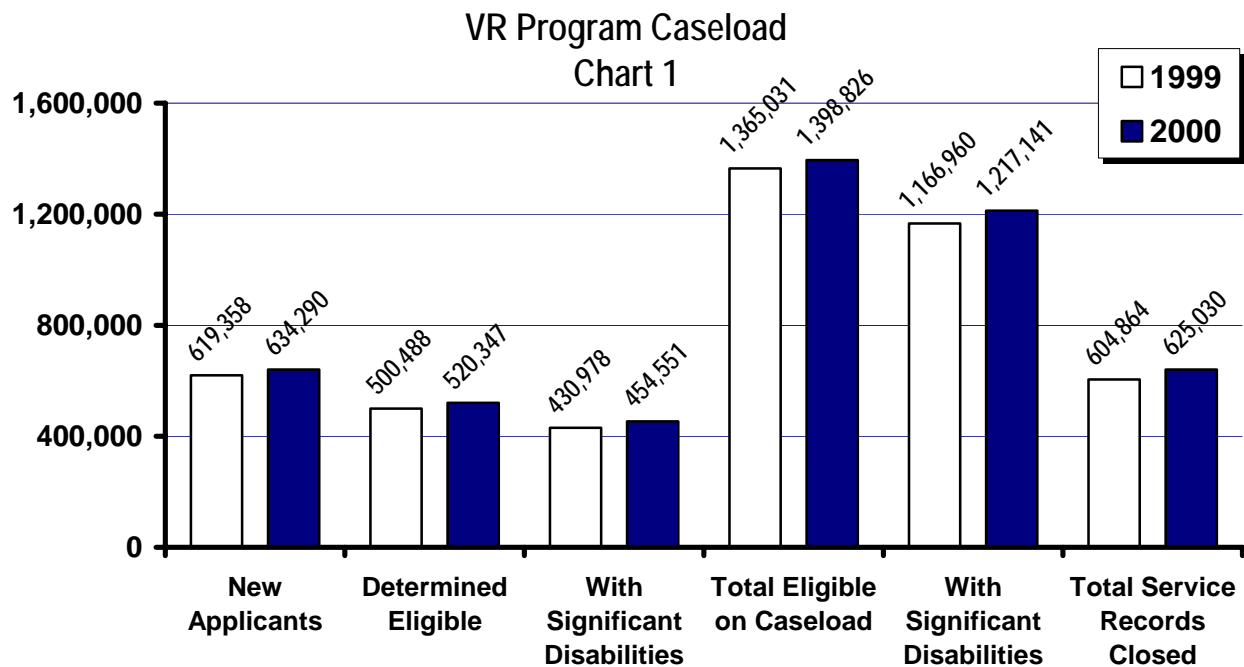
Evaluation Standard 1 — Employment Outcomes				
Performance Indicators	General/Combined VR Agencies		VR Agencies Serving the Blind	
	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail
1.1 Change in Employment Outcome	40	16	15	9
1.2 Percent of Outcomes Employed After Services	50	6	18	6
1.3 Percent of Employment Outcomes in Competitive Employment	51	5	21	3
1.4 Percent of Competitive Employment Outcomes with Significant Disability	52	4	18	6
1.5 Ratio of Competitive Employment Earnings to State Average Weekly Wage * No state wage data exists for Guam, Northern Marianas and American Samoa. Therefore, Indicator 1.5 cannot be computed.	40*	13*	19	5
1.6 Percent Difference Earnings as Primary Source of Support at Competitive Employment Outcome Versus Application	46	10	17	7
Evaluation Standard 2 — Equal Access to Services				
Performance Factors	General/Combined VR Agencies		VR Agencies Serving the Blind	
Ratio of .80 or Higher	49		8	
Ratio of Less than .80	2		1	
Fewer than 100 Individuals from Minority Backgrounds Exiting the State VR Services Program	5		15	

A state-by-state breakdown of VR agency performance for both evaluation standards is provided in Appendix 1 of this report.

In fiscal year 2000, RSA also collected and analyzed data submitted by state VR agencies in the Quarterly Cumulative Caseload Report (RSA 113 Report) and Case Service Report (RSA 911 Report). As Chart 1 shows, data collected in the RSA 911 Report indicate that over 630,000 individuals with disabilities applied for VR services in fiscal year 2000. Of those, state VR agencies, following the eligibility determination

process, accepted 82 percent of the applicants as eligible to participate in the VR program.

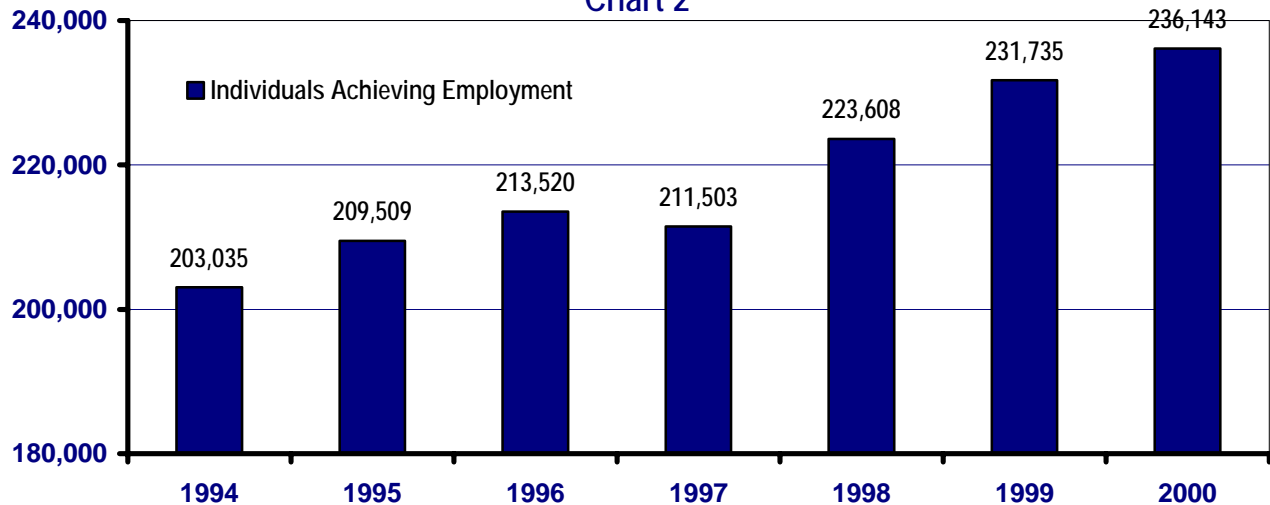
The number of individuals with significant disabilities determined eligible for VR services also increased from 430,978 in fiscal year 1999 to 454,551 in fiscal year 2000. They represented 87 percent of individuals with disabilities determined eligible for VR services in fiscal year 2000. In that same year, of those individuals found ineligible for VR services, 2,931 individuals were determined to be too significantly disabled to benefit from VR services.



In fiscal year 1999, state VR agencies provided services to more than 1.3 million individuals. In fiscal year 2000, that number increased to nearly 1.4 million. In that same year, the number of individuals with significant disabilities who received services increased to more than 86 percent of all individuals receiving services.

Success in the rehabilitation of individuals with significant disabilities is reflected in data from the RSA 113 Report provided in Chart 2 below. Chart 2 shows the number of individuals who achieved an employment outcome after receiving services through the State VR Services Program each year from 1994 to 2000. The number of persons with disabilities placed in jobs rose in every year from 1994 to 2000, except for a small decline in 1997. In fiscal year 2000, 236,143 individuals obtained an employment outcome.

**Individuals Achieving an Employment Outcome
Chart 2**

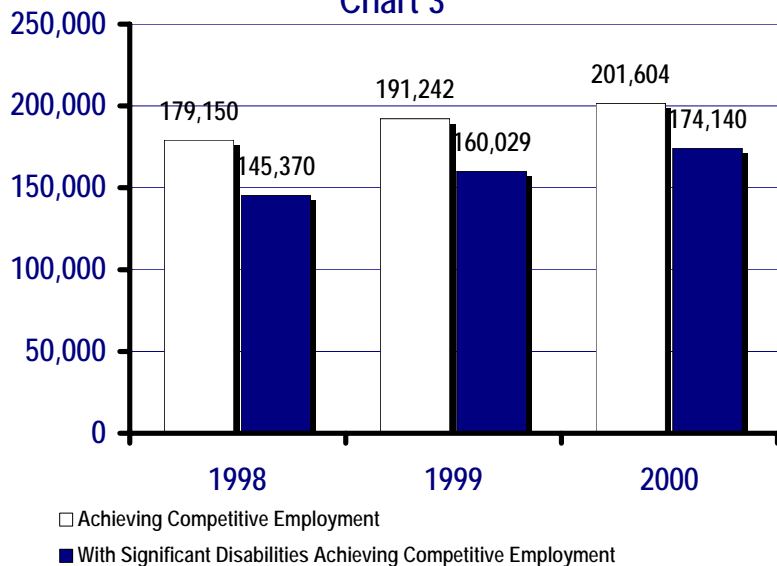


Using data collected in the RSA 113 Report, Table 2 shows the number of individuals who obtained an employment outcome after receiving at least one VR service and leaving the State VR Services Program. The number of individuals with significant disabilities who obtained employment increased each year since 1995. In that year, individuals with significant disabilities represented 76 percent of all individuals with disabilities who got jobs after receiving VR services. By fiscal year 2000, more than 87 percent of individuals who got jobs after receiving VR services were individuals with significant disabilities.

Individuals Obtaining Employment After Exiting VR Table 2			
Fiscal Year	Individuals With Significant Disabilities	Individuals Without Significant Disabilities	Percent With Significant Disabilities
1995	159,138	50,371	76.0
1996	165,686	47,834	77.6
1997	168,422	43,093	79.6
1998	184,651	38,957	82.6
1999	196,832	34,903	84.9
2000	205,444	30,699	87.0

In addition, since 1992 the State VR Services Program realized an increase in competitive employment outcomes. As Chart 3 shows, data obtained from the RSA 911 Report indicates the number of individuals achieving competitive employment increased in 1998, 1999 and again in fiscal year 2000, including competitive employment outcomes of individuals with significant disabilities. Program regulations defined competitive employment as employment in the competitive labor market that is performed on a full-time or

Individuals Achieving Competitive Employment
Chart 3



part-time basis in an integrated setting. In a competitive employment environment, an individual with a disability is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled. In fiscal year 2000, there was also an increase in the number of individuals who obtained jobs in competitive employment with medical benefits. In that year, more than 146,000 individuals got competitive jobs with medical benefits, over 126,000 of whom were individuals with significant disabilities.

To accomplish those and other outcomes, during fiscal year 2000, RSA made significant investments in the vocational rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities. Including both state and federal funds, in fiscal year 2000 the VR program spent \$3,588,554,307 on services to individuals with disabilities, \$136,053,870 on services to groups of individuals and \$434,366,380 on administration of the program. Services provided in the services to individuals category included: \$315,546,425 for physical and mental restoration services, \$1,054,011,670 for training of all kinds, \$28,503,764 in personal assistance services and \$109,431,954 for rehabilitation technology services.

A more detailed, state-by-state breakdown of information regarding the State VR Services Program for fiscal year 2000 has been provided in Appendix 2 of this report. Additional information is also available by calling the RSA Basic State Grants Branch at (202) 245-7488.

State Supported Employment Services Program Program Administration Division Sections 621- 628

The State Supported Employment Services Program has been one of the most popular approaches in the rehabilitation of persons with significant disabilities over the last decade. It was developed to help in the transition of persons with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities into a work setting through the use of on-site job coaches and other supports. By federal regulation, state VR agencies must provide ongoing support services needed by individuals with significant disabilities to maintain supported employment, including monthly monitoring at the work site, from the time of job placement until transition to extended services.

**Federal Funding
2000 \$38,152,000**

Under the program, state VR agencies collaborate with appropriate public and private nonprofit organizations to provide supported employment services. State VR agencies provide individuals with disabilities time-limited services for a period not to exceed 18 months, unless a longer period to achieve job stabilization has been established in the IPE. Once this period has ended, the state VR agency must arrange for "extended services" to be provided by other appropriate state agencies, private nonprofit organizations or other sources for the duration of that employment. Supported employment placements are achieved when the short-term VR services are augmented with extended services by other public or nonprofit agencies or organizations.

An individual's potential need for supported employment must be considered as part of the assessment to determine eligibility for the State VR Services Program. The requirements pertaining to individuals with an employment goal of supported employment are the same in both the Title I State VR Services Program and the Title VI-B State Supported Employment Services Program. A state VR agency may support an individual's supported employment services solely with State VR Services (Title I) grant funds, or it may fund the cost of supported employment services in whole or in part with State Supported Employment Services (Title VI-B) grant funds. Title VI-B supported employment funds may only be used to provide supported employment services and are essentially used to supplement Title I funds.

Since 1996, more individuals have been receiving supported employment services using funds under the Title I program than with funds under the Title VI-B program. Based on data related to those individuals achieving an employment outcome in fiscal year 2000, 11,370 individuals received funding for supported employment services solely under the Title I State VR Services Program and 13,016 received funding for supported employment services through the Title VI-B supplement. These numbers do not include those individuals who were still receiving supported employment services at the close of the fiscal year.

RSA data also demonstrate that in fiscal year 2000, 79 percent of individuals receiving funding for supported employment services through the Title VI-B Program and achieving an employment outcome, obtained a supported employment outcome. Of those individuals who obtained other types of employment outcomes, seven percent were employed in a non-integrated employment setting such as extended or “sheltered” employment.

Some individuals with an initial goal of supported employment achieve an employment outcome other than a supported employment outcome, such as competitive employment, without supports or non-competitive employment. In fiscal year 2000, 76 percent of individuals with a supported employment goal, including consumers who received support for supported employment services under both Title I and Title VI-B, achieved a competitive employment outcome.

During fiscal year 2000, RTI released a sub-study of the Longitudinal Study titled ***Vocational Rehabilitation Experiences Among Individuals Who Achieved a Supported Employment Outcome***. The sub-study was designed primarily to produce descriptive information on individuals served by the VR program who transitioned into a work environment and received ongoing support services. The study compares the findings with analogous information on other consumers of VR services with significant disabilities who obtained other types of employment. More information regarding the Longitudinal Study and specific findings of the sub-study is included in the Highlights section of this report:

As state VR agencies serve an increasing number of individuals with significant disabilities, the number of individuals receiving supported employment services will likely continue to increase.

American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program Special Projects Division and Program Administration Division Section 121

The American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program (AIVRS) provides grants to governing bodies of Indian tribes and other consortia to deliver VR services to American Indians with disabilities who live on or near federal or state reservations. The term reservation includes Indian reservations, public domain Indian allotments, former Indian reservations in Oklahoma, and land held by incorporated Native groups, regional corporations and village corporations under the provisions of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

**Federal Funding
2000 \$23,390,000**

Awards are made through competitive applications for a period of up to five years to provide VR services designed to assist American Indians with disabilities to prepare for and engage in gainful employment. Applicants assure that efforts will be made to provide a broad scope of rehabilitation services, to the maximum extent feasible,

comparable to the rehabilitation services provided by the state VR agencies, and that effort will be made to provide VR services in a manner and at a level of quality at least comparable to those services provided by the state agencies.

The AIVRS program is supported through funds reserved by the RSA Commissioner from funds allocated under Title I, Part B of the Act. As Table 3 shows, the program has grown substantially in the last several years as a result of increases in the minimum amount of funds required to be reserved for the program.

Number of Grants Funded Table 3	
Fiscal Year	Total Grants
1996	35
1997	39
1998	47
1999	53
2000	64

The number of grantees funded increased from 31 in 1996, to 64 in fiscal year 2000. In addition, the 1998 Amendments increased the grant period from three years to up to five years, providing more program stability. Eighty-eight percent of Tribal VR project staff are American Indians.

As Table 4 shows, the number of American Indians with disabilities achieving employment outcomes increased from 530 in fiscal year 1997 to 951 in fiscal year 2000. In addition, the percentage of American Indians with disabilities, receiving services under an IPE through the program and achieving an employment outcome increased from 57 percent in 1998 to 62 percent in 2000.

Number of Individuals Achieving Employment Table 4			
Fiscal Year	Number Served	Number Exiting after Receiving Services but not Achieving Employment	Number Achieving Employment
1997	2,617	289	530
1998	3,243	449	598
1999	3,186	431	678
2000	4,148	579	951

Technical assistance to the Tribal VR projects is provided from a variety of sources, including: RSA, state VR agencies, Regional Continuing Education Programs, NIDRR and its grantees and the capacity building grantees funded under Section 21 of the Act. The Tribal VR projects, for example, are building strong relationships with the state VR agencies. These relationships, in turn, are promoting cross training where state VR agencies are training the Tribal VR staff on techniques of VR service delivery, and the Tribal project staff are providing training on VR services designed to be delivered in diverse cultures. As another example, the technical assistance network sponsors annual conferences for the AIVRS projects, focusing on training and networking. Other grantees funded under the Act participate in the conferences as both trainers and learners, further promoting strong partnerships within the program and among RSA grantees.

RSA continues monitoring Tribal VR projects, but has changed its monitoring strategy from the conduct of on-site reviews to the provision of self-assessment tools designed to assist Tribal projects to identify issues and needs requiring training and technical assistance. In fiscal year 1999, RSA awarded a two-year study to initiate the first comprehensive evaluation of the AIVRS program. The study was designed to examine consumer characteristics, services provided, outcomes and management of the AIVRS program. The study will also compare AIVRS program performance to the performance of the State VR Services Program. The study will result in a final report to be completed and published in fiscal year 2002. Study findings will be used in the future to assist RSA in evaluating program performance and developing appropriate strategies for program improvement.

Demonstration and Training Program Special Projects Division Section 303

Demonstration and Training Programs provide competitive grants or contracts to eligible entities to expand and improve the provision of rehabilitation and other services authorized under the Act. Section 303(b) of the Act

**Federal Funding
2000 \$21,672,000**

authorizes the support of projects that provide activities to demonstrate and implement methods of service delivery for individuals with disabilities. Other types of projects authorized under this section include activities such as technical assistance, systems change, special studies and evaluation and dissemination and utilization of findings from successful, previously-funded projects. A number of projects funded under this section of the Act are designed to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities, including those individuals who were unserved or underserved by programs under the Act. In addition, seven Congressionally mandated projects were funded.

Sections 303(a), (c) and (d) authorize demonstration projects designed specifically to increase client choice in the rehabilitation process, make information and training available to parents of individuals with disabilities and provide Braille training. The 1998 Amendments broadened the program's mission, roles and project activities, and shifted the responsibility of other programs under Section 303. For example, Braille Training and the Parent Information and Training Program used to be funded under Section 803.

Entities eligible for grants under Section 303(b) of this program include state VR agencies, community rehabilitation programs, Indian tribes or tribal organizations, or other public or nonprofit agencies or organizations. Competitions may be limited to one or more type of entity. The program supports projects for up to 60 months.

During the project period, project managers may provide comprehensive services that can demonstrate the application of innovative procedures leading to the successful achievement of employment outcomes. As another example of projects funded under

this program, project managers may document exemplary procedures and best practices for dissemination and replication that provide best methods for resolving or alleviating rehabilitation barriers that are nationally significant or common to several states or specific geographical areas. Other projects are designed to expand or improve VR services that prepare individuals with disabilities to move toward fully integrated competitive employment with a carefully designed support system including job coaching, job search assistance, job development and placement, worksite modification and co-worker training.

In fiscal year 2000, the program implemented a newly designed web-based performance report protocol. The information submitted by grantees provided a baseline of data. The program had 26 continuation projects funded and 22 projects that were in the final year of their project. For purposes of this report, data has been extracted from those 26 projects in continuation status, since data is not yet available from grantees who were in their final year. In fiscal year 2000, 919 individuals were placed in employment through the 26 projects providing services under the program. In addition, in that same year, beginning base line data were collected for GPRA.

In fiscal year 2000, RSA made 23 new awards under Section 303(b). New awards addressed priorities in the following areas: increasing employment outcomes, especially self-employment; telecommuting or business ownership for American Indians with disabilities who reside in or near reservations or in urban settings; providing affordable transportation services to individuals with disabilities and career advancement. One new award was also made to implement a National Technical Advisory Center for Native Americans with Disabilities.

In addition, RSA awarded continuation grants to projects that had made significant progress in meeting their specific goals and objectives. These continuation awards included six systems change projects, 23 field-initiated projects, two Braille training projects, seven parent information and training projects, one technical assistance center for parent information and training and one supported employment national scope project.

Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Program Special Projects Division Section 304

The Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Program makes comprehensive VR services available to migrant and seasonal farm workers with disabilities. Projects under the program develop innovative methods for reaching and

**Federal Funding
2000 \$2,350,000**

serving this population. Emphasis is given in these projects to outreach, specialized bilingual rehabilitation counseling and coordination of VR services with services from other sources. Projects provide VR services to migrant and seasonal farmworkers and

to members of their families when such services will contribute to the rehabilitation of the worker with a disability.

The program is administered in coordination with other programs serving migrant and seasonal farm workers, including programs under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965, Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act, the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act, and the Workforce Investment Act. In addition, RSA participates as a member of the Federal Interagency Committee on Migrants to share information and develop strategies to improve the coordination and delivery of services to this population.

Projects funded in fiscal year 2000 trained migrant and seasonal farmworkers with disabilities in self-employment and in developing other skills that can be applied outside the agricultural area to increase their chances of entering new occupations. In addition, funded projects worked directly with employers to create opportunities for on-the-job training and job placement. As Table 5 indicates, although the number of projects funded under the program leveled off following fiscal year 1998, the number of individuals served by these projects continued to rise each year from 9,000 in fiscal year 1998 to 9,800 in fiscal year 2000. The estimated number of individuals served include individuals to whom information was disseminated through the 14 projects.

Number of Projects Funded and Individuals Served			
Table 5			
Fiscal Year	1998	1999	2000
Total Projects Funded	14	14	14
Estimated Number of Individuals Served	9,000	9,500	9,800

For program participants who wish to continue doing farmwork, but have medical or other problems that prevent them, Section 304 projects use VR resources to provide them with medical and other services for a quick return to work. These services have contributed significantly to the attainment of employment outcomes for participants.

Projects With Industry Special Projects Division Section 611-612

The Projects With Industry (PWI) Program creates and expands job and career opportunities for individuals with disabilities in the competitive labor market by engaging the participation of business and industry in the VR process.

**Federal Funding
2000 \$22,071,000**

PWI projects promote the involvement of business and private industry through Business Advisory Councils (BAC) that identify jobs and careers available in the community, and provide advice on the appropriate skills and training. BACs are

required to identify job and career availability within the community, consistent with the current and projected local employment opportunities identified by the local workforce investment board for the community under WIA.

PWI grants are made to a variety of agencies and organizations, including businesses and industrial corporations, community rehabilitation programs, labor organizations, trade associations, Indian tribes, tribal organizations, designated state units and foundations. Grants are awarded for a period of up to five years and the federal share may not exceed 80 percent of the total cost of a project. New awards may be made only to projects proposing to serve geographic areas that are unserved or underserved by the PWI program.

PWI grantees must provide to RSA an annual evaluation of project operations in accordance with established program evaluation standards and performance indicators. Specifically, RSA established seven standards to evaluate the performance of a PWI grant.

Evaluation Standard 1: The primary objective of the project must be to assist individuals with disabilities to obtain competitive employment. The activities carried out by the project must support the accomplishment of this objective.

Evaluation Standard 2: The project must serve individuals with disabilities that impair their capacity to obtain competitive employment. In selecting persons to receive services, priority must be given to individuals with significant disabilities.

Evaluation Standard 3: The project must ensure the provision of services that will assist in the placement of individuals with disabilities.

Evaluation Standard 4: Funds must be used to achieve the project's primary objective at minimum cost to the Federal Government.

Evaluation Standard 5: The project's advisory council must provide policy guidance and assistance in the conduct of the project.

Evaluation Standard 6: Working relationships, including partnerships, must be established with agencies and organizations to expand the project's capacity to meet its objectives.

Evaluation Standard 7: The project must obtain positive results in assisting individuals with disabilities to obtain competitive employment.

RSA established nine compliance indicators by which to measure the effectiveness of individual grants.

Compliance Indicator 1: Percent of individuals served whose disabilities are significant. A minimum of 50 percent of individuals served by the project are individuals who have significant disabilities.

Compliance Indicator 2: Percent of individuals served who have been unemployed for at least six months at the time of project entry. A minimum of 50 percent of individuals served by the project have been unemployed for at least 6 months at the time of project entry.

Compliance Indicator 3: Cost per placement. The average cost per placement of individuals served by the project does not exceed \$1,600.00.

Compliance Indicator 4: Projected cost per placement. The actual average cost per placement of individuals served by the project does not exceed 140 percent of the projected average cost per placement in the grantee's application.

Compliance Indicator 5: Placement rate. A minimum of 40 percent of individuals served by the project are placed in competitive employment.

Compliance Indicator 6: Projected placement rate. The actual number of individuals served by the project that are placed into competitive employment is at least 50 percent of the number of individuals that the grantee projected in its grant application would be placed.

Compliance Indicator 7: Change in earnings. The earnings of individuals served by the project who are placed into competitive employment have increased by an average of at least \$75.00 a week over earnings at project entry.

Compliance Indicator 8: Percent placed who have significant disabilities. At least 50 percent of individuals served by the project who are placed into competitive employment are individuals who have significant disabilities.

Compliance Indicator 9: Percent unemployed placed. At least 50 percent of individuals served by the project who are placed into competitive employment are individuals who were unemployed for at least 6 months at the time of project entry.

In order to receive continuation funding for the third and subsequent years, PWI grantees must demonstrate compliance with the standards and indicators by submitting data for the most recent complete project year. If a grantee does not demonstrate compliance on the basis of the previous year's data, the grantee has an opportunity to demonstrate compliance with the standards by submitting data from the first six months of the current project year.

Table 6 below presents selected performance information for the PWI program for fiscal years 1998, 1999 and 2000. As the table demonstrates, both the percentage of persons placed who have significant disabilities and the percentage of persons placed who were previously unemployed for at least six months at the time of project entry have increased annually since 1998. In fiscal year 2000, the percentage of individuals who were placed into employment by the program was 62 percent, an increase over the 1999 level of performance.

Projects With Industry Program Outcomes Table 6			
Fiscal Year	1998	1999	2000
Total projects funded	104	101	99
Total persons served (new this period)	13,811	13,9458	13,083
Percentage served with significant disabilities	85%	7%	87%
Percentage served who were unemployed 6 months or more	69%	70%	72%
Percentage of total persons placed in employment	49%	59%	62%
Percentage of individuals with significant disabilities placed in employment	84%	85%	86%
Percentage of previously unemployed individuals placed in employment	67%	69%	71%
Placement rate of previously unemployed individuals	48%	58%	61%
Placement rate of individuals with significant disabilities	48%	58%	62%

In fiscal year 2000, PWI projects also reported that 87 percent of individuals served, and 86 percent of individuals placed, were individuals with significant disabilities. In addition, in fiscal year 2000, 72 percent of the individuals served, and 71 percent of individuals placed, had been unemployed at least six months at the time of project entry.

To continue to improve program outcomes in the provision of PWI services to individuals with the most need, RSA will work with other federal agencies to provide opportunities for PWI grantees to identify and exchange information addressing work disincentives affecting previously unemployed individuals with disabilities. RSA will also provide technical assistance to PWI grantees with poor performance in this area.

PWI Program Output Measures		
Table 7		
	1999	2000
Continuation Projects	\$21,518,731	\$19,452,574
Number	97	89
Average Award	\$221,843	\$218,568
New Projects	\$331,559	\$2,292,117
Number	1	12
Average Award	\$165,780	\$191,010
Peer Review	0	\$105,599
Minority Outreach	\$220,710	\$220,710
Total Funding	\$22,071,000	\$22,071,000
Total Projects	99	101

Table 7 provides PWI output measures for fiscal years 1999 and 2000. In fiscal year 2000, RSA initiated an evaluation of the program.

The Department's goal in conducting this study is to: 1) identify the unique role that the PWI program currently plays in increasing the employment of individuals with disabilities, including an examination of its relationship to the State VR Services Program, and 2) evaluate the extent to which the PWI program has been successful in meeting its statutory purposes, in particular, engaging the talent and leadership of private industry as partners in the rehabilitation process.

The broad purpose of the evaluation was to examine the role and performance of the PWI program as one component of the broader set of employment-related services available to individuals with disabilities, with a particular focus on the extent to which PWI projects fulfilled their intended goal to create and expand job opportunities for individuals with disabilities at the project level.

Business Enterprise Program Blind and Visually Impaired Division Section 103(b)

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) is authorized under Section 103(b) of the Act. Section 103(b) provides that VR services, when provided to groups, can include management, supervision and other services to improve businesses operated by significantly disabled individuals. Under the BEP program, state VR agencies can use funds under the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program to support the Vending Facility Program, which is authorized under the Randolph-Sheppard Act. The original intent of the Randolph-Sheppard Act was to enhance employment opportunities for blind individuals who are trained and licensed to operate vending facilities.

Supported by a combination of RSA program funds, state appropriations, federal vending machine income, and levied set-asides from vendors, the BEP provides persons who are blind with remunerative employment and self-support through the operation of vending facilities on federal and other property. The program recruits qualified individuals who are blind, trains them on the management and operation of small business enterprises, and then licenses graduates to operate the facilities.

At the outset, the program placed sundry stands in the lobbies of federal office buildings and post offices selling such items as newspapers, magazines, candies and tobacco products. Through the years, the program has grown and broadened from Federal locations to also include state, county, municipal and private installations as well as interstate highway rest areas. Operations have expanded to include military mess halls, cafeterias, snack bars, miscellaneous shops and facilities comprised of vending machines.

A primary focus of RSA is on increasing the number of vendors, the number of facilities, and the average annual earnings of vendors. RSA has established standards and performance indicators to encourage state agencies to increase average earnings of individuals in the program.

As Table 8 shows, total vendor gross income and overall average earnings increased from fiscal year 1999 to fiscal year 2000. On the other hand, the number of vending facilities and the number of vendors operating vending facilities decreased during the same reporting period.

BEP Program Outcomes		
Table 8		
	1999	2000
Income and Earnings		
Gross Income	\$448,142,701	\$469,395,355
Vendor Earnings	\$90,613,880	\$93,273,607
Average Earnings	\$32,544	\$34,298
Number of Vendors		
Federal Locations	925	897
Non-federal Locations	1,884	1,819
Total Vendors	2,809	2,716
Number of Vending Facilities		
Federal Locations	1,120	1,114
Non-federal Locations	2,232	2,178
Total Facilities	3,352	3,292

Independent Living and Community Integration

All programs and activities authorized under the Act are intended to promote independence for individuals with disabilities. However, the four grant programs described in this section of the report are specifically designed to maximize the leadership, empowerment and independence of individuals with disabilities, and provide opportunities for inclusion and integration of those individuals into the mainstream of American society.

Independent Living Services Program Special Projects Division Title VII, Chapter I Section 711, Part B

The Independent Living Services Program provides formula grants to states, with funds allotted based on population. Funds are used to provide independent living services, to support the operation of centers for independent living, to demonstrate ways to expand

**Federal Funding
2000 \$22,296,000**

and improve independent living services, and to support other activities that promote independent living. To be eligible for financial assistance, states are required to establish a Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). Each state must also submit a state plan for independent living that is jointly developed and signed by the director of the designated state VR unit and the chairperson of the SILC.

The program provides financial assistance to: expand and improve independent living services; develop and support statewide networks of centers

Program Accomplishments	
In fiscal year 2000, independent living programs nationwide served over 131,726 individuals with disabilities. Those individuals received services in one or more of the following areas:	
1,372	individuals were relocated from nursing homes or other institutions to community-based living arrangements
18,036	individuals were reported as having received services that prevented the necessity of their entering into nursing homes or other institutions
52,883	individuals received independent living skills training and life skills training
33,270	individuals received independent living services related to securing housing or shelter
35,322	individuals received services related to transportation
36,594	individuals received personal assistance services

for independent living; and improve working relationships among state independent living rehabilitation programs, centers for independent living, SILCs, other programs funded under the Act and other relevant federal and non-federal programs.

**Centers for Independent Living Programs
Special Projects Division
Title VII, Chapter I
Part C**

The Centers for Independent Living Program provides grants for consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability, non-residential private nonprofit agencies to provide independent living services. At a minimum, all centers funded by the program are required to provide the core services of information and referral, independent living skills training, peer counseling, and individual and systems advocacy. Centers may also provide: community awareness; school-based peer counseling, role modeling and skills training; personal assistance services; transportation; training in use of public transportation vehicles and systems; and recreational events.

**Federal Funding
2000 \$48,000,000**

The Act establishes a set of standards and assurances that centers must meet. The standards and assurances are used in evaluating compliance in the following areas: independent living philosophy, including consumer control and equal access; provision of services on a cross-disability basis; support of the development and achievement of the independent living goals that have been chosen by consumers; advocacy to increase the quality of community options for independent living; provision of independent living core services; resource development; and community capacity-building activities, including community advocacy, technical assistance and outreach.

As required by the 1998 Amendments, RSA must award grants to any eligible agency that had been awarded a grant as of September 30, 1997. In effect, all centers for independent living funded by the end of fiscal year 1997 are "grandfathered in," and thus guaranteed continued funding as long as they continue to comply with the standards and assurances. New centers in a state are funded on a competitive basis, based on the availability of funds and the state's priority designation of unserved or underserved areas within the state.

**Independent Living Services
For Older Individuals Who are Blind
Special Projects Division
Title VII, Chapter 2**

The Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who Are Blind Program delivers independent living services to individuals who are 55 years of age or older, and whose significant visual impairment makes competitive employment extremely difficult to attain, but for whom independent living goals are

**Federal Funding
2000 \$15,000,000**

feasible. Services are designed to assist an older individual who is blind in coping with activities of daily living. Examples of services provided include: services to help correct vision loss; the provision of adaptive aids and services; delivery of orientation and mobility training; training in communication skills and Braille instruction; and provision of information and referral services, peer counseling and individual advocacy training.

Under the Act, in any fiscal year in which program appropriations exceed \$13 million dollars, grants to states will be made on a formula basis rather than a discretionary basis. In fiscal year 2000, appropriations reached \$15 million dollars and RSA authorized formula grants based on population aged 55 and older to state agencies for the blind, or in states that have no such agency, to state VR agencies. States participating in this program must match every \$9 of federal funds with \$1 in non-federal cash or in-kind resources in the year for which the federal funds are appropriated.

The program experienced several major accomplishments in fiscal year 2000. First, state funding in support of Title VII, Chapter 2 programs increased, leading to sustainability of the program and increases in program capacity to meet the needs of consumers. The average overall non-federal support per program increased from approximately \$117,169 in fiscal year 1999 to almost \$201,515 in fiscal year 2000, a 72 percent increase. Second, the program served more consumers who have other severe or multiple disabilities in addition to a significant visual impairment. Finally, states reported that in fiscal year 2000, 50 percent of all consumers served under the Title VII, Chapter 2 program were 80 years of age and older.

Projects for Initiating Recreational Programs For Individuals with Disabilities Special Projects Division Section 305

Projects for Initiating Recreational Programs for Individuals with Disabilities provide recreation and related activities for individuals with disabilities to aid in their employment, mobility, independence, socialization, and community integration. Projects are designed to promote the development of social skills that are necessary in order to integrate individuals with disabilities into the community. Successful integration can greatly benefit an individual with a disability by developing skills, building self-esteem and reducing social barriers that can prevent the individual from seeking employment in settings where there may not be any individuals with apparent disabilities. Individuals without disabilities also benefit from integrated recreational activities through opportunities to learn about the abilities that individuals with disabilities possess.

**Federal Funding
2000 \$3,521,000***
* Includes one-year award
of \$925,000

The program awards discretionary grants on a competitive basis to states, public agencies and nonprofit private organizations, including institutions of higher education.

Projects funded under this program must provide recreational activities for individuals with disabilities in settings with peers without disabilities when possible and appropriate.

Grants are available for periods of up to three years. The federal share of the costs of the Recreational Program is 100 percent for the first year, 75 percent for the second year and 50 percent for the third. Projects funded under this program authority are required to provide a non-federal match (cash and/or in-kind contribution) for year two, at 25 percent of year one federal funding, and for year three, at 50 percent of year one federal funding.

Grantees must demonstrate in their applications the manner in which the program will be continued after federal funding has ended. Some recreational programs continue for lengthy periods of time after federal funding ends by relying on other funding sources. By the end of fiscal year 2000, of the 71 projects initiated since fiscal year 1993, 86 percent continued after federal funding ended.

Technical Assistance, Training and Support Programs

RSA operates and provides funding for a number of programs that support the central work of the vocational rehabilitation program. Support programs frequently are discretionary programs that have been established to provide funding for addressing new and emerging needs of individuals with disabilities. They may, for example, provide technical assistance for more efficient management of service provision, open opportunities for previously underserved populations, initiate partnerships with the business community, and help establish an atmosphere of independence and self-confidence among individuals with disabilities that foster competitive employment. They include training efforts designed to qualify new personnel and expand the knowledge and skills of current professionals through recurrent training, continuing education and professional development.

Program Improvement Section 12

Program Improvement funds allocated under Section 12 are used to support activities that increase program effectiveness, improve accountability, and enhance the agency's ability to address issues of national significance in achieving the purposes of the Act. Program funds are awarded through grants and contracts and may be used to procure expertise to provide short-term technical instruction, conduct special demonstrations, develop and disseminate educational or information materials and carry out monitoring and evaluation activities.

**Federal Funding
2000 \$1,900,000**

Under this section of the Act, the RSA Commissioner is authorized to provide technical assistance and consultative services to public and non-profit private agencies and organizations, including assistance to agencies and organizations to facilitate meaningful and effective participation by individuals with disabilities in workforce investment activities under WIA.

During fiscal year 2000, RSA undertook several program improvement projects that were particularly innovative in their way of addressing previously under-explored problem areas, or in addressing, as an aggregate, the common technical assistance needs of multiple state VR agencies simultaneously.

One program improvement effort established a collaborative project with the Department of Health and Human Services. The project was designed to develop and implement a five-year training and technical assistance program aimed at building a cadre of disability leaders from the field of independent living. This expertise would then be used to assist states in developing post-Olmstead plans for delivering consumer-

directed home and community-based long-term services for individuals with significant disabilities.

The agency also supported an independent living international exchange program, designed to provide opportunities for independent living practitioners and policy experts to observe and interact with similar programs in other countries.

RSA funded a project to develop video-conferencing technology within a state's one-stop centers, providing consumers and employers at the one-stops with remote access to sign language interpreters and real time captioning services.

In support of the findings and recommendations from a southeastern region-wide employer survey completed in 1998, RSA took action on a proposal supported by a consortium of twelve state VR agencies that focused on a proactive regional approach to employer outreach that pooled resources and skills in the development of major strategies and tools, which could promote long-term positive relationships with employers.

In fiscal year 2000, the National Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center (TA Center), established by RSA in 1998, funded eleven projects, for a total of \$779,659. Of those, seven were state-directed projects, representing a total of \$499,659, and four projects were RSA-directed, representing a total of \$280,000. The TA Center funds projects for providing technical assistance to state VR agencies and the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program grant recipients, as well as RSA-directed projects. Several of the projects funded through the TA Center are highlighted in the "Celebrating Innovation in the VR Program" section of this report.

Capacity Building for Traditionally Underserved Populations Resource Development Division Section 21

To ensure that individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds have equal access to programs authorized by the Act, RSA is carrying out a plan to improve services to individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds. To

**Federal Funding
2000 \$2,126,905**

help carry out this plan, one percent of funds from Title III (Professional Development and Special Projects and Demonstration), Title VI (Employment Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities, Part A, Projects with Industry, Part B, Supported Employment), and Title VII (Independent Living Services and Centers for Independent Living) are used to support capacity building projects designed to provide outreach and technical assistance to minority entities and American Indian tribes.

1999 and 2000 Outcomes

- Increased grant awards to minority-serving institutions of higher education and American Indian tribes
- Established new rehabilitation training programs at undergraduate and master's levels designed to increase the number of minority rehabilitation professionals
- Awarded projects to American Indian Tribes under the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services Projects
- Increased knowledge among thousands of minority-serving higher education staff about RSA, VR programs, and legislation related to disability
- Established offices of student disability affairs on many college and university campuses
- Forged collaborative relationships between VR agencies and minority-serving institutions of higher education

The 1998 Amendments define minority entities, the organizations to which the program reached out, as historically Black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions of higher education, American Indian tribal colleges or universities, and other institutions of higher learning whose minority student enrollment is at least 50 percent.

Capacity building projects are designed to expand the service-providing capabilities of these entities and increase their participation in activities funded under the Act.

Training and technical assistance activities funded under the Act may include training on the mission of RSA, RSA-funded programs, disability

legislation, and other pertinent subjects, thus helping to increase awareness of RSA and its programs. Through efforts under the Capacity Building Program, there was a nearly 30 percent increase in the number of grant applications submitted by minority entities to the Rehabilitation Training Program in fiscal year 2000. In addition, in that same year RSA awarded 11 continuation grants to minority entities.

Rehabilitation Training Program Resource Development Division Section 302

The purpose of the Rehabilitation Training Program is to ensure that skilled personnel are available to serve the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities assisted through VR, supported employment and independent living programs. To that end, the program supports training and related activities designed to increase the number of qualified personnel trained in providing rehabilitation services.

**Federal Funding
2000 \$39,629,000**

Grants and contracts under this program authority are awarded to states and public and nonprofit agencies and organizations, including institutions of higher education, to pay all or part of the cost of conducting training programs. Awards may be made in any of 31 long-term training fields, in addition to awards for continuing education, short-term training, experimental and innovative training and training interpreters for persons who

are deaf or hard of hearing and persons who are deaf-blind. These training programs vary in terms of content, methodology and audience.

The long-term training program supports academic training grants that must direct 75 percent of the funds to trainee scholarships. The statute requires trainees who receive assistance either to work for a period of time in public or private non-profit rehabilitation agencies or related agencies, including professional corporations or professional practice groups that have service arrangements with a state agency, or to pay back the assistance they received. Grant recipients under the long-term training program are required to build closer relationships between training institutions and state VR agencies; promote careers in VR; identify potential employers who would meet the student's payback requirements and assure that data on the employment of students are accurate.

Training of statewide workforce systems personnel is authorized under this program, and may be jointly funded by the DOL. Statewide workforce systems personnel may be trained in evaluative skills to determine whether an individual with a disability may be served by the State VR Services Program, or another component of the statewide workforce system.

Of the funds appropriated for the Rehabilitation Training Program, 15 percent must be used to support in-service training. In-service training is intended to assist state VR agencies in the training of their staff consistent with the state's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD).

Under Title I, each state is required to establish procedures to ensure there is an adequate supply of qualified staff for the state agency, assess personnel needs and make projections for future needs and address current and projected personnel training needs. States are further required to develop and maintain policies and procedures for job-specific personnel standards that are consistent with certification, licensure, or other state personnel requirements for comparable positions. If a state's current personnel do not meet the highest requirements for personnel standards within the state, the CSPD must identify the steps a state will take to upgrade the qualifications of their staff, through retraining or hiring. Funds under the State VR Services Program also may be used to comply with these requirements

In fiscal year 2000, RSA awarded more than 2 million dollars in CSPD grants to help retrain VR counselors to the Master's level standard. Through in-service training grants, the Rehabilitation Training Program continued to play a pivotal role in helping state VR agencies develop and implement their CSPD and establish standards for hiring and training qualified rehabilitation professionals in their respective states.

In addition, the RSA training program is very active in leading universities and state VR agencies in an effort to increase the pool of qualified VR counselors available to state agencies. As large numbers of existing counselors are reaching retirement age, the

RSA training program is targeting more of its resources toward pre-service counselor training to expand the pool of potential candidates.

The program also sponsors an annual conference of educators and state agencies to discuss human resource issues and solutions. Program managers also meet regularly with educators, accrediting bodies and state agencies to develop and implement effective strategies for increasing the recruitment pool for state VR agencies.

The allocation of rehabilitation training funds for fiscal years 1999 and 2000 is shown in Table 9 on the following page. The table clearly reflects a shift in funding of programs designed to meet the critical need of training current counselors to levels required by the Act and training of new counselors to meet the needs of state agencies as retirement rates increase. The rows indicating number of grants and funding levels show a dramatic increase in the fields of rehabilitation counseling and CSPD, despite level funding of the training program.

**Rehabilitation Training Projects
Funding and Awards
Fiscal Years 1999 and 2000
Table 9**

	Number of Awards 1999	Grants Amount	Number of Awards 2000	Grants Amount
Long Term Training				
Medical Rehab	7	699,640	7	699,640
Rehab Nursing	2	200,000	1	100,000
Prosthetics/Orthotics	4	600,000	4	600,000
Rehab Counseling	69	6,597,661	67	6,558,075
Rehab Administration	5	575,172	5	499,918
Physical Therapy	3	256,311	0	0
Occupational Therapy	4	399,846	0	0
Rehab Technology	8	782,224	5	482,289
Voc Eval/Adjustment	10	982,201	8	796,929
Rehab of Mentally Ill	7	690,254	7	695,992
Rehab Psychology	3	293,071	2	199,970
Undergrad Education	17	1,190,505	17	1,264,283
Independent Living	2	200,000	0	0
Speech Path/Audiology	4	289,755	2	149,982
Rehab of Blind	16	1,581,400	12	1,198,708
Rehab of Deaf	14	1,399,970	11	1,099,968
Job Dev/Placement	10	992,864	9	899,834
CSPD	8	2,187,914	14	3,953,040
Long Term Training Totals	193	19,918,788	171	19,950,147
Short Term Training	2	449,916	2	449,916
Continuing Education	21	10,114,516	24	10,696,366
In-Service Training	79	5,991,675	79	5,821,525
Interpreter Training	12	2,086,421	12	2,103,842

Table 9 does not reflect costs associated with peer review of applications, RSA support for NIDRR-funded Research and Training Centers (at \$200,000 per year), support for Section 21 efforts (one percent of program funding level, or \$396,290 per year), and support for a Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Material (\$300,000 per year).

It is important to note that RSA shifted the funding of projects in the independent living category of long-term training to the area of continuing education to better reflect the nature of the training being provided under those grants. Likewise, RSA split the funding of rehabilitation technology projects between long-term training and continuing education. RSA remains committed to funding these areas of importance. The shift was to fund them under the appropriate authority.

Evaluation, Research and Information Dissemination

To improve the delivery of services to individuals with disabilities, the Act requires the distribution of practical and scientific information regarding state-of-the-art practices, scientific breakthroughs and new knowledge regarding disabilities. To address those requirements, RSA funds and promotes a variety of research and demonstration programs, training programs and a range of information dissemination projects designed to generate and make available critical data and information to appropriate audiences.

Evaluation Immediate Office of the Commissioner Planning, Policy and Evaluation Section 14

Section 14 mandates that RSA evaluate all programs authorized by the Act using appropriate methodology and evaluative research design. The purpose is to evaluate program effectiveness in relation to program cost; impact on related programs and overall structure and mechanisms for delivery of services. The Act further requires that standards be established and used for evaluations and that evaluations be conducted by individuals who are not immediately involved in the administration of the program or project to be evaluated. RSA relies significantly on evaluation studies to obtain information on the operations and effects of the programs it administers and to help make judgments about the programs' levels of success and decisions on how to improve them.

Federal Funding
2000 \$1,587,000

Under this section of the Act, RSA is funding a Longitudinal Study designed to examine the success of the State VR Services Program in assisting individuals with disabilities to achieve sustainable improvements in employment, earnings, independence and quality of life. The study tracks 8,000 VR consumers at 37 locations. It provides comprehensive information on VR programs under the Act, including types of persons served, resources available, costs, services provided and short- and long-term outcomes.

In fiscal year 2000, RSA released two Longitudinal Study reports: ***Characteristics and Outcomes of Transitional Youth in Vocational Rehabilitation*** and ***Vocational Rehabilitation Experiences Among Individuals Who Achieved a Supported Employment Outcome***. Both reports are discussed in more detail in Section 2 of this report.

In addition, three new evaluation studies were initiated by the agency in fiscal year 2000. The first study, ***Evaluation of the RSA Training Program***, evaluates the Rehabilitation Training Program, authorized under Title III of the Act. Specifically, the study examines the effectiveness of long-term training activities in response to the need for qualified rehabilitation personnel, with a focus on the profession of rehabilitation counseling. The final report is expected in fiscal year 2003.

The second study, ***Evaluation of the Projects With Industries (PWI) Program***, was designed to assess the effectiveness of the PWI program in increasing the employment of individuals with disabilities, including an examination of its relationship to the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program. The study also evaluates the extent to which the PWI program has been successful in meeting its statutory purposes, in particular, engaging the talent and leadership of private industry as partners in the rehabilitation process. That study's final report is expected in fiscal year 2003.

The third study, ***Evaluation of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Implementation: A Disability Perspective***, is designed to supplement a larger study funded by DOL. The DOL study gathers information regarding compliance with Title I of WIA, and is designed to provide a broad overview of WIA implementation. This study does not address issues specific to consumers with disabilities or requirements under Title IV of WIA. The RSA study will provide a more in-depth picture of WIA implementation as it relates to the State VR Services Program and consumers with disabilities.

RSA will utilize findings of all its evaluative studies to initiate program change and improvement.

American Rehabilitation Magazine **Section 12(a)(4)**

The ***American Rehabilitation*** magazine disseminates information on new and successful approaches to providing rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities that can and should be replicated. The magazine addresses topics related to VR, such as best practices in the performance of professional duties, innovative programs, agency administrative practices and research findings. The magazine also features book and film reviews, resources on disability and rehabilitation, information regarding what individual states are doing and other items of interest to rehabilitation professionals.

In recent years, the magazine has devoted a number of issues to cover one specific disability or a specific approach to rehabilitation. Articles appearing in fiscal year 2000 issues focused on high-quality employment; math, computers and the internet; consumer involvement in the rehabilitation process; employment trends; basic skills for labor market success: and findings from the Longitudinal Study.

The Clearinghouse of Disabilities Information Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services Section 15

The Clearinghouse of Disabilities Information responds to inquires and provides the public with information about what is going on in the rehabilitation community. Inquiries usually come from individuals with disabilities, their families, national organizations, other federal and state agencies, information providers, the news media and the general public. Most inquiries are related to federal funding, legislation affecting individuals with disabilities and federal programs and policies. Clearinghouse staff refers callers to other appropriate sources of disability-related information and assistance.

Periodically, the Clearinghouse staff will analyze inquiries to assess current information needs. Based on that analysis, fact sheets and other relevant publications are prepared and made available to the public.

National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research U.S. Department of Education Sections 200-204

Created in 1978, the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) conducts comprehensive and coordinated programs of research, demonstration projects, training and related activities that promote full inclusion and integration into society; employment; independent living; maintenance of health and function and the transfer of rehabilitation technology to individuals with disabilities. NIDRR activities are designed to improve the economic and social self-sufficiency of these individuals, with particular emphasis on improving the effectiveness of services authorized under the Act.

**Federal Funding
2000 \$87,500,000**

A primary role of NIDRR is to ensure the widespread distribution of practical scientific and technological information related to rehabilitation and disability, in useable formats to appropriate user populations, and to increase opportunities for disabled individuals, including those who are members of underserved minority groups.

To address these purposes, NIDRR supports rehabilitation research and development, demonstration projects and related activities, including the training of persons who provide rehabilitation services, or who conduct rehabilitation research. In addition, NIDRR supports projects to disseminate and promote the use of information concerning developments in rehabilitation procedures, methods and devices. Information is provided to rehabilitation professionals, persons with disabilities and their representatives.

NIDRR also supports data analyses on the demographics of disability and provides that information to policy makers, administrators and other relevant groups. Awards are competitive, with applications reviewed by panels of experts, including rehabilitation professionals, rehabilitation researchers and persons with disabilities.

NIDRR supports the following centers and projects:

Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers

Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers (RRTCs) conduct coordinated, integrated and advanced programs of research targeted toward the production of new knowledge to improve rehabilitation methodology and service delivery systems, to alleviate or stabilize disabling conditions and to promote maximum social and economic independence of individuals with disabilities. RRTCs also provide training, including graduate, pre-service and in-service training to assist rehabilitation personnel to more effectively provide rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities. Awards are for five years, except that grants to new recipients or to support new or innovative research may be made for less than five years.

Rehabilitation Engineering Research Centers

Rehabilitation Engineering Research Centers (RERCs) focus on issues dealing with rehabilitation technology, including rehabilitation engineering and assistive technology devices and services. Types of activities supported by RERCs include: the development and dissemination of innovative methods of applying advanced technology, scientific achievements and psychological and social knowledge to rehabilitation problems and the removal of environmental barriers; demonstrations and dissemination of scientific research to assist in meeting the employment and independent living needs of individuals with severe disabilities; service delivery systems change projects; and the stimulation of the production and distribution of equipment in the private sector, as well as clinical evaluations of equipment. Each RERC must provide training opportunities to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities, to become researchers and practitioners of rehabilitation technology. Awards are for five years, except that grants to new recipients or to support new or innovative research may be made for less than five years.

Disability and Rehabilitation Research and Related Projects

Disability and Rehabilitation Research and Related Projects (DRRPs) are aimed at fulfilling NIDRR's overarching goals of inclusion, integration, employment and self-sufficiency. Projects may support short-term research relating to the development of methods, procedures and devices to assist in the provision of rehabilitation services, particularly to persons with severe disabilities. Others support information utilization and dissemination, including state-of-the-art assessments and diffusion centers, to ensure that knowledge generated from research is available and can be fully used to improve services, opportunities and conditions for persons with disabilities. Specifically, some DRRPs provide technical assistance and training to state and local governments

and private businesses regarding the ADA. DRRPs also include the Traumatic Brain Injury Model Systems and the Burn Injury Model Systems.

Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers

The Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTACs) are also responsible for providing technical assistance, disseminating information and providing training to individuals or entities with responsibilities and rights under the Act on the requirements of the ADA and developments in ADA case law, policy and implementation. The DBTACs are responsible for increasing the capacity of organizations at the state and local level to provide technical assistance, disseminate information, provide training and promote awareness of the ADA. The DBTACs also promote awareness of the ADA and the availability of services provided by the DBTACs, other NIDRR grantees working on ADA issues and other federal information sources on the ADA.

Small Business Innovative Research

Small Business Innovative Research projects support the development of ideas and projects that are useful to persons with disabilities by inviting the participation of small business firms with strong research capabilities in science, engineering, or educational technology. The program funds the process of taking an idea from development to market readiness.

Field-Initiated Projects

Field-Initiated Projects (FIPs) support research and development projects that address important activities that are not included in NIDRR's announced priorities, thereby allowing NIDRR to expand the scope of its research activities as needed, to be responsive to emerging developments in the field.

Mary E. Switzer Fellowships

This fellowship program supports one-year fellowships to highly qualified individuals to carry out discrete research activities that are related to NIDRR's research priorities or to pursue studies of importance to the rehabilitation community.

Advanced Rehabilitation Research Training Projects

Advanced Rehabilitation Research Training (ARRTs) Projects support grants to institutions providing advanced training in research to physicians, nurses, engineers, physical therapists and other professionals.

Model Spinal Cord Injury Systems

Model Spinal Cord Injury Systems (MSCIS) support projects that provide innovative and effective approaches to the delivery and evaluation of comprehensive medical, psychological, vocational and other rehabilitation services and conduct site-specific and

collaborative research to meet the wide range of needs of individuals with spinal cord injuries.

The allocation of NIDRR funds for fiscal years 1999 and 2000 is shown on Table 10 on the following page.

Following the publication of the 1997 report of the Institute of Medicine on disability and rehabilitation research, "Enabling America," NIDRR significantly enhanced its evaluation processes. In fiscal year 1999, a standing panel model was adopted for field-initiated competitions. In fiscal year 2000, NIDRR continued to utilize the standing panel model as well as explore additional enhancements to the program review process in order to raise the quality of research funded by the agency.

In fiscal year 1999, NIDRR also completed and published the Long-Range Plan for the years 1999 to 2003. This plan identified major priority areas for NIDRR, including Technology for Access and Function, Health and Function, Employment Outcomes, Community Integration and Independent Living. In addition, other important areas of focus were identified, including Capacity-Building, Disability Statistics and Knowledge Dissemination and Utilization. For each priority and focus area, a research agenda was identified. In fiscal year 2000, priorities established in the Long-Range Plan were incorporated into grant announcements to encourage innovative research in those important areas.

**NIDRR Funded Centers and Projects
Fiscal Years 1999 and 2000
Table 10**

	Number of Awards 1999	Grants Amount	Number of Awards 2000	Grants Amount
RRTCs				
Continuations	31	\$23,300,000	33	\$21,248,000
New Awards	7	\$3,050,000	5	\$2,820,000
Total	38	\$26,350,000	38	\$24,068,000
RERCs				
Continuations	11	\$9,900,000	13	\$11,890,000
New Awards	4	\$750,000	2	\$1,300,000
Total	13	\$10,650,000	15	\$13,190,000
Disability and Rehabilitation Research and Related Projects				
Continuations	32	\$10,000,000	38	\$11,888,000
New Awards	9	\$1,350,000	8	\$5,181,000
Total	41	\$17,450,000	46	\$17,450,000
DBTACs				
Continuations	10	\$6,100,000	10	\$6,415,000
Small Business Innovative Research		\$1,600,000		\$1,409,000
Field-Initiated Research				
Continuations	57	\$6,625,000	56	\$7,614,000
New Awards	30	\$4,500,000	29	\$4,410,000
Total	87	\$11,125,000	85	\$12,024,000
Mary Switzer Fellowships				
New Awards	10	\$450,000	10	\$490,000
Research Training Grants				
Continuations	7	\$1,500,000	12	\$1,768,000
New Awards	5	\$450,000	2	\$288,000
Total	13	\$1,950,000	14	\$2,056,000
Spinal Cord Injury Centers				
Continuations	18	\$7,000,000	0	0
New Awards	0	0	15	\$5,415,000
Database	1	0	1	0
Total	19	\$7,000,000	17	\$5,415,000
Outreach to Minority Colleges and Universities				
New Awards	10	\$810,000	6	\$865,000

Advocacy, Enforcement and Compliance

Requirements under the Act call for continuous reviews of policies and practices related to the nondiscrimination and affirmative employment of individuals with disabilities and their access to facilities and information. To carry out the responsibilities stemming from those requirements, RSA funds and supports a number of advocacy and advisory programs operating at national and state levels. Such programs conduct periodic reviews of existing employment policies and practices and develop and recommend policies and procedures that facilitate the nondiscrimination and affirmative employment of individuals who have received rehabilitation services to ensure compliance with standards prescribed by Congressional legislation.

Advocacy programs also develop advisory information and provide appropriate training and technical assistance, as well as make recommendations to the President, the Congress and the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

Several programs established under the Act have been given the authority to go beyond dispensing advisory and advocacy services. Agencies administering these programs use enforcement and compliance techniques to ensure that government agencies and private firms doing business with the government subscribe to and implement legislative provisions related to the employment of individuals with disabilities. These enforcement agencies review complaints, conduct investigations, conduct public hearings and issue orders. These agencies participate or appear, when necessary, as amicus curiae in any United States or state courts in civil actions. They design appropriate and equitable affirmative action remedies. Orders of compliance may include the withholding of or suspension of federal funds.

Client Assistance Program Program Administration Division Section 112

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) provides grants to states for services to assist eligible individuals and applicants of the State VR Services Program and other programs, projects and services funded under the Act.

Services are provided to help eligible individuals and applicants understand the services and benefits available under the Act and to advise them of their rights and responsibilities in connection with those benefits. Assistance may also be provided to help eligible individuals and applicants in their relationships with those entities providing services under the Act, including assistance and advocacy in pursuing legal and administrative remedies to ensure the protection of their rights. State VR agencies must inform VR consumers about the services available from the CAP and how to contact the

**Federal Funding
2000 \$10,928,000**

CAP. States must operate a CAP in order to receive state VR grant funds. There are currently 56 CAPs operating around the country.

Each governor designates a public or a private agency to operate a CAP. This designated agency must be independent of any agency that provides services under the Act, except in cases where the Act “grandfathered” CAPs already housed within state agencies providing services. In the event that one of these state agencies providing services under the Act restructures, the Act requires the governor to redesignate the CAP in an agency that does not provide services under the Act.

CAPs also conduct systemic advocacy to benefit large numbers of individuals facing a similar issue. Systemic advocacy can take a variety of forms, but most often CAPs engage in discussions with state VR agencies and other programs funded under the Act to improve policies and procedures that affect the quality of the service delivery system.

For example, in fiscal year 2000, the Louisiana CAP successfully pressured Louisiana Rehabilitative Services (LRS) to revise a policy which had substantially limited the ability of many LRS consumers to pursue post-secondary education. The state of Louisiana awards TOP scholarships to the highest-achieving high school graduates throughout the state. Prior LRS policy required that LRS consumers bound for college use their TOP scholarships to pay their tuition. However, other restrictive LRS policies prohibited these consumers from receiving support for additional educational related expenses.

Through systemic and individual advocacy, CAP convinced LRS to revise this policy, permitting consumers to exercise choice in the use of TOPs scholarships for other educational related expenses. Consequently, these consumers are now eligible to receive LRS funding for tuition. CAP utilized a combination of strategies in order to bring about this change, including: collaboration with RSA; and the representation of individual clients, both in due process hearings and actions in state court.

Also, in fiscal year 1999, the Governor of Nevada instituted a personnel decision, which, in effect, required the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR) to hire industrial rehabilitation counselors possessing lesser qualifications than permitted by the Act. In fiscal year 2000, the Nevada CAP, through systemic advocacy, persuaded the Governor to change this policy, bringing it into conformity with the requirements of the Act. Thus, BVR now can fill vacancies with professional rehabilitation counselors eligible to sit for the Certified Counselor Examination.

Overall, in fiscal year 2000, CAPs nationwide responded to 58,600 requests for information and provided extensive services to 8,594 individuals. Slightly more than 93 percent of those cases in which extensive services were provided involved applicants for or recipients of services from the state VR program. In nearly 41 percent of those cases, issues related to the delivery of VR services.

Protection and Advocacy of Individual Rights Program Program Administration Division Section 509

The purpose of the Protection and Advocacy of Individual Rights Program (PAIR) is to provide assistance and information to eligible individuals with disabilities and conduct advocacy to ensure the protection of their rights under federal law. PAIR supports a system in each state to protect the legal and human rights of individuals with disabilities who are ineligible for protection and advocacy services provided under Part C of the Developmental Disabilities and Bill of Rights Act of 2000, the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness Act, or who need protection and advocacy services that are beyond the scope of the CAP.

Federal Funding
2000 \$11,894,000

States use PAIR funds to plan and carry out protection and advocacy programs for eligible individuals with disabilities and to develop outreach strategies to make individuals with disabilities aware of their rights. Funds must be set aside under this program for two activities before awarding grants to eligible states and outlying areas with the remaining appropriation. During any fiscal year in which the appropriation is equal to or exceeds \$5.5 million, the U.S. Department of Education Secretary must first set aside not less than 1.8 percent and not more than 2.2 percent of the amount appropriated for training and technical assistance to eligible systems established under this program.

Another requirement, if appropriations are sufficient (any fiscal year in which the total appropriation exceeds \$10.5 million), is that the Secretary must award \$50,000 to the eligible system established under the Developmental Disabilities Act to serve the American Indian consortium. The Secretary then distributes the remainder of the appropriation to the eligible systems within the states and outlying areas on a population basis after satisfying minimum allocations.

The Act also requires the Secretary to increase the minimum allotments for states and outlying areas by a percentage not greater than the percentage increase in the total amount appropriated for this program from the previous fiscal year when the level of the appropriation increases. The Act establishes a minimum allotment of \$100,000 for states or one-third of one percent of funds remaining after the technical assistance set-aside and grant for the American Indian consortium, whichever is greater. The outlying areas receive a minimum allotment of \$50,000.

As part of the protection and advocacy structure in each state and territory, the program investigates, negotiates, or mediates solutions to problems expressed by individuals with disabilities. It provides information and technical assistance to requesting individuals and organizations. PAIR also provides legal counsel and litigation services.

During fiscal year 2000, PAIR programs reported serving 78,900 individuals, including 11,800 cases and 67,143 non-cases (individuals provided with routine information or referral services). Of the cases handled by PAIR programs in that year, the greatest number of specified issues involved employment, education and architectural barriers.

Each year, PAIR programs, with public comment, must develop a statement of objectives and priorities, including a rationale for the selection of the objectives and priorities and a plan for achieving them. These objectives and priorities will define the issues that PAIR will work on during the year, thus defining the types of cases that PAIR will accept. These priorities and objectives cover a wide variety of issues that affect individuals with disabilities in their daily lives.

For example, in New York, Disability Advocates, Inc. (DAI) represented the plaintiffs in *Pallozzi V. Allstate Life Insurance Co.*, a lawsuit filed in Federal District Court alleging that Allstate had improperly denied a married couple with a history of mental illness a life insurance policy in violation of Title III of the ADA. The District Court dismissed the suit and DAI appealed on behalf of the plaintiffs to the Second Circuit Court of Appeals. In fiscal year 2000, the Second Circuit reversed the lower court ruling, holding that Congress had clearly intended to provide a clear and comprehensive mandate for the elimination of discrimination based on disabilities. The Court further found that Congress had explicitly prohibited insurance companies from denying policies to persons with disabilities based on their disabilities. The issue of whether the ADA applies to insurance companies has been hotly contested throughout the courts and this decision is expected to affect the practices of insurance companies nationwide.

Also, in South Carolina, Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities, Inc. (PandA) was approached by several deaf parents who were being denied the right to effective communication during meetings with school district officials regarding their children. The PandA educated district officials regarding their obligations under the ADA to provide effective communication. As a result of these efforts the district has ended its practice of denying effective communication to deaf parents.

Employment of People with Disabilities in the Federal Government Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Section 501

The Act authorizes the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to enforce the nondiscrimination and affirmative employment provisions of laws and regulations concerning the employment of individuals with disabilities. As part of its oversight responsibilities, EEOC conducts onsite reviews of federal agency affirmative action employment programs. Based on its findings, the agency submits findings and recommendations for federal agency implementation. The EEOC then monitors the implementation of these findings and recommendations by performing follow-up onsite reviews.

Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board Access Board Section 502

Section 502 of the Act created the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, also known as the Access Board. The Access Board is charged with ensuring federal agency compliance with the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA), and developing accessibility requirements under other laws. Section 502 lays out the duties of the Board under the ABA, which include: ensuring compliance with standards issued under the ABA, developing and maintaining guidelines upon which the standards are based and promoting access throughout all segments of society. The Access Board also has the primary responsibility for developing and maintaining accessibility guidelines under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These include guidelines for facilities and transportation vehicles covered by the ADA. Under the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the Access Board is also responsible for developing and periodically updating guidelines that ensure access to various telecommunication products.

Composed of 25 members, the Access Board is structured to function as a representative of the general public and as a coordinating body among federal agencies. Twelve of its members are senior managers from federal departments; the other thirteen are private citizens appointed by the president. Key responsibilities of the Access Board include: developing and maintaining accessibility requirements for the built environment, transit vehicles, telecommunications equipment and for electronic and information technology; providing technical assistance and training on these guidelines and standards; and enforcing accessibility standards for federally funded facilities.

The 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act expanded the Access Board's role and gave it responsibility for developing access standards for electronic and information technology under Section 508 of the Act. Information regarding those standards and the expanded role of the Access Board is provided in the description of Section 508. The Access Board provides training and technical assistance on all its guidelines and standards.

With its publications, hotline and training sessions, the Access Board also provides a range of services to private as well as public organizations. In addition, the Board enforces the provisions of the ABA through the investigation of complaints. The law requires access to facilities designed, built, altered, or leased with federal funds. The Access Board conducts its investigations through the responsible federal agencies and strives for amicable resolution of complaints.

Electronic and Information Technology Office of the Secretary, Department of Education Section 508

Section 508 of the Act requires federal agencies when they develop, procure, maintain, or use electronic and information technology to ensure that disabled employees and members of the public have access to information that is comparable to the access available to others. The intention is to eliminate barriers in information technology, make new opportunities available for individuals with disabilities and encourage development of technologies that will help achieve these goals.

The 1998 Amendments charge the Access Board with responsibility for developing electronic and information standards to support effective implementation of Section 508. In July of fiscal year 2000, President Clinton signed into law a military appropriations bill that included an amendment to Section 508. Under the new amendment, the effective date of Section 508's enforcement provisions was delayed to allow more time for compliance with the Access Board's standards once they become final. The amended language revises the effective date of the enforcement provisions to six months from publication of the Access Board's final standards.

The Section 508 standards, published in final form by the Access Board in December 2000, cover electronic and information technology including computers, software and electronic office equipment. They provide criteria that spell out what makes these products accessible to people with disabilities, including those with vision, hearing, speech and mobility impairments. The new standards provide technical criteria specific to various types of technologies and performance-based requirements, which focus on the functional capabilities of covered technologies. Specific criteria cover software applications and operating systems; web-based information or applications; telecommunications functions; video or multi-media products; self contained, closed products such as information kiosks and transaction machines and computers. Also covered is compatibility with adaptive equipment people with disabilities commonly use for information and communication access.

Sub-part B of the Section 508 standards are organized into six sections:

- Software applications and operating systems
- Web-based Intranet and Internet information and applications
- Telecommunications products
- Video and multi-media products
- Self-contained, closed products
- Desktop and portable computers

Title II of the Assistive Technology Act requires the Access Board to provide training and technical assistance to state entities on Section 508. In addition, NIDRR has funded various projects to provide technical assistance to state entities. In addition, the

Access Board and the General Services Administration (GSA) provide training and technical assistance to federal entities. Final standards will be incorporated into the federal government's procurement regulations.

The Department of Education, Office of Chief Information Officer (OCIO), also plays a lead role in the implementation of Section 508. OCIO worked closely with GSA to establish FITAI and the OCIO Assistive Technology Team devoted both resources and staff to the effort. In fiscal year 2000, OCIO, in partnership with the Office of Management and Budget, established the Section 508 Executive Steering Committee, an executive level forum made up of representatives from eight major federal departments and agencies. This group developed technical guidance, procurement-related FAQ's, Section 508 coordinators' guidelines, an industry-approved Section 508 compatibility and conformance template and a website where all this information is available to federal agencies, industry and the general public. In addition, the OCIO Assistive Technology Team delivered over 50 assistive technology workshops, presentations and demonstrations to other federal agencies, to state and local educational institutions and at assistive technology and information technology industry seminars and conferences.

In fiscal year 2000, the Department provided a five-year, \$7.5 million grant to the Georgia Institute of Technology's Center for Rehabilitation Technology. This grant will provide training and technical assistance on universal design to technology manufacturers, product designers and purchasers of information technology to help facilitate implementation of Section 508.

**Federal Contracts Compliance Programs for Individuals with Disabilities,
U.S. Department of Labor
Employment Standards Administration
Section 503**

Using up-front affirmative action methods, the Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Program (OFCCP) looks into the employment practices of employers with federal contracts or subcontracts to make sure they do not discriminate against individuals with disabilities. Where such barriers are disclosed, the contractor, as part of its contractual obligation, must take corrective action. OFCCP investigators conduct several thousand or more compliance reviews and investigate hundreds of complaints each year. OFCCP also issues policy guidance to private companies and develops innovative ways to gain compliance with the law.

**Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted and Federally Conducted
Programs and Activities**
Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division
Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights
Section 504

Section 504 prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in federally assisted programs and activities. This provision of the Act is designed to protect the rights of any person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment. Major life activities include walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, caring for oneself and performing manual tasks.

The U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division (CRD) has overall responsibility for enforcing compliance with Section 504 of the Act. As part of its regulatory and review efforts, the CRD responds to ad hoc requests from federal agencies on their disability rights regulations and contributes to the Access Board's continuing development of the guidelines for the accessible design of facilities subject to the Architectural Barriers Act or the ADA.

The CRD also participates in the delivery of technical assistance to improve disability rights enforcement programs, promote interagency information sharing and cooperation and eliminate redundant requirements.

In conjunction with the CRD, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in the U.S. Department of Education has responsibility for enforcing Section 504 of the Act for federally-funded education programs. Specifically, Section 504 applies to all programs, projects and activities funded by the Department of Education, including all education agencies, elementary and secondary school systems, colleges and universities, vocational schools, proprietary schools, state VR agencies, libraries and museums. Such programs, projects or activities may include, but are not limited to: admissions, recruitment, financial aid, academic programs, student treatment and services, counseling and guidance, discipline, classroom assignment, grading, vocational education, recreation, physical education, athletics, housing and employment.

Examples of the types of discrimination prohibited by Section 504 include access to educational programs and facilities, denial of a free appropriate public education for elementary and secondary students and academic adjustments in higher education. Section 504 also prohibits employment discrimination and retaliation for filing an OCR complaint or for advocating for a right protected by this provision of the law.

National Council on Disability Section 400

As an independent agency, the National Council on Disability (NCD) promotes policies, programs and procedures that guarantee equal opportunity for all individuals with disabilities that lead to their economic self-sufficiency, independent living and inclusion and integration into all aspects of society. More specifically, the NCD reviews and evaluates laws, policies, programs, practices and procedures at all levels to see if they meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. The Council makes recommendations to the President, the Congress, the Secretary of Education, RSA's Commissioner and officials of federal agencies based on those evaluations.

In fiscal year 2000, the Council conducted a number of activities designed to increase consumer input and awareness regarding policy issues affecting individuals with disabilities. Those activities included dissemination of information through the conduct of hearings, forums and conferences throughout the country and through response to thousands of telephone, e-mail and written inquiries on ADA and other disability civil rights issues.

During fiscal year 2000, NCD continued its Disability Civil Rights Monitoring Project and released three independent analyses of federal enforcement of disability civil rights laws: ***Enforcing the Civil Rights of Air Travelers with Disabilities; Back to School on Civil Rights*** and ***Promises to Keep: A Decade of Federal Enforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act***. The Council also released the following reports that same year: ***Implementation of the National Voter Registration Act by State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies; From Privileges to Rights: People with Disabilities Speak for Themselves; National Disability Policy: A Progress Report*** and ***Federal Barriers to Assistive Technology***.