

# **Planning For the Future**

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In its Operational Plan for fiscal year 2001, RSA set out to accomplish five major strategic objectives through a broad range of program activities. The five strategic objectives are designed to: promote improved and expanded employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities; ensure the effective and efficient implementation of the 1998 Amendments; conduct monitoring of and provide technical assistance to RSA-funded programs to ensure effective program management and strengthen accountability; promote excellence in rehabilitation practices through national leadership activities; and promote accomplishments of VR programs.

### Improve Employment Opportunities

RSA plans to engage in four sets of program activities to improve employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. First, the agency will continue to facilitate key linkages between WIA and the Act to optimize effectiveness of state VR agency services and programs in a WIA environment. The agency will convene workgroup meetings, conduct monthly teleconferences with RSA and WIA liaisons, conduct meetings with the Department of Labor's ETA staff to discuss and resolve implementation issues and help state VR agencies improve their performance in the one-stop centers. Second, RSA will facilitate state and Tribal VR agency involvement in the Welfare-to-Work and TANF programs to help former welfare recipients with disabilities achieve quality employment outcomes.

Next, RSA plans to develop and distribute information describing effective practices, model cooperative agreements and policies regarding school-to-work programs and transition services, including those operated by Tribal VR agencies. Finally, RSA will establish and maintain linkages with the SSA, the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and the Consortia of Administrators of Native American Rehabilitation to facilitate effective implementation of TWWIA.

### Implement Reauthorization Changes

The agency plans to revise current systems, policies and procedures, as needed to ensure the 1998 Amendments are effectively implemented. To that end, RSA will conduct briefings and training sessions on new Part 361 regulations.

In addition, RSA plans to continue to monitor state VR agency performance against the two Title I evaluation standards established for the State VR Services Program. The agency also plans to implement a third evaluation standard under Section 106 of the Act: **Standard 3: Acquisition and Retention of Employment with Increases in**

**Earnings.** Implementation of Standard 3, however, rests heavily on state VR agency ability to use the unemployment insurance wage databases that will provide data for Standard 3 indicators. Should state agencies encounter significant difficulties in obtaining unemployment insurance wage data, implementation of Standard 3 will be adversely affected.

## Monitor and Provide Technical Assistance

RSA will continue to conduct reviews and on-site monitoring, using the Monitoring and Technical Assistance Guide as its uniform monitoring instrument. As in previous years, RSA has selected focus areas to determine the level of implementation of specific requirements and national initiatives on a state-by-state basis and to assess the nature and scope of technical assistance needed by the VR program.

For fiscal year 2001, RSA selected four focus areas:

- **State VR agency in the Workforce Investment Act and the impact on eligible individuals with disabilities.** RSA review and monitoring activities will initially assess statewide workforce investment policies and issues and then gradually focus on the impact of WIA at the local level.
- **Evaluation standards and performance indicators.** RSA will review performance of state VR agencies on the evaluation standards and performance indicators published in final regulations in fiscal year 2000.
- **Comprehensive system of personnel development.** RSA reviewers will determine if a state VR agency has established a personnel development standard for VR counselors that complies with the provisions of the Act and assess progress toward meeting that standard.
- **Eligibility determination process.** RSA will use a service review instrument to monitor state VR agency practices in determining the eligibility of individuals with disabilities.

In addition to conducting reviews and monitoring activities, RSA will update the Monitoring and Technical Assistance Guide, develop and issue guidance to state VR agencies on the use of the Standards and Indicators Performance Report and on the development of Program Improvement Plans and strengthen the management of its monitoring and technical assistance system.

## Promote Excellence in Rehabilitation Practices

In fiscal year 2001, RSA will promote excellence in the vocational rehabilitation program through national conferences, forums and the delivery of training and technical

assistance. The agency will conduct the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Rehabilitation Education Conference and plan for the 12<sup>th</sup> annual conference. In conjunction with CSAVR, RSA will continue funding activities of the Institute on Rehabilitation Issues (IRI), including forums, publishing and disseminating documents and conducting continuing education activities. In conjunction with the ETA, RSA will be actively involved in planning and conducting the Joint Employment and Training Technology Conference. The agency will also host the fiscal year 2001 National Financial Management Conference, which marks the second national training conference for the leadership and key personnel employed at state-operated comprehensive rehabilitation centers and the Annual American Indian Rehabilitation Conference.

RSA will also continue its efforts to improve services to individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds. The agency will provide training and technical assistance to minority institutions and organizations to make it easier for individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds to gain access to VR services. Training and technical assistance activities will also focus on expanding the capacity of those institutions and organizations to successfully compete for discretionary grants and establish effective cooperative agreements.

### **Showcase Accomplishments of VR Programs**

To accomplish this objective, RSA will, in conjunction with CSAVR, develop a brochure and exhibit to increase visibility and showcase accomplishments of VR programs under the Act. The agency will also develop appropriate materials and conduct necessary forums to disseminate findings of the Longitudinal Study, beginning with a conference that will be scheduled for fiscal year 2001. Finally, RSA will disseminate a consumer's guide to the Rehabilitation Act and other related brochures.