

# Archived Information

## PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

**Goal: Provide leadership in promoting the employment and independence of individuals with disabilities and in assisting states and providers of service under the Rehabilitation Act.**

**Relationship of Program to Volume 1, Department-wide Objectives:** This objective supports Strategic Plan Goal 3.4 ensuring access to services that provide adults with disabilities the opportunity to strengthen their skills and improve their earning power over their lifetime.

FY 2000—\$1,900,000

FY 2001—\$1,900,000(Requested budget)

OBJECTIVE 1: PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ENABLE AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDING SERVICES UNDER THE REHABILITATION ACT TO BETTER ASSIST INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN OBTAINING MEANINGFUL AND GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT AND INDEPENDENT LIVING.

**Indicator 1.1 Successful Technical Assistance: Beneficiaries of technical assistance under the contracted technical assistance project will report that the outcome of the technical assistance which they received was successful in resolving the problem identified in the beneficiary's technical assistance request, and that the efforts completed fulfilled their expectations.**

Targets and Performance Data	Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
<p><b>Actual Performance</b> Performance baseline will be established in FY 2000.</p> <p><b>Performance Targets</b> New program plan; no targets established</p>	<p><b>Status:</b> Technical Assistance Center began operating in mid-fiscal year 1998. Data from TA projects completed through FY 2000 will be examined to establish a performance baseline and performance targets for future years.</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Newly established program performance plan and indicator. Information obtained from the Technical Assistance Center's followup survey of TA beneficiaries will be used to assess performance. The survey will measure on a scale of 1 to 5 (where a rating of 5 is "completely" and a rating of 1 is "not at all") the extent to which the outcome of the TA was successful in the solving the problem identified in the beneficiary's proposal, and the extent to which the TA fulfilled the beneficiary's expectations.</p>	<p><b>Source:</b> Performance appraisal reports as completed by the beneficiaries of the technical assistance delivery process. <i>Frequency:</i> Average project rating will be calculated annually. <i>Next Update:</i> September 30, 2000.</p> <p><b>Validation Procedure:</b> The Rehabilitation Services Administration's (RSA's) technical assistance contractor, DTI, Inc., as well as staff from RSA's central and regional offices will perform followup verification to investigate the cause of weak ratings and to assure satisfactory project outcomes.</p> <p><b>Limitations of Data and Planned Improvements:</b> Limitations include small number of projects; objectivity of rater/self-reporting mechanism; and variation in complexity, scope, cost, and duration of TA project. Revised reporting mechanism will designate a certain score as the minimal level for acceptable performance.</p>

## **KEY STRATEGIES**

### Strategies Continued from 1999

Not applicable.

### New or Strengthened Strategies

- ❖ To increase the effectiveness of TA, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) will develop strategies and methods that will assist state VR agencies in conducting appropriate assessments of their performance strengths and weaknesses.
- ❖ To increase the effectiveness of TA, RSA will improve processes for identifying state VR agencies with the greatest need for technical assistance.
- ❖ To increase the impact of TA efforts, RSA will develop priorities for targeting technical assistance projects, so that the most critical or nationally significant problem areas receive primary attention.

## **HOW THIS PROGRAM COORDINATES WITH OTHER FEDERAL ACTIVITIES**

Examples of how projects supported with funds available under the Program Improvement Program have coordinated with other Federal activities to achieve project objectives are listed below:

- ❖ To provide opportunities for the exchange of information about successful independent living (IL) programs or services, to better identify and disseminate model approaches, and to develop strategies to address important IL issues, RSA, in conjunction with the Social Security Administration, convened an international conference of selected experts.
- ❖ To expand opportunities and options for people with cognitive disabilities, RSA supported the design, development, and reproduction of certain educational and informational materials to promote the objectives of Project Employ, an initiative of the President's Committee on Employment of People With Disabilities.
- ❖ To support opportunities for careers in the arts for people with disabilities, RSA, as a followup to the jointly sponsored National Forum on Careers in the Arts, supported a followup conference of selected forum participants to identify specific action steps for implementing recommendations from the forum, in coordination with the National Endowment for the Arts, the Social Security Administration, and the Administration on Developmental Disabilities within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- ❖ To better explore employment and other related issues particularly affecting women with disabilities, RSA has jointly sponsored a series of conferences at various locations throughout the country, including an Indian reservation, in partnership with the Social Security Administration.
- ❖ To establish a process by which deaf and hard-of-hearing consumers of vocational rehabilitation services in rural areas can obtain more extensive employment services through the use of remote sign language interpreting and computer-aided real-time captioning at workforce center sites, RSA has provided support for a project to demonstrate the utility of video-conferencing technology, in conjunction with funding from the U.S. Department of Labor.

## **CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVING PROGRAM GOAL**

- ❖ Because of the high degree of autonomy allowed within the joint state/Federal vocational rehabilitation program for state vocational rehabilitation agencies, it is difficult to assure continuing and effective utilization of the improved practices and technologies that are introduced through the delivery of technical assistance.
- ❖ Prolonged time spans separating project completion from observable outcomes can sometimes forestall the identification of effective remedial efforts.
- ❖ The variety of environments arising from the differences among the structures of state governments, as well as the differences in the economies and demographics of individual states, necessitates shaping program improvement initiatives to suit a range of conditions, and reduces the Federal capacity to take uniform and concerted action in a single direction.

## **INDICATOR CHANGES**

### **From FY 1999 Annual Plan (two years old)**

Adjusted—Not applicable.

Dropped—Not applicable.

### **From FY 2000 Annual Plan (last year's)**

Adjusted—Not applicable.

Dropped—Not applicable.

New—Not applicable.