

individuals with disabilities, unless there is a valid reason for an executive session; and

(2) Conduct forums or hearings, as appropriate, that are publicly announced, open, and accessible to the public, including individuals with disabilities.

(k) *Compensation.* Funds appropriated under Title I of the Act, except funds to carry out sections 112 and 121 of the Act, may be used to compensate and reimburse the expenses of Council members in accordance with section 105(g) of the Act.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1820-0500)

(Authority: Section 105 of the Act; 29 U.S.C. 725)

[66 FR 4382, Jan. 17, 2001, as amended at 66 FR 7253, Jan. 22, 2001]

**§ 361.18 Comprehensive system of personnel development.**

The State plan must describe the procedures and activities the State agency will undertake to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified rehabilitation personnel, including professionals and paraprofessionals, for the designated State unit. If the State agency has a State Rehabilitation Council, this description must, at a minimum, specify that the Council has an opportunity to review and comment on the development of plans, policies, and procedures necessary to meet the requirements of paragraphs (b) through (d) of this section. This description must also conform with the following requirements:

(a) *Data system on personnel and personnel development.* The State plan must describe the development and maintenance of a system by the State agency for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs and personnel development, in accordance with the following requirements:

(1) Data on qualified personnel needs must include—

(i) The number of personnel who are employed by the State agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in relation to the number of

individuals served, broken down by personnel category;

(ii) The number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services, broken down by personnel category; and

(iii) Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the State agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services in the State in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

(2) Data on personnel development must include—

(i) A list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by type of program;

(ii) The number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and

(iii) The number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

(b) *Plan for recruitment, preparation, and retention of qualified personnel.* The State plan must describe the development, updating, and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for personnel who are qualified in accordance with paragraph (c) of this section. The plan must identify the personnel needs based on the data collection and analysis system described in paragraph (a) of this section and must provide for the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated State unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified in accordance with paragraph (c) of this section, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

(c) *Personnel standards.*

(1) The State plan must include the State agency's policies and describe the procedures the State agency will undertake to establish and maintain standards to ensure that all professional and paraprofessional personnel needed within the designated State unit to carry out this part are appropriately and adequately prepared and trained, including—

(i) Standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, or registration requirements, or, in the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including State personnel requirements) that apply to the profession or discipline in which that category of personnel is providing vocational rehabilitation services; and

(ii) To the extent that existing standards are not based on the highest requirements in the State, the steps the State is currently taking and the steps the State plans to take to retrain or hire personnel to meet standards that are based on the highest requirements in the State, including measures to notify State unit personnel, the institutions of higher education identified under paragraph (a)(2)(i) of this section, and other public agencies of these steps and the timelines for taking each step. The steps taken by the State unit under this paragraph must be described in a written plan that includes—

(A) Specific strategies for retraining, recruiting, and hiring personnel;

(B) The specific time period by which all State unit personnel will meet the standards described in paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section;

(C) Procedures for evaluating the State unit's progress in hiring or retraining personnel to meet applicable personnel standards within the time period established under paragraph (c)(1)(ii)(B) of this section; and

(D) In instances in which the State unit is unable to immediately hire new personnel who meet the requirements in paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section, the initial minimum qualifications that the designated State unit will require of newly hired personnel and a plan for training those individuals to meet applicable requirements within

the time period established under paragraph (c)(1)(ii)(B) of this section.

(2) As used in this section—

(i) *Highest requirements in the State applicable to that profession or discipline* means the highest entry-level academic degree needed for any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or, in the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements that apply to that profession or discipline. The current requirements of all State statutes and regulations of other agencies in the State applicable to that profession or discipline must be considered and must be kept on file by the designated State unit and available to the public.

(ii) *Profession or discipline* means a specific occupational category, including any paraprofessional occupational category, that—

(A) Provides rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities;

(B) Has been established or designated by the State unit; and

(C) Has a specified scope of responsibility.

(d) *Staff development.*

(1) The State plan must include the State agency's policies and describe the procedures and activities the State agency will undertake to ensure that all personnel employed by the State unit receive appropriate and adequate training, including a description of—

(i) A system of staff development for rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals within the State unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology; and

(ii) Procedures for acquiring and disseminating to rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated State unit significant knowledge from research and other sources.

(2) The specific training areas for staff development must be based on the needs of each State unit and may include, but are not limited to—

(i) Training regarding the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and the amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 made by the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998;

(ii) Training with respect to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and Social Security work incentive programs, including programs under the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999, training to facilitate informed choice under this program, and training to improve the provision of services to culturally diverse populations; and

(iii) Activities related to—

- (A) Recruitment and retention of qualified rehabilitation personnel;
- (B) Succession planning; and
- (C) Leadership development and capacity building.

(e) *Personnel to address individual communication needs.* The State plan must describe how the State unit—

(1) Includes among its personnel, or obtains the services of, individuals able to communicate in the native languages of applicants and eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability; and

(2) Includes among its personnel, or obtains the services of, individuals able to communicate with applicants and eligible individuals in appropriate modes of communication.

(f) *Coordination with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.* The State plan must describe the procedures and activities the State agency will undertake to coordinate its comprehensive system of personnel development under the Act with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

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(Authority: Section 101(a)(7) of the Act; 29 U.S.C. 721(a)(7))

[66 FR 4382, Jan. 17, 2001, as amended at 66 FR 7253, Jan. 22, 2001]

**§ 361.19 Affirmative action for individuals with disabilities.**

The State plan must assure that the State agency takes affirmative action to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities covered under and on the same terms

and conditions as stated in section 503 of the Act.

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(Authority: Section 101(a)(6)(B) of the Act; 29 U.S.C. 721(a)(6)(B))

[66 FR 4382, Jan. 17, 2001, as amended at 66 FR 7253, Jan. 22, 2001]

**§ 361.20 Public participation requirements.**

(a) *Conduct of public meetings.* The State plan must assure that prior to the adoption of any substantive policies or procedures governing the provision of vocational rehabilitation services under the State plan, including making any substantive amendments to the policies and procedures, the designated State agency conducts public meetings throughout the State to provide the public, including individuals with disabilities, an opportunity to comment on the policies or procedures.

(b) *Notice requirements.* The State plan must assure that the designated State agency, prior to conducting the public meetings, provides appropriate and sufficient notice throughout the State of the meetings in accordance with—

(1) State law governing public meetings; or

(2) In the absence of State law governing public meetings, procedures developed by the designated State agency in consultation with the State Rehabilitation Council.

(c) *Summary of input of the State Rehabilitation Council.* The State plan must provide a summary of the input of the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State agency has a Council, into the State plan and any amendment to the plan, in accordance with § 361.16(a)(2)(v).

(d) *Special consultation requirements.* The State plan must assure that the State agency actively consults with the director of the Client Assistance Program, the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State agency has a Council, and, as appropriate, Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and native Hawaiian organizations on its policies and procedures governing the provision of vocational rehabilitation services under the State plan.