

Programs Under The Rehabilitation Act

RSA funds directly or, through partnerships with other federal and nonfederal agencies, supports close to 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, a description of the discrete programs and/or initiatives under that category is provided. Each program description includes a budget allocation for fiscal years 1998 and 1999, changes related to the 1998 Amendments and a summary of major outcomes and accomplishments.

Employment

- State VR Services
- State Supported Employment Services
- American Indian VR Services
- Demonstration and Training
- Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers
- 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

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.

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

Federal Funding	
1998	\$2,231,528,000
1999	\$2,287,128,000

The State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program assists states in operating a statewide, comprehensive, coordinated, effective, efficient and accountable VR program as an integral part of a statewide workforce investment system. The program is designed to assess, plan, develop and provide VR

services for individuals with disabilities so that those individuals may prepare for, engage in and maintain gainful employment consistent with their strengths, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities and interests.

This formula grant program provides financial assistance to states to assist in covering 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, 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.

Nationwide there are 56 general and combined agencies, which are agencies serving all individuals with disabilities in the state and agencies serving all individuals with disabilities except those who are blind or visually impaired; and 24 state agencies for the blind, which are agencies that provide services only for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. All states and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, Northern Marianas and American Samoa have VR agencies.

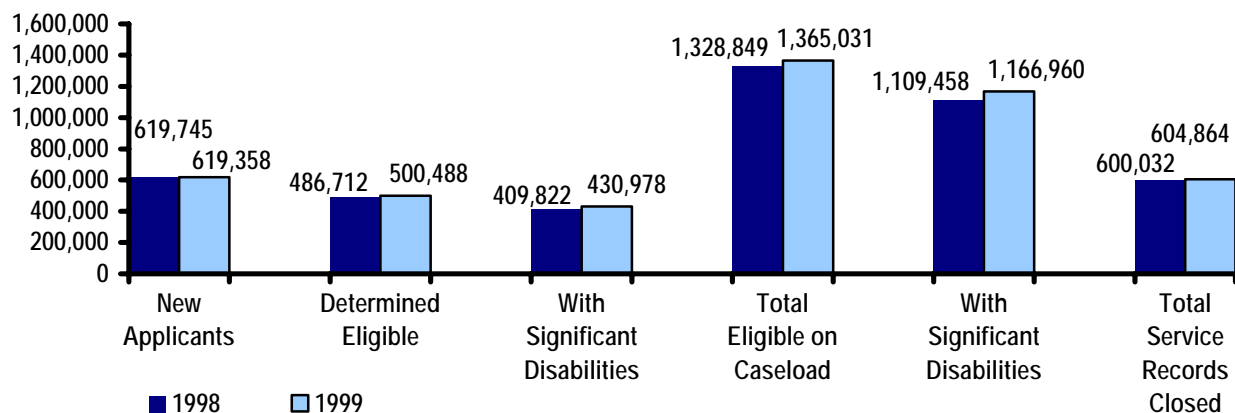
Across the nation, state VR agencies employ nearly 10,000 professional VR counselors who help individuals with disabilities prepare a plan for employment and obtain job training and placement services. The program may provide a variety of services, such

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 integration into society. Priority is given to serving individuals with the most significant disabilities.

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.

State VR agencies have been providing services to more than a million individuals with disabilities each year from 1995 through 1999. As shown in Chart 5 below, in both fiscal years 1998 and 1999, state VR agencies provided services to more than 1.3 million individuals according to data from the RSA 113 Report. In 1998, more than 83 percent of individuals receiving services from VR agencies nationwide had significant disabilities. In 1999, the number of individuals with significant disabilities who received services increased to more than 85 percent.

VR Program Caseload
Total Number of Consumers
Chart 5



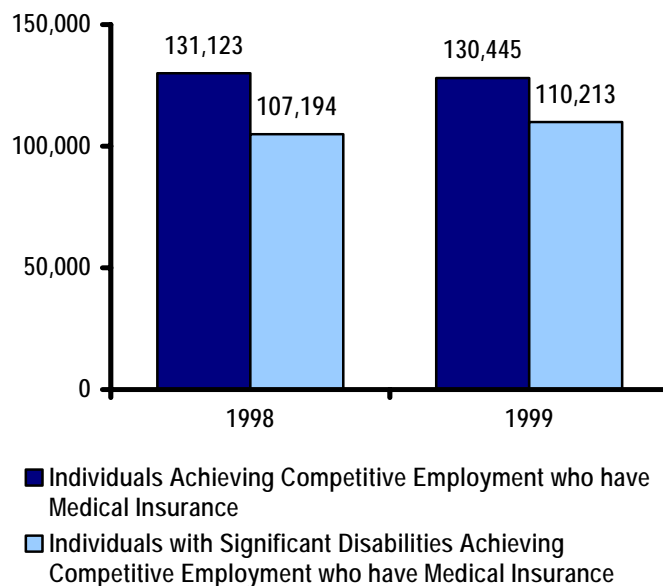
In fiscal years 1998 and 1999, well over half a million individuals with disabilities applied for VR services. Of those, state VR agencies, following the eligibility determination process, accepted more than three quarters of the applicants as eligible to participate in the VR program. Acceptance rates are the number of persons determined eligible for VR services as a percent of all applicants during that fiscal year.

The number of individuals with significant disabilities determined eligible for VR services rose from nearly 360,000 in fiscal year 1995 to more than 430,000 in fiscal year 1999.

They represented 76 percent of individuals with disabilities determined eligible for VR services in 1995, 84 percent in fiscal year 1998 and 86 percent in fiscal year 1999.

The number of individuals with disabilities who VR agencies determined not to be eligible for VR services declined from 151,715 in 1995 to 126,129 in 1998 and 116,858 in 1999. Of those individuals found ineligible for VR services, in 1998 and 1999 respectively, 3,472 and 3,162 individuals were determined too significantly disabled to benefit from VR services.

Number of Individuals Obtaining Competitive Employment With Medical Insurance
Chart 6



While RSA data indicate that the actual number of applicants to the state VR program did not increase significantly from 1998 to 1999, the number of employment outcomes did. In fact, competitive employment continued to be the primary outcome achieved by consumers, including individuals with significant disabilities. Based on data from the RSA 911 Report, as Chart 6 shows, in 1999 the number of individuals with significant disabilities who achieved competitive employment who have medical insurance as a benefit of the job increased from 1998.

In planning for the future, RSA will continue its leadership and guidance to state VR agencies to focus on high-quality outcomes, the provision of services to individuals with the most

significant disabilities and increased opportunities for consumer choice and involvement. A more detailed, state-by-state breakdown of information regarding outcomes of the State VR Services Program for fiscal years 1998 and 1999 has been provided in the Appendix to this report. Additional information is also available by calling the Basic State Grants Branch of RSA at (202) 245-7488.

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

Federal Funding	
1998	\$38,152,000
1999	\$38,152,000

The purpose of the State Supported Employment Services Program is to assist states in developing collaborative programs with appropriate public and private nonprofit organizations to provide supported employment services for individuals with the most significant disabilities. The program assists individuals with the most significant disabilities to achieve the employment outcome of supported employment. The term “*supported employment*” includes both individuals in competitive work and individuals working in an integrated setting toward competitive work. Individuals in competitive employment must earn at the least the minimum wage.

Supported employment placements are achieved by augmenting short-term VR services (supported employment services) with ongoing support provided by other public or nonprofit agencies or organizations (extended services). State VR agencies provide time-limited services for a period not to exceed 18 months, unless a longer period to achieve job stabilization has been established in the individualized plan for employment. Once this period has ended, the state VR agency must arrange for "extended services" provided by other appropriate state agencies, private nonprofit organizations or other sources for the duration of that employment.

An individual’s potential 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 VR program and the Title VI-B State Supported Employment Services Programs. 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. The number of individuals receiving funding for their supported employment services through the Title VI-B program from 1995 to 1999 increased by eight percent, while the number of individuals receiving funding for their supported employment services solely through the Title I program increased by 42 percent. Fiscal year 1999 data show that 49,228 individuals received funding for supported employment services solely under the Title I program and 39,046 received funding for supported employment services through the Title VI-B supplement. This reflects a six percent increase in fiscal year 1999 from fiscal year 1998 in the number of individuals who received funding for supported employment services through the Title VI-B program.

RSA data also demonstrate that in fiscal year 1999, 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 1999, slightly more than 72 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.

As state VR agencies serve an increasing number of individuals with significant disabilities, the number of individuals receiving supported employment services through Title I or Title VI-B will likely continue to increase.

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

Federal Funding	
1998	\$15,360,000
1999	\$17,283,000

The American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS) Program supports projects that deliver vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians with disabilities who live on or near the Indian reservation served by the project. The term “*reservation*” includes federal or state 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.

Projects under the program, funded through competitive grant awards for a period of up to five years, provide a broad range of VR services designed to assist American Indians with disabilities to prepare for, engage in and maintain employment. The AIVRS project provides services designed to meet the individual and unique needs of the American Indians residing on the reservation served by the project. Only the governing bodies of American Indian tribes or consortia of those governing bodies located on federal and state reservations may apply for funding under this program, and the applicants must show that effort will be made to provide a broad scope of VR services in a manner and at a level of quality comparable to those services provided by state VR agencies.

Number of Grants Funded			
Table 2			
Fiscal Year	Continuing Grants	New Grants	Total Grants
1996	32	3	35
1997	35	4	39
1998	38	11	47
1999	47	6	53

The AIVRS program is funded through a set-aside from funds allocated under Title I of the Act. As Table 2 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 set aside for the program. The 1998 Amendments increased the project period from three years to five years, providing more program stability.

As Table 3 shows, the number of American Indians with disabilities achieving employment outcomes increased from 530 in fiscal year 1997 to 679 in 1999. In addition, the percentage of American Indians with disabilities who received services through the program and obtained an employment outcome increased from 57 percent in 1998 to 61 percent in 1999.

Number of Individuals Achieving Employment Table 3		
Fiscal Year	Number Served	Number Achieving Employment
1997	2,617	530
1998	3,243	598
1999	3,071	679

Technical assistance from a variety of sources, including RSA, NIDRR and their grantees, supported the AIVRS projects in capacity building, training and research. Other initiatives are underway. 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, program officials hold 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.

In fiscal year 1999, RSA awarded a contract to initiate the first comprehensive evaluation of the AIVRS program. The study will 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 information obtained from the two-year study will assist RSA in evaluating program performance and developing appropriate strategies for program improvement.

Demonstration and Training Program Special Projects Division Section 303

Federal Funding	
1998	\$15,942,000
1999	\$14,942,000
* Reflects \$4 million transferred to NIDRR	

Each year, RSA provides financial assistance to state and other public and private agencies and organizations to expand and improve vocational rehabilitation services in their areas. A number of projects funded under this special demonstration program are usually directed at serving individuals who are members of unserved or underserved population groups.

The Demonstration and Training Program supports projects for up to 60 months. During that period, project managers design comprehensive services that can demonstrate the application of new procedures and the successful achievement of employment outcomes. As part of program activities, project managers document exemplary procedures and best practices for dissemination and replication that have the best potential of resolving or alleviating rehabilitation problems that are nationally significant or common to several states. Projects are designed to expand or improve vocational rehabilitation 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.

The 1998 Amendments broadened program mission, roles and project activities and placed activities from the Special Demonstration Programs, Section 802(g) and part of Section 803, under Section 303. The 1998 Amendments also shifted the responsibility of other programs to the Demonstration and Training Program. For example, Braille Training and Parent Training projects are now funded under this program.

Program Highlights	
8,856	individuals with disabilities served
3,509	individuals with disabilities placed
1,934	presentations to potential providers

Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers Program Special Projects Division Section 304

Federal Funding	
1998	\$2,350,000
1999	\$2,350,000

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

Funded projects in fiscal years 1998 and 1999 trained migrant and seasonal farm workers with disabilities in self-employment and 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 job

Number of Projects Funded and Individuals Served Table 4				
Fiscal Year	1996	1997	1998	1999
Total Projects Funded	9	11	14	14
Estimated Number of Individuals Served	6,600	8,000	9,000	9,500

providers to create opportunities for on-the-job training and job placement. As Table 4 demonstrates, although the number of projects funded under this program leveled off in fiscal year 1998, the estimated number of individuals served continued to rise each year from 6,600 in fiscal year 1996 to 9,500 in fiscal year 1999.

For program participants who wish to continue doing farm work 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 Program
Special Projects Division
Section 611-612**

Federal Funding	
1998	\$22,071,000
1999	\$22,071,000

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 rehabilitation process. 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 business and industrial corporations, community rehabilitation programs, labor organizations, trade associations and foundations. Grants are awarded for a period of up to five years and 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 standards and compliance indicators. Program compliance indicators place an emphasis on services to individuals who are considered most in need of PWI services due to their impaired capacity to obtain competitive employment. These indicators, established under program regulations, evaluate a project's performance in serving and placing individuals with significant disabilities and individuals who were unemployed at the time of project entry.

As Table 5 on the following page demonstrates, both the percentage of persons served who have significant disabilities and the percentage of persons served who were previously unemployed for at least six months at the time of project entry have increased annually since 1997. In fiscal year 1999, the percentage of individuals who were placed into employment by the program was 59 percent, an increase over the 1998 level of performance and the same as the 1997 level. For fiscal year 1999, PWI projects also reported that 87 percent of individuals served and 85 percent of individuals placed were individuals with significant disabilities. In addition, 70 percent of the individuals served and 69 percent of individuals placed had been unemployed at least six months at the time of project entry.

**Projects with Industry
Program Outcomes
Table 5**

Fiscal Year	1996	1997	1998	1999
Total projects funded	110	119	104	101
Total persons served (new this period)	19,336	19,109	13,811	13,726
Percentage served with significant disabilities	81%	82%	85%	87%
Percentage served who were unemployed 6 months or more	71%	65%	69%	70%
Percentage of total persons placed	62%	59%	49%	59%
Percentage with significant disabilities placed	79%	89%	84%	85%
Percentage of previously unemployed individuals placed	68%	66%	67%	69%

Fiscal year 1997 was the final year of the five-year period for 94 projects. Fiscal year 1998 was the first year of a new five-year project period for 87 projects.

In June 1998, RSA published proposed regulations governing the program compliance indicators in the Federal Register. The objective of the new regulations is to focus more on project outcomes and increase grantee accountability. In September 1999, technical amendments to the regulations were published. Final performance indicators for the program are expected early in fiscal year 2000. The 1998 Amendments also changed some of the program requirements, including information collection requirements.

In fiscal year 2000, RSA plans to initiate an evaluation study of the PWI program. The primary goals of the planned study are to identify the unique role that the PWI program plays in increasing the employment of individuals with disabilities, including an examination of its relationship to the state VR program, and to 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.

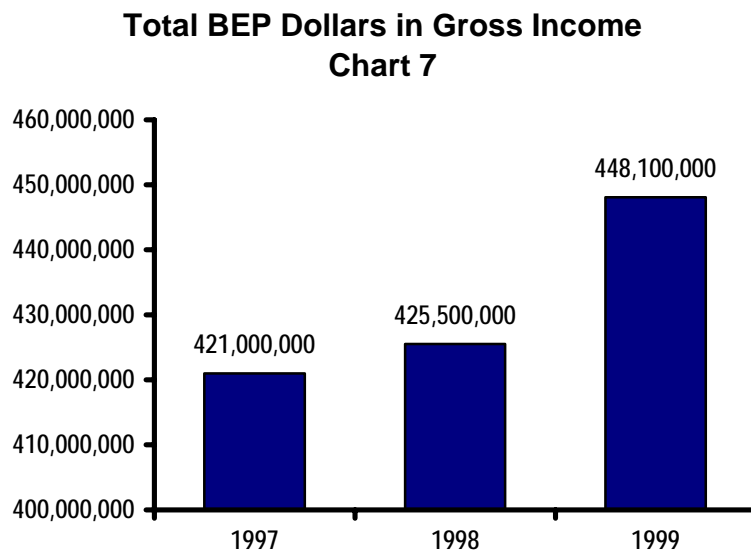
Business Enterprise Program Blind and Visually Impaired Division Section 103(b)

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) is authorized under Section 103(b) of the Act. Under the BEP program, state agencies can use funds under the State VR Services Program to support the Vending Facility Program, which is authorized under the Randolph Sheppard Act of 1936. 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.

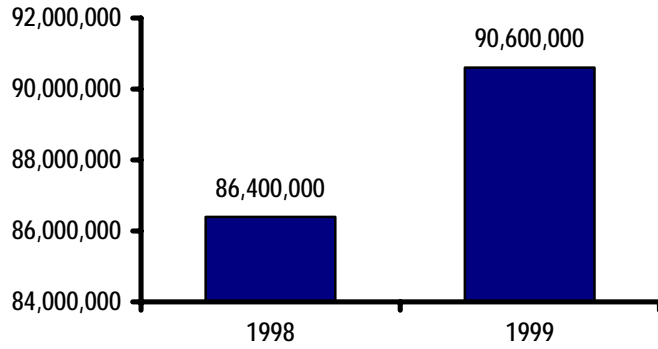
Supported by a combination of RSA program funds, state appropriations, federal vending machine income and levied set-asides from vendors, the BEP provides persons who are blind with remunerative employment and self-support through the operation of vending facilities on federal and other property. The 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. Since then, operations have expanded to include military mess halls, cafeterias, snack bars, miscellaneous shops and facilities comprised of vending machines. In recent years, the program has broadened to include state, county, municipal and private installations and interstate highway rest areas.

A primary focus of RSA is on increasing the number of vendors, the number of locations with facilities and the average annual earnings of vendors. Through standards and performance indicators RSA has established at the federal level, the agency is encouraging states to increase average earnings of individuals in the program. Average vendor earnings in 1998 were \$29,815, increasing in 1999 to \$32,544. As Chart 7 indicates, gross program earnings also rose each year since 1997.



Total Vendor Net Income
Chart 8



Nationally, total vendor net income increased from fiscal year 1998 to fiscal year 1999, as Chart 8 indicates. The number of vending facilities and the number of vendors operating vending facilities, on the other hand, decreased during the same two-year reporting period.

Independent Living and Community Integration

All programs and activities authorized under the Act are intended to promote independence for individuals with disabilities. However, the three grant programs described in this section of the report are specifically designed to maximize the leadership, empowerment and independence of individuals with disabilities, and to provide opportunities for inclusion and integration of those individuals into the mainstream of American society. Independent living programs provide financial assistance to provide, expand and improve independent living services; develop and support statewide networks of centers for independent living; and improve working relationships among state independent living rehabilitation programs, Centers for Independent Living, Statewide Independent Living Councils, Rehabilitation Act programs outside of Title VII and other relevant federal and non-federal programs.

Independent Living Services and Centers for Independent Living Programs Special Projects Division Title VII, Chapter I, Parts B and C

	Federal Funding	
	Section 711- Part B	Section 721-Part C
1998	\$21,859,000	\$45,205,000
1999	\$22,296,000	\$46,109,000

The goal of these two important programs is to maximize the leadership, empowerment, independence and productivity of individuals with disabilities, and to integrate these individuals into the

mainstream of American society. To be eligible for financial assistance under the Independent Living Program, a state administered formula grant program, 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 by the state agency and the SILC, and signed by both the director of the state agency and the chairperson of the SILC.

The Independent Living Program provides financial assistance to expand and improve independent living services; develop and support statewide networks of centers for independent living; and improve working relationships among state independent living rehabilitation programs, Centers for Independent Living, SILCs, Rehabilitation Act programs outside of Title VII and other relevant federal and non-federal programs.

The Centers for Independent Living Program provides grants for consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability, nonresidential, private nonprofit agencies that are designed and operated within a local community by individuals with disabilities and provide an array of independent living services.

At a minimum, independent living centers are required to provide the core services of information and referral, independent living skills training, peer counseling and individual and systems change advocacy. Most centers are also actively involved in providing one or more of the following services: community awareness programs; school-based peer counseling, role modeling and skills training; personal assistance services; transportation and training in use of public transportation vehicles and systems; and staging recreational events that integrate individuals with disabilities with their non-disabled peers.

The Act establishes a set of standards and assurances that centers for independent living must meet and requires RSA to develop and publish indicators of minimum compliance with those standards. 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 independent living goals 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, such as 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 meet program and fiscal

Program Accomplishments Fiscal Years 1998 and 1999

Based on data collected by RSA in the 704 Annual Performance Report, in fiscal year 1998, centers and SILCs nationwide served over 185,000 individuals with disabilities. These individuals received services in one or more of the following areas:

- 1,671 individuals were relocated from nursing homes or other institutions to community-based living arrangements
- 18,343 individuals received services that prevented the necessity of entering into nursing homes or other institutions
- 85,416 individuals received independent living skills training and life skills training
- 42,948 individuals received independent living services related to securing housing or shelter
- 33,732 individuals received services related to transportation
- 44,725 individuals received personal assistance services

In fiscal year 1999, centers and SILCs nationwide served 172,951 individuals with disabilities. These individuals received services in one or more of the following areas:

- 2,563 individuals were relocated from nursing homes or other institutions to community-based living arrangements
- 21,354 individuals received services that prevented the necessity of entering into nursing homes or other institutions
- 64,070 individuals received independent living skills training and life skills training
- 42,163 individuals received independent living services related to securing housing or shelter
- 31,015 individuals received services related to transportation
- 33,815 individuals received personal assistance services

standards and assurances. New centers in a state are funded, on a competitive basis, based on the availability of funds and the state's identification of unserved or underserved areas within the state.

Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who Are Blind Special Projects Division Title VII, Chapter 2

Federal Funding	
1998	\$10,950,000
1999	\$11,169,000

RSA authorizes discretionary grants to state VR agencies for the blind, or to the state VR agency when the agencies are combined, for establishing programs that provide independent living services for 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 feasible. 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. In addition, the law provides that in any fiscal year in which appropriations to the program exceed \$13 million, grants to states will be made on a formula basis rather than a discretionary one.

The services the program delivers are designed to improve the ability of elderly individuals who are blind to maintain a desired level of personal independence. They include services designed to assist an older individual who is blind in conducting activities of daily living; 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.

The program experienced two major accomplishments in 1998 and 1999. The first was a marked trend toward an increase of state funding in support of Title VII, Chapter 2 programs, which leads to sustainability of the program and increases its capacity to meet the needs of consumers. The average overall non-federal support per program increased from approximately \$88,000 in fiscal year 1997 to almost \$94,000 in fiscal year 1999. Secondly, the program saw an increase in services delivered by state programs to consumers that have separate severe or multiple disabilities in addition to a significant visual impairment. States reported that between fiscal years 1998 and 1999, 49 percent of all consumers served under the Title VII, Chapter 2 program were 80 years of age and up.

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

Federal Funding	
1998	\$2,596,000
1999	\$2,596,000

Recreational programs provide recreation and related activities for individuals with disabilities to aid in their employment, mobility, independence, socialization and community integration. Programs are designed to promote the development of social skills that are necessary in order to integrate individuals with disabilities into the community.

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. 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.

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.

Recreational Programs may continue for lengthy periods of time after federal funding ends, as long as they have other funding sources. Some become other types of recreation programs and are not counted as continuing projects under Section 305 of the Act. For fiscal year 1998, of the 65 projects initiated since fiscal year 1993, 79 percent continued after federal funding ended. For fiscal year 1999, of the 74 projects initiated since fiscal year 1993, 90 percent are continuing.

Technical Assistance, Training and Support

RSA operates and provides funding for a select number of programs that support the central work of the vocational rehabilitation program. Support programs frequently are discretionary grant programs to provide funding for addressing new and emerging needs of individuals with disabilities. These programs 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 fosters competitive employment. Program activities 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

Federal Funding	
1998	\$2,900,000
1999	\$1,900,000

The Act authorizes the Commissioner of RSA to provide technical assistance and consultative services to public and non-profit private agencies and organizations, including assistance to enable agencies and organizations to facilitate meaningful and effective participation by individuals with disabilities in workforce investment activities under WIA. In addition, Section 12 funds may be used to provide short-term technical instruction, conduct special demonstrations, develop and disseminate educational or information materials and carry out monitoring and evaluation activities.

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 critical areas of national significance in achieving the purposes of the Act. Program funds are awarded through grants and contracts to procure expertise in identified problem areas of national significance and technical support in order to improve the operation of VR programs under the Act and the provision of services to individuals with disabilities.

Under the leadership of the Office of the Commissioner, RSA's central and regional offices provide technical assistance and administrative directorship to assist states and other grantees in strengthening programs that provide services to individuals with disabilities. In fiscal years 1998 and 1999, the Office of the Commissioner undertook a number of special initiatives, including: implementing projects to streamline the state VR system and processes; holding a national conference on effective employment strategies for individuals with disabilities; revitalizing the Institute on Rehabilitation

Issues; implementing the cooperative agreement between RSA and the National Endowments for the Arts to promote careers in the arts as viable options for persons with disabilities; and funding a number of technical assistance projects.

In addition, in February 1998, RSA established the National Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center to organize resources for providing technical assistance to state VR agencies and the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program grant recipients. The creation of the Center allows RSA much greater flexibility in addressing the technical assistance needs of requesting agencies without the complications or constraints sometimes associated with the federal procurement process.

Subject only to funding availability, the Center accepts proposals on an on-going basis without submission deadlines. In fiscal year 1998, seven preliminary proposals were approved by RSA and funded through the Center for a total of \$346,363. In fiscal year 1999, fourteen preliminary proposals were approved by RSA and funded through the Center for a total of \$947,373.

RSA contracted with DTI Associates of Arlington, Virginia to manage the day-to-day operation of the Center. Several projects funded through the 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

Federal Funding	
1998	\$1,947,540
1999	\$2,013,105

Capacity Building for Traditionally Underserved Populations projects are designed to ensure that individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds have equal access to programs authorized by the Act. To that end, program managers use one percent of funds from Title II (Research and Training), 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) to support capacity building projects designed to provide outreach and technical assistance to minority entities and Indian Tribes.

The purpose of capacity building projects is to expand the service-providing capabilities of these organizations and increase their participation in activities funded under the Act. 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.

Training and technical assistance activities funded under the Act may include training on the mission of RSA, the RSA programs, disability legislation and other pertinent subjects, thus helping to increase awareness of RSA and its programs. Through efforts under this important program area, there was a nearly 30 percent increase in the number of grant applications submitted by minority entities to the Rehabilitation Training Program.

NIDRR also operates a grant to provide Outreach to Minority Colleges and Universities under Section 21 of the Act. In fiscal years 1998 and 1999 respectively, NIDRR allocated \$768,000 and \$810,000 to this grant.

Capacity Building for Traditionally Underserved Populations

1998 and 1999 Outcomes

- Increase by 30 percent in the number of proposals submitted by minority-serving institutions of higher education and American Indian tribes
- Increase in grant awards to minority-serving institutions of higher education and American Indian tribes
- Establishment of new rehabilitation training programs at undergraduate and master's levels in several minority-serving institutions of higher education designed to increase the number of minority rehabilitation professionals
- Increase in knowledge among thousands of minority-serving higher education staff about RSA, VR programs, and legislation related to the area of disability
- Establishment of offices of student disability affairs on many college and university campuses
- Establishment of closer and more collaborative relationships between VR agencies and minority-serving institutions of higher education

Rehabilitation Training Program Resource Development Division Sections 302 and 803

Federal Funding	
1998	\$39,629,000
1999	\$39,629,000

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.

Grants and contracts under this program authority are awarded to states and other 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 nonprofit 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 Department of Labor. 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 Training Program, 15 percent must be used to support the in-service training. In-service training is intended to assist state VR agencies in the training of state agency 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 1999, RSA awarded more than \$2 million in CSPD grants to help train VR counselors to the Master's level standard. Through in-service training grants, the RSA 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 RSA training program also sponsors an annual conference of educators and state agencies to discuss human resource issues and solutions, and meets 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 1998 and 1999 is shown in Table 6 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.

**Rehabilitation Training Projects
Funded in 1998 and 1999
Table 6**

	Number of Awards 1998	Grants Amount	Number of Awards 1999	Grants Amount
Long Term Training				
Medical Rehabilitation	7	699,984	7	699,640
Rehab Nursing	2	199,656	2	200,000
Prosthetics/Orthotics	5	700,173	4	600,000
Rehabilitation Counseling	62	5,946,306	69	6,597,661
Rehabilitation Administration	5	575,530	5	575,172
Physical Therapy	3	293,190	3	256,311
Occupational Therapy	5	499,445	4	399,846
Rehabilitation Technology	9	881,413	8	782,224
Vocational Evaluation/Adjustment	10	982,164	10	982,201
Rehabilitation of Mentally Ill	7	688,592	7	690,254
Rehabilitation Psychology	3	293,071	3	293,071
Undergrad Education	18	1,312,849	17	1,190,505
Independent Living	2	200,000	2	200,000
Speech Pathology/Audiology	4	289,755	4	289,755
Rehabilitation of Blind	15	1,480,940	16	1,581,400
Rehabilitation of Deaf	14	1,386,880	14	1,399,970
Job Development/Placement	10	983,378	10	992,864
CSPD	0	0	8	2,219,273
Long Term Training Totals	181	17,413,326	193	19,950,147
Short Term Training	2	449,916	2	449,916
Continuing Education	21	9,448,306	21	10,114,516
In-Service Training	79	6,051,097	79	5,991,675
Experimental/Innovative	5	498,335	0	0
Interpreter Training	12	2,105,298	12	2,086,421
Title VIII	14	1,978,880	0	0

Evaluation, Research and Information Dissemination

To improve the delivery of services to individuals with disabilities and increase the effectiveness of strategies that are designed to enhance their employment opportunities, the Rehabilitation 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

Federal Funding	
1998	\$1,587,000
1999	\$1,587,000

Section 14 of the Act mandates that the Commissioner of RSA evaluate all programs authorized by the Act; their effectiveness in relation to their cost; their impact on related programs; and their structure and mechanisms for delivery of services, using appropriate methodology and evaluative

research design. The Act further requires that standards be established and used for evaluations and that the evaluations be conducted by persons who are not immediately involved in the administration of the program or project evaluated.

RSA relies significantly on evaluation studies to obtain information on the operations and effectiveness of the programs it administers and help make judgments about the programs' levels of success and decisions on how to improve them. A current Longitudinal Study, conducted by Research Triangle Institute, is examining 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. RSA will utilize study findings to initiate program change and improvement. As part of the study's key accomplishments, the agency's Planning, Policy and Evaluation staff issued the Third Interim Report of the Longitudinal Study: *Characteristics and Outcomes of Former VR Consumers with an Employment Outcome* in August of 1998. The Longitudinal Study is discussed in more detail in the Focusing on Results Section of this report.

RSA Planning, Policy and Evaluation staff also initiated two major evaluation studies in 1999: an evaluation of the Independent Living Program and an evaluation of the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Program. The contract to conduct an evaluation of the Independent Living Program was awarded to Cherry Engineering

Support Services, Inc. The purpose of the study was to examine Centers for Independent Living operations and consumer services and to focus on measuring access to services, process and outcomes, including consumer satisfaction. The contract to evaluate the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program was awarded to Development Associates, Inc. That study's purpose was to describe and analyze the characteristics, services received, and outcomes of American Indians with disabilities.

American Rehabilitation Magazine Section 12(a)(4)

RSA designed *American Rehabilitation* (AR) to disseminate information on topics related to vocational rehabilitation, such as best practices in the performance of professional duties, innovative programs, agency administrative practices, research, and technique. In recent years, the magazine has devoted a number of issues to cover one specific disability or a specific approach to rehabilitation. In particular, the magazine focuses on new and successful approaches to providing rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities that can and should be replicated. AR divides its magazine into sections, or departments, to feature books, audiovisual materials, and other resources on disability and rehabilitation, present materials on what individual states are doing and disseminate other items of interest to rehabilitation professionals.

Capping several years of gradually improving the appearance and quality of the magazine, the AR staff introduced full color for the journal's cover. Issues for 1998 and 1999 focused on community rehabilitation programs, personal assistance services, employment for people with disabilities, and high-quality employment.

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

The primary responsibility of the Clearinghouse is to respond to inquiries and provide the public with information about what's going on in the rehabilitation community. Most of the inquiries ask questions about federal funding, federal legislation affecting individuals with disabilities, programs and policies, and identification of and referral to other information sources. 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. The Clearinghouse also analyzes the requests and inquiries, summarizes the information in publications and fact sheets, and issues the fact sheets and publications to the public. Its staff members are trained to serve as experts in referring requests to other sources of disability-related information.

**National Institute on Disability and
Rehabilitation Research**
Sections 200-204

Federal Funding	
1998	\$76,800,000
1999	\$81,000,000

Created in 1978, NIDRR conducts comprehensive and coordinated programs of research, demonstration projects, training and related activities that promote 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.

To address these purposes, NIDRR supports rehabilitation research and development, demonstration projects and related activities, including training of persons who provide rehabilitation services or who conduct rehabilitation research. A primary role of the agency is to ensure the widespread distribution of practical scientific and technological information related to rehabilitation and disability. To that end, 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 and individuals with disabilities and their representatives.

NIDRR also supports projects designed to analyze data related to population demographics and other information vital to understanding the needs of individuals with disabilities. That information is disseminated to policy makers, administrators and other relevant groups.

Projects are awarded by NIDRR to grantees through a competitive application process. Each application is reviewed by a panel of experts that includes in its membership rehabilitation professionals, rehabilitation researchers and individuals with disabilities.

NIDRR-Funded Projects and Centers

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. Specifically, projects are designed 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 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. Specifically, the Centers support activities and projects designed to develop and disseminate innovative methods for applying technology, scientific achievements and psychological and social knowledge to rehabilitation problems and the removal of environmental barriers. The Centers conduct demonstrations and facilitate the dissemination of scientific research to assist in meeting the employment and independent living needs of individuals with severe disabilities. Projects also focus on identifying opportunities for systems change to improve the delivery of services. Centers also conduct activities to promote the production and distribution of equipment in the private sector, as well as clinical evaluations of new and emerging equipment.

The RERCs also provide training to individuals, including individuals with disabilities, to become researchers and practitioners of rehabilitation technology. Awards are for five years, except grants to new recipients or grants to support new or innovative research, which may be less than five years.

Disability and Rehabilitation Research and Related Projects

The Disability and Rehabilitation Research and Related Projects (DRRPs) are aimed at fulfilling NIDRR's overarching goals of inclusion, integration, employment and self-sufficiency. Some projects 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. Other projects 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. Projects that provide technical assistance and training to state and local governments

and private businesses regarding the ADA and facilitate implementation of the ADA without litigation or undue difficulty are also included under this activity, as are 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 responsible for providing technical assistance, disseminating information and training individuals and entities on responsibilities and rights under the Act, the requirements of the ADA and developments in ADA case law, policy and implementation. The DBTACs also 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.

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. Projects are designed to take an idea from development to market readiness.

Field-Initiated Projects

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

Mary E. Switzer Fellowships

The Mary E. Switzer Fellowship program provides 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 Projects (ARRTPs) award 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 (SCIS) provide innovative and effective approaches to the delivery and evaluation of comprehensive medical, psychological, vocational and other rehabilitation services, as well as 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 1998 and 1999 is shown on Table 7 on the following page.

**NIDRR-Funded Centers and Projects
Fiscal Years 1998 and 1999
Table 7**

	Number of Awards 1998	Grants Amount	Number of Awards 1999	Grants Amount
RRTCs				
Continuations	20	\$10,350,000	32	\$23,300,000
New Awards	18	\$14,150,000	6	\$3,050,000
Total	38	\$24,500,000	38	\$26,350,000
RERCs				
Continuations	5	\$3,600,000	12	\$9,900,000
New Awards	9	\$8,300,000	1	\$750,000
Total	14	\$11,900,000	13	\$10,650,000
Disability and Rehabilitation Research and Related Projects				
Continuations	18	\$5,310,000	24	\$10,000,000
New Awards	14	\$6,550,000	2	\$1,350,000
Total	42	\$17,960,000	36	\$17,450,000
DBTACs				
Continuations	10	\$6,100,000	10	\$6,100,000
Small Business Innovative Research				
		\$1,300,000		\$1,600,000
Field Initiated Projects				
Continuations	46	\$5,315,000	55	\$6,625,000
New Awards	30	\$3,750,000	30	\$4,500,000
Total	76	\$9,065,000	85	\$11,125,000
Mary Switzer Fellowships				
New Awards	10	\$450,000	10	\$450,000
Research Training Grants				
Continuations	5	\$750,000	8	\$1,500,000
New Awards	3	\$450,000	5	\$450,000
Total	8	\$1,200,000	13	\$1,950,000
Spinal Cord Injury Systems				
Continuations	18	\$6,714,000	18	\$7,000,000
New Awards	0	0	0	0
Database	1	\$6,714,000	1	0
Total	19	\$13,428,000	19	\$7,000,000
Outreach to Minority Colleges and Universities				
New Awards	10	\$768,000	10	\$810,000

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. A standing panel model was adopted for the field initiated projects competition beginning in fiscal year 1999. Program Review, a reverse site visit format, was strengthened and used to comprehensively evaluate all of the major centers funded by NIDRR. This information was used to review and refocus the RERC and RRTC competitions in fiscal years 1998 and 1999.

In fiscal years 1998 and 1999, NIDRR also finalized 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.

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 key leaders and decision makers in 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. 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 and design appropriate and equitable affirmative action remedies. Orders of compliance may include the withholding or suspension of federal funds.

Client Assistance Program Program Administration Division Section 112

Federal Funding	
1998	\$10,714,000
1999	\$10,928,000

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

States and outlying areas have adopted different organizational structures for meeting the requirement to establish a CAP in each state. 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” agencies providing services under the Act. In the event one of these “grandfathered” agencies restructured, the Act requires the governor to redesignate the CAP in an agency that does not provide services under the Act. CAPs also engage in systems 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 VR and other programs funded under the Act to improve policies and/or procedures that affect directly or indirectly the quality of the service delivery system.

In fiscal year 1998, CAPs responded to 61,654 requests for information and provided extensive services to 9,893 individuals. Of those cases in which extensive services were provided, 94 percent involved applicants for or recipients of services from the state VR program. In 83 percent of the cases, the state VR agency was the sole source of concern. In 46 percent of those cases, the issues related to the delivery of VR services. Likewise, in fiscal year 1999, CAPs responded to 65,504 requests for information and provided extensive services to 9,149 individuals. Of those cases in which extensive services were provided, 95 percent involved applicants for or recipients of services from the state VR program. In 82 percent of these cases, the state VR agency was the sole source of concern. In nearly 46 percent of those cases, the issues related to the delivery of VR services.

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

Federal Funding	
1998	\$9,894,000
1999	\$10,894,000

The purpose of the Protection and Advocacy of Individual Rights (PAIR) Program 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 or the Protection and Advocacy of Individuals with Mental Illness Act, or who need protection and advocacy services that are beyond the scope of the CAP.

States may 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 Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education 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. States and outlying areas may carry over unobligated federal funds for an additional year.

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.

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.

In fiscal year 1998, PAIR programs reported serving more than 72,000 individuals, including 15,000 cases and 57,000 non-cases (individuals provided with routine information or referral services). Of cases handled by PAIR programs in that year, the greatest number of specified issues involved employment, education and architectural barriers. In fiscal year 1999, PAIR programs reported serving more than 80,000 individuals, including 15,000 cases and 65,000 non-cases (individuals provided with routine information or referral services). Again, of the cases handled by PAIR programs in 1999, the greatest number of specified issues involved employment, education and architectural barriers.

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 people 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

Composed of 25 members, the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, also known as 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 selected from federal departments; the other thirteen members are private citizens appointed by the president.

The Access Board has the primary responsibility for developing and maintaining accessibility guidelines and standards under several different laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These include guidelines for facilities and transportation vehicles covered by the ADA as well as federally-funded facilities covered by the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA). 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.

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.

The 1998 Amendments expanded the Access Board's role and gave it responsibility for developing access standards for electronic and information technology. The Section 508 standards will cover various means for disseminating information, including computers, software, and electronic office equipment in the federal sector. The standards will also provide technical criteria specific to various types of technologies and performance-based requirements, which focus on the functional capabilities of covered technologies. The standards cover software applications and operating systems; web-based information or applications; telecommunications products; video or multi-media products; self-contained, closed products such as information kiosks and transaction machines; and computers.

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

With reauthorization of the Act in 1998, Section 508 was reauthorized and now requires that when federal departments or agencies develop, procure, maintain or use electronic and information technology, they must ensure that the technology is accessible to individuals with disabilities, unless an undue burden would be imposed on the department or agency. Under the 1998 Amendments, federal agencies must give disabled employees and members of the public 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.

Because of its long-standing experience as the chief procurement agency, the General Services Administration (GSA) was designated as the lead agency to implement Section 508. In that lead role, GSA launched the Federal Information Technology Accessibility Initiative (FITAI) to help federal agencies provide access to electronic and information technology and to meet the requirements of Section 508. The initiative is designed to coordinate the federal government's efforts to comply with the law through outreach, training and information sharing. 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.

The 1998 Amendments charge the Access Board with responsibility for developing electronic and information standards to support effective implementation of Section 508. In September 1998, the Access Board created an Electronic and Information Technology Access Advisory Committee to make recommendations on the standards to be developed. The Committee included 27 members representing industry, various disability organizations, and other groups with an interest in the issues to be addressed.

The Section 508 standards will cover various means for disseminating information, including computers, software and electronic office equipment in the federal sector. The standards will also provide technical criteria specific to various types of technologies and performance-based requirements, which focus on the functional capabilities of covered technologies. The standards cover software applications and operating systems; web-based information or applications; telecommunications products; video or multi-media products; self-contained, closed products such as information kiosks and transaction machines; and computers. The Committee presented its final report to the Access Board in May 1999.

**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) reviews employment practices of employers with federal contracts or subcontracts to make sure they do not discriminate against individuals with disabilities. Under this Section of the Act, employers with federal contracts or subcontracts are required to analyze their workforce, evaluate the entire scope of their personnel practices and identify barriers to equal employment opportunities. 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 for 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 and 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, 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. It makes recommendations to the President, the Congress, the Secretary of Education, RSA's Commissioner, and officials of federal agencies. The NCD also prepares reports on progress, including the annual report entitled: *National Disability Policy: A Progress Report*.

During 1998 and 1999, NCD broadened the participation of youth and minorities with disabilities in the policy process, worked to monitor and improve the enforcement of civil rights laws for people with disabilities, and brought a disability perspective to generic policy discussions. NCD also planned and conducted hearings, forums, and conferences, and established a national fellowship program to identify new leaders with disabilities.

In addition, NCD, as part of its other responsibilities under the Rehabilitation Act, designed and launched the Disability Civil Rights Monitoring Project to monitor and evaluate the implementation and enforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act and other civil rights laws. NCD released its first report under the project, *Enforcing the Civil Rights of Air Travelers with Disabilities: Recommendations for the Department of Transportation and Congress*, one in a series of reports on the enforcement of federal laws protecting the civil rights of people with disabilities.