

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES
REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM
RSA-IM-93-04
DATE: November 6, 1992

TO : STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES (GENERAL)
STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES (BLIND)
CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
REGIONAL REHABILITATION CONTINUING EDUCATION
PROGRAMS (RRCEPS)
RSA SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

SUBJECT : FY 1992 Employment Initiative and the Involvement of the Private Sector

CONTENT : RSA has completed a series of regional private industry meetings designed to promote the enhancement and expansion of collaborative programs, services, and activities among service providers, business, industry, labor, and consumers to place and retain people with disabilities in employment. From these meetings, it was expected that RSA would identify common themes and innovative strategies for further involving the private sector in employing people with disabilities.

The results of these meetings point toward several ways in which the private sector could be more effectively involved in vocational rehabilitation efforts. As such they are directly related to RSA's FY 1992-3 initiative aimed at reducing the sixty-seven percent figure of people with disabilities who do not participate in the workforce. This memorandum is intended to share the findings of the private industry meetings with State Vocational Agencies, and to solicit your support in implementing actions they suggest.

Annual Job Development and Job Placement Planning

Annual Job Development and Job Placement Planning provides a State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency with an opportunity to affirm its mission to assist individuals with disabilities to prepare for and engage in gainful employment, and to project and

evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency with which resources, including private industry, are utilized in support of its mission. State Agencies are encouraged to develop annual Job Development and Job Placement Plans, and to include a significant role for private industry in those plans.

Employer Advisory Committees

Effective implementation of vocational rehabilitation programs calls for many and varied partnerships. Employers are key partners, for they are in a strategic position to identify the availability of current and projected jobs, specify the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for acceptable levels of job performance, provide settings for on-the-job training, and provide job opportunities.

Employer Advisory Committees at the State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Central Office level can be an invaluable resource in relation to the development of strategic plans, policies, and operating procedures relative to the placement and retention of individuals with disabilities. Employer Advisory Committees at the service provision level can be an invaluable resource to State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency District Office managers, supervisors, and vocational rehabilitation counselors to assist individuals with disabilities to prepare for, obtain, and retain specific jobs. State Agencies are encouraged to establish Employer Advisory Committees at both the State and local levels.

Human Resource Development and Human Resource Management

Human Resource Development supports achievement of the Agency's mission through individual and organizational development, career development, and related skills and knowledge building processes that extend the capacities of the individual and the organization. Human Resource Management supports the achievement of enhanced organizational performance through the effective use of recruitment, affirmative action, compensation, appraisal, incentives, rewards, and other practices that promote individual and organizational goals. Human Resource Development and Human Resource Management can therefore be viewed as a foundation for planning, developmental, and operational initiatives to improve and expand employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. In regard to the private industry initiative, resource development related to establishing and maintaining relationships with employers, understanding the needs of employers, and marketing with employers are areas that State Agencies could emphasize to improve involvement with VR efforts. Specifically, these areas could be addressed through in-service training and continuing education programs.

Use of Comparable Services and Benefits

Developing cooperative agreements and arrangements with sources such as the State Employment Service, Private Industry Councils established under The Jobs Training Partnership Act, Public Vocational Education and Adult Education Programs, State Occupational Information Councils, and the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities can expand and enhance the State Agency's resources to assist individuals with disabilities to prepare for and obtain employment. State Agencies are encouraged to vigorously pursue use of comparable services and benefits that are employment related and involve private industry.

Projects With Industry (PWI)

A major component of each Projects with Industry Program is the establishment of a Business Advisory Council comprised of representatives of private industry, business concerns, and organized labor to identify job availability within the community and the skills necessary to fill the identified jobs. Cooperative Agreements between State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies and Projects with Industry Programs which describe respective responsibilities to identify and serve individuals with disabilities in a collaborative manner can provide unique opportunities to coordinate existing resources in a holistic, effective, and efficient manner.

Americans with Disabilities Act

ADA's Title I provisions prohibit discrimination because of a disability in regard to job application procedures; hiring, advancement, or discharge of employees; employee compensation, or job training; and other terms, conditions and privileges of employment. These provisions complement the State-Federal program mandate under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Act), which is to assist individuals with disabilities to prepare for, and engage in suitable employment.

State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies can utilize ADA to promote employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities by providing technical assistance to employers if specific assistance is related to the placement of individual clients of the State Agency, or if technical assistance is expected to contribute substantially to the placement of groups of individuals with handicaps who are clients of the State Agency.

Rehabilitation Technology

Policy and guidance which provide State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency managers, supervisors, and vocational rehabilitation counselors with timely and updated information related to rehabilitation engineering, assistive technology devices, and assistive technology services are a key element in strategies to apply the potential of rehabilitation technology to initiatives to expand employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with severe disabilities. State Agencies are encouraged to periodically assess policy and guidance related to state of the art developments in rehabilitation technology.

Private Industry Meetings

Meetings between representative of private industry, consumers and service providers provide for exchange of information and ideas and can foster closer relationships between the partners. RSA intends to conduct regional meetings between these groups and RSA as well as a national meeting in the fall of 1993. State Agencies are encouraged to attend these meetings and conduct similar meetings at the State or local level.

INQUIRES : Any questions concerning this information memorandum should be addressed to Timothy C. Muzzio, Ph.D. at (202) 205-8926.

Nell C. Carney, CRC
Commissioner

Commissioner, a few other related good ideas came about, but were not related to the private industry meetings or came out of the meetings but are not things that State Agencies can do. I suggest we consider them one by one.

Client Satisfaction Surveys

Client satisfaction surveys can be helpful to State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies to assist in assessing effective methods, techniques, and outcomes of placement services, barriers which may be related to the environment and the State Agency itself, factors associated with individual clients, and client input to refine, improve, and expand placement policies and operational procedures. (we could include this as part of the IM regardless of the fact that it did not result from the private industry meetings.)

Special Projects and Demonstrations

RSA may wish to consider using the special projects and demonstrations authority to stimulate creative approaches to private industry involvement.

Use RRCEP or Short Term Training to train State Agency staff in establishing and maintaining relationships with employers, including topics such as understanding the needs of employers, effective communication with employers, followup with employers, involving employers, "marketing" with employers, and successful marketing with the ADA.