

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES
REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20202

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM
RSA-IM-04-02
DATE: November 20, 2003

ADDRESSEES: STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES (GENERAL)
STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES (BLIND)
CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING
CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
PROTECTION & ADVOCACY OF INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS
PROGRAMS
REGIONAL REHABILITATION CONTINUING EDUCATION
PROGRAMS
AMERICAN INDIAN VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION
PROGRAMS
CONSUMER ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS
RSA SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

SUBJECT: Developing Public Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Relationships with
Associations, Agencies, and Membership Organizations Dedicated
to a Diverse and Qualified Workforce

CONTENT: This memorandum is designed to provide resources to VR
management and staff wishing to build stronger relationships with
employers in their areas. This document describes and provides
links to several agencies and associations focused on human
resource and business issues, including the United States
Chamber of Commerce, the Society for Human Resource
Management, and the United States Small Business
Administration. This is certainly not an exhaustive list of entities
that might prove helpful in an endeavor to improve VR/business
relationships. These summaries are designed to be representative
and to give a “jumping off” place for further relationship-building in
your State.

The United States Chamber of Commerce and State and Local Affiliates

Some of the most recognized organizations for business are chambers of commerce. Whether a local or state chamber or the national entity, chambers are widely regarded as a valuable tool for business networking and other functions. The U.S. Chamber, and the state and local affiliates represent the interests of 3,000,000 businesses, most of which are small and medium size.

Future workforce projections indicate the United States will have a 10 million-worker shortfall by the end of this decade. Additionally, it is expected that 70-75% of the new job growth will occur in small and medium size businesses. These businesses will require the most assistance in the recruiting, hiring, retaining and advancing of qualified workers. As they compete with larger companies, small businesses are challenged to compete for workers. VR can be a source for those workers.

Developing a relationship with a local chamber of commerce will provide networking opportunities with business, present opportunities for business to learn about the expertise and services of VR, and establish partnerships that benefit businesses as they work to maintain a competitive advantage in this global economy.

If you would like to learn more about the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, including where it operates in your area, visit www.uschamber.com. The Center for Workforce Preparation (CWP) a nonprofit affiliate of the Chamber, was established to assist chambers of commerce in the development of workforce strategies so their members can hire, train, retain and advance workers with skills to compete in the 21st century. CWP can be accessed at <http://www.uschamber.com/cwp/default>.

The Society for Human Resource Management

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) represents more than 175,000 human resource professionals and has 500 local chapters nationwide. Focused on smart people management practices to create successful organizations, SHRM provides educational programming and comprehensive resources to human resource staff on a myriad of workforce topics, such as recruiting, workforce productivity, diversity and others.

Opportunities may exist for working with a local SHRM chapter to host a speaker at a chapter meeting, include important information in the chapter's newsletter or provide resources to chapter members on managing a diverse workforce. Local chapter members include HR professionals at all levels in an organization, from employers of any size. For more information about SHRM, visit www.shrm.org. Membership as well as chapter information is available on the website.

United States Small Business Administration

The Small Business Administration (SBA) can serve two main functions as a tool for State VR agencies. The first is as another networking opportunity, this time for small businesses in your State or local area. Most States and localities have SBA-sponsored fairs and expos which provide networking opportunities for VR agencies wishing to place individuals with disabilities into jobs with small business. While networking at these events, the resources VR can provide (qualified workers, ADA training, etc.) might be the focus of discussions with small business operators.

The second resource available from the SBA is a tool for education and training of individuals with disabilities who desire self-employment and small business ownership as their employment outcome. The SBA has on its website a library of training materials

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on many topics, including writing a business plan, determining start-up costs for a new business, and financing start-up costs for a business. Forms and procedures for applying for SBA loans and other assistance are also available.

The SBA website has a full listing of its State and regional offices. It also includes information on upcoming local events, as well as the training resources mentioned earlier. The website URL is www.sba.gov.

It is my hope that this information will stimulate your thinking as you move forward to build more and stronger relationships with the business community. If you have any questions regarding the information contained herein or if you have comments regarding your business relationships, please contact Jenn Rigger on my staff at 202-260-2179 or jenn.rigger@ed.gov.

Joanne Wilson
Commissioner

cc: COUNCIL OF STATE ADMINISTRATORS OF
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION
NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF REHABILITATION
PARTNERS