

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

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM  
RSA-IM-04-11  
DATE: June 18, 2004

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

SUBJECT: Request for Nominations for the Thirty-First Institute on Rehabilitation Issues  
Primary Study Groups

CONTENT: The purpose of this Information Memorandum (IM) is to request nominations for persons to serve as chairpersons and members on the following two Thirty-First Institute on Rehabilitation Issues (IRI) primary study groups (PSG):

1. Leading and Managing Change in Public Vocational Rehabilitation

The university coordinator for this study group is Ms. Jeanne Miller, the director of Regional Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program (RRCEP) VI at the University of Arkansas.

2. Consumer Organizations: Important Resources for Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies

The university coordinator for this study group is Dr. Donald Dew, the director of RRCEP III at The George Washington University.

**The deadline for receipt of the nominations is July 30, 2004. Descriptions of the two IRI topics are attached to this memorandum.** Nominees for chairpersons for the PSGs must be current State vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency directors, or designees, who have demonstrated leadership qualities, an ability to facilitate group discussions, good writing and editorial skills, and who have served on previous IRI PSGs. Both the chairpersons and the PSG members make a commitment to attend three meetings for two to three days each, during which the topical issues are discussed and debated in great detail.

The PSG will be primarily made up of representatives from State VR agencies and will include a total of approximately 10-12 persons, including individuals who are recognized authorities on the issue under study and/or represent important consumer perspectives. The PSG members define the issues in their topical area and write drafts of assigned chapters or sections. Their only compensation is reimbursement of travel and per diem expenses at the host university rate.

In submitting nominations, we encourage you to review the attached “IRI Primary Study Groups - Roles and Responsibilities” with each nominee before submitting his/her name. In order to receive consideration, each Nomination Form must be fully completed, including a brief justification. We also suggest that you ensure that each nominee requests his/her supervisor's approval prior to submitting a Nomination Form. Self-nomination is also encouraged. Our goal is to select a representative sample of persons knowledgeable of the topics from both inside and outside the State-Federal VR program, and to ensure participation of persons from minority backgrounds and persons with disabilities.

During the 31<sup>st</sup> IRI Forum to be held in Washington, DC from May 2-3, 2005, the PSG chairpersons and members present their draft publications to a larger study group for review and comment, and are honored for their contribution to the field of rehabilitation literature.

Please provide the completed Nomination Forms for chairpersons and members of the IRI PSGs to:

Mr. Charles Sadler  
RSA IRI Coordinator  
Rehabilitation Services Administration  
550 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW, Room 5002  
Washington, DC 20004

E-MAIL: [charles.sadler@ed.gov](mailto:charles.sadler@ed.gov)  
TELEPHONE: (202) 245-7514  
FAX: (202) 245-7590  
RELAY: (800) 877-8339  
TTY: (202) 245-8352

We appreciate your continued support of the IRI.

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Joanne Wilson  
Commissioner

Attachments: IRI Primary Study Groups – Roles and Responsibilities  
Nomination Form  
Descriptions of the 31<sup>st</sup> IRI Topics

cc: Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation  
National Organization of Rehabilitation Partners

## **IRI PRIMARY STUDY GROUPS - ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The following information is provided to persons who are either interested in nominating an individual to serve as a member or chairperson of an IRI PSG, or who are considering whether or not they are willing and able to be nominated to serve on an IRI PSG.

Persons nominating individuals to participate in the IRI should ensure that the nominees are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. In order to avoid misunderstandings, please review the information contained herein with each nominee before submitting the Nomination Form.

**PURPOSE:** To research, write and publish an IRI publication that provides a foundation for quality state-of-the-art training on a specific topic. RSA annually funds two grantees at the University of Arkansas and The George Washington University to serve as university coordinators for two IRI PSGs, and to convene the National IRI Forum in Washington. The IRI is not original research; the document is comprised of existent research applied to contemporary issues and challenges in the field of VR. Approximately 2500 to 3500 copies of each IRI publication are disseminated nationally to an audience of VR counselors, consumers, advocates, administrators, educators, researchers, and trainers. The publications are also placed on the two university coordinators' web sites with numerous links to other rehabilitation partners.

### **SKILLS NEEDED BY ALL PSG MEMBERS:**

- 1) Knowledge of the topic.
- 2) Writing skills. This includes the ability to discuss the issue and then create and write (outlining, developing and drafting) a section or chapter of the document.
- 3) The ability to work as part of a team.

## **ROLES OF PARTICIPANTS ON THE IRI STUDY GROUPS**

### **UNIVERSITY COORDINATOR -**

Responsible for all facets of the PSG meetings, such as: arranging meeting times and hotel accommodations; providing travel and per diem; arranging teleconferences, if necessary; duplicating and editing the draft IRI documents; publishing and disseminating the final IRI document; and, any other logistical support necessary during the course of the IRI cycle.

- CHAIRPERSON -** Facilitates the PSG meetings and maintains group focus on the topical issues. Assigns writing assignments and membership to the editorial committee that is responsible for editing the document after the national IRI Forum. Works closely with the university coordinator, and the PSG members to ensure that the IRI publication is published in a timely manner.
- RSA REPRESENTATIVE -** Ensures that the group fulfills the charge presented by the RSA Commissioner and that the final publication complies with Federal law, regulations and policy. Reviews the final draft of the IRI document and provides a written review to the RSA IRI Coordinator.

#### **WHAT KIND OF TIME COMMITMENT IS REQUIRED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE IRI?**

The IRI requires an approximately one-year time commitment that includes three meetings of approximately two and a half days. **THE FIRST TWO MEETINGS MAY ENTAIL WEEKEND TRAVEL.** The first meeting is devoted to a discussion of the topic and all the issues surrounding it. The group members are then assigned chapters to be written.

The second meeting focuses on a review and critique of the draft. Between the second and third meetings the members of the PSG rewrite and refine their respective chapters into the final draft. The third meeting occurs during the National IRI Forum in Washington, DC, during which time an expanded group of individuals reviews the final draft publication and provides feedback for further improving the document. These recommendations are considered by the PSG editorial committee, who may meet in Washington, DC immediately following the Forum. The editorial committee is usually composed of 3-7 members of the PSG, including the chairperson and the university coordinator.

IRI PSG membership is an honor. IRI PSG chairpersons and members are accorded the title of “IRI Scholars” and receive certificates of appreciation signed by the RSA Commissioner. The IRI is an opportunity to work collaboratively with consumers and professionals with knowledge and expertise on a given topic, and to develop a publication useful in training VR professionals.

## Nomination Form

### THIRTY-FIRST INSTITUTE ON REHABILITATION ISSUES

#### 1. Nominee Information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone/TDD: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

The nominee is an individual with a disability.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_\_ No

The following question is to assist us in assembling an IRI PSG that includes individuals from diverse backgrounds. **Answering this question is optional.**

Race/Ethnic Status (Please check the most accurate answer)

\_\_\_\_\_ White

\_\_\_\_\_ Black/African American

\_\_\_\_\_ American Indian

\_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic

\_\_\_\_\_ Asian/Pacific Islander

\_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. For which PSG is this nomination being submitted?

\_\_\_\_\_ Leading and Managing Change in Public Vocational Rehabilitation

\_\_\_\_\_ Consumer Organizations: Important Resources for Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies

- 3. Are you asking that the nominee be considered as the chairperson or member of the PSG? For an individual to be considered as the chairperson, the nominee must be a State VR agency director, or his/her designee. You must also specify the previous IRI study group(s) on which the nominee served as a PSG member. **Previous membership on an PSG is required to serve as the Chairperson.** If you would like us to consider the nominee for both, check both Chairperson and Member.

\_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson

Previous IRI PSG experience - \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Member

- 4. Please provide a brief justification for the nomination. The justification should describe the nominee's knowledge and expertise regarding the topic, and most importantly, include specific references to the individual's ability to participate as part of a team in discussing the topic and in writing chapters of a publication. Explain why you feel that this individual would be an asset to the IRI PSG. If necessary, use additional space or attach supportive documentation.

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Nominator Information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone/TDD: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF THE NOMINATION FORMS IS JULY 30, 2004.**

## Thirty-First IRI Topics

### Topic 1: Leading and Managing Change in Public Vocational Rehabilitation

For most of its fifty-six year history, the IRI has focused on developing publications to be used in training front-line rehabilitation professionals in the skills necessary to provide VR services leading to employment to individuals with disabilities. In the late 1990's, however, the scope of the IRI was broadened to include practical guidance in the areas of VR agency management, and human resource and organizational development. The publication entitled "Assuring an Outstanding Public VR Program for the Twenty-First Century: Eliminating Barriers to Effective Service Delivery," developed in 1997 and popularly known as the "streamlining" document, set a new direction for the IRI. Subsequent IRI documents embellished upon this theme in the following related areas: succession planning; fulfilling the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development requirements; and, the leadership role of field service managers and supervisors. This year, the IRI once again focuses on how the public VR program can collaborate with consumer organizations to lead and manage change to improve the employment of individuals with disabilities in an era of workforce development and rapidly changing technology.

- A. Issues to be addressed in publication:
1. Becoming a change agent
  2. Working collaboratively with consumer organizations to develop the landscape for change
  3. Creating a climate for change
    - a) Why change?
    - b) How does the disability movement influence the need for change?
    - c) Assessing the agency status and need for change
    - d) How change may improve service delivery and the achievement of employment outcomes
  4. Leading change in the public VR marketplace
    - a) Understanding change
    - b) Developing a change vision
  5. Influences impacting change in the public VR marketplace
    - a) Consumer organization
    - b) Technology
    - c) Client choice



- d) Staff competencies
- e) Impact of the CSPD
- f) Impact of staff attrition due to aging out of the senior counselors
- g) Relating VR's participation in the new workforce development system
- h) Growing numbers of minority group members as staff of VR and consumers
- i) Emphasis on performance measurement and obtaining good jobs for consumers as opposed to compliance to the law

6. Employee leadership development

B. Intended audience:

- 1. Mid- and senior-level managers and administrators of public VR agencies

C. Potential effects on improving services to individuals with disabilities:

- 1. Public VR agencies will adjust to meet the needs of the changing disability community culture as a partner with consumer organizations.
- 2. Public VR agencies will have structure in managing change that is mandated by increasing use of technology and modification to job assignments demanded by such change; clients and partners of VR systems will receive more timely services and better data to evaluate effectiveness of new strategies.
- 3. Leaders and managers of tomorrow will be empowered with new knowledge to take the risk to implement change to better serve clients.

**Topic 2: Consumer Organizations: Important Resources for Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies**

Consumer organizations, whose membership and officers are comprised of a majority of individuals with disabilities play a crucial role in the lives of people with disabilities. Consequently, their involvement in the VR program is fundamental to its success. This topic will explore the development of strong working relationships between State VR agencies and grass-roots consumer organizations, which are pivotal in ensuring that agency efforts are effective in meeting the needs of the various disability populations the agencies are serving and the realization of successful outcomes.

A. Issues to be addressed in publication:

- 1. The definition of a "consumer organization," the evolution of such

organizations, and their involvement in the development of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

2. Methods by which State VR agencies can draw upon the collective talent and expertise of consumer organizations, such as:
  - a) Mentoring - The expectations and beliefs that individuals with disabilities have about their own abilities, potential, and competence inevitably influence their choices throughout the VR process. All too frequently, individuals create self-imposed limits based on poor role modeling, lack of disability-specific information, and misconceptions about their disability. Ultimately, these self-imposed limits negatively affect their employment outcomes and quality of life. Connecting individuals being served by the VR program with mentors from consumer organizations of individuals with disabilities, who possess practical knowledge and firsthand experience, and who have achieved high-quality employment and independence through their participation in the VR process, will help guide VR participants to make positive choices regarding their programs and their lives.
  - b) Provision of adjustment-to-disability services - Adjustment-to-disability services (or adjustment services) are critically important to empowering many individuals with significant disabilities to pursue, achieve, and sustain high-quality employment outcomes in integrated settings. Adjustment services are a comprehensive and integrated set of services, including counseling, mentoring and other services, designed to provide individuals with disabilities with confidence, interpersonal and disability specific skills, and a positive attitude toward disability that they may require to achieve competitive employment, community integration, and independence. The provision of such services through the VR program directly assists individuals in adjusting to living and working with a disability, thus greatly enhancing their capabilities to achieve long-term success in the workplace. Through collaboration with consumer organizations and accessing their expertise, VR agencies can ensure that sufficient and appropriate adjustment services are made available to individuals with disabilities as integral components of their rehabilitation planning.
  - c) Immersion opportunities - Individuals with disabilities can be truly empowered and in control of their futures only when they possess the information, education, training, confidence, and high expectations needed to make effective employment and life-related decisions. VR counselors play a vital role in the empowerment of individuals with disabilities. Counselors and other VR staff can

achieve a unique perspective of the capabilities and employment potential of persons with disabilities through participation in activities through which they interact for extended periods of time directly with persons with disabilities in situations other than traditional professional counselor to consumer relationships. In addition, individuals with disabilities also can benefit immensely from participation in these same intensive and experiential “immersion” activities, as they learn from their peers and develop positive attitudes toward their disabilities. Consumer organizations are ideal resources through which VR agencies can provide immersion activities for their staff and consumer alike.

- d) Program evaluation and policy development - Because consumer organizations represent the collective voice of their members, they are able to offer experience-based input on the effectiveness of a State VR agency’s policies, procedures and practices as they affect applicants and individuals eligible for VR services. Strong partnerships and productive dialogue between VR agencies and these organizations can lead to better programming, better agency performance, and, ultimately, better outcomes for persons with disabilities. In addition, as statutorily required, VR agencies can obtain the perspectives of individuals with disabilities through a variety of mechanisms, including ongoing consultation with consumer organizations. Additionally, representatives of consumer organizations can provide an agency with valuable insight during the various stages of planning and policy development.

B. Intended audience:

- 1. State VR agencies and VR professionals;
- 2. Consumer organizations of individuals with disabilities; and
- 3. Individuals with disabilities.

C. Potential effects on improving services to individuals with disabilities:

Consumer organizations are an invaluable resource for State VR agencies. These organizations provide a network of individuals whose knowledge and experience can significantly supplement the efforts of a VR agency in meeting its mission and in empowering persons with disabilities to achieve their employment and independent living goals. Consumer organizations can provide experience-based information, technical assistance, access to role models and mentors, disability-specific training, job matching, advocacy on behalf of persons with disabilities and the needs of the public VR program, and a variety of other services that VR agencies would find useful in working with persons with disabilities.