

COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

The Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL)/Vocational Rehabilitation Services Support Team, (VRSST), has the primary responsibility for the relationship with educational institutions and maintenance of the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD).

The goals of the Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL)/Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program for CSPD are to:

- Expand opportunities to address training needs that support eligibility to sit for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) exam using institutions of higher education;
- Meet federal CSPD requirements by December 31, 2006, and beyond;
- Continue linking training to staff competencies in support of CRC maintenance;
- Work with the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to develop standards for all positions on a nationwide basis; and to
- Continue to provide in-service training opportunities for all VR staff members to insure that quality services are provided by qualified VR personnel.

Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

System for Collecting and Analyzing Data

The VR Program collects personnel data regarding the number of positions and vacancies in each job category. Additional data collected includes the number of incumbents who are eligible for retirement during the next five years, their years of service with the state of Georgia, their credentials, educational levels, and certifications within the agency. Finally, data is collected on staff developmental performance and career plans and goals.

The Human Resource Development Team (HRDT) along with VR leadership applies the principles of human performance improvement in its collection and analysis of data. Specifically:

- Performance Analysis (Front-End Analysis)
 - Identify the organization's performance results and compare them to its objectives and capabilities;
 - Identify an individual's performance results and compare them to his/her objectives and capabilities;
 - Identify system issues related to the organization and the individual and plan for interventions as needed.

- Needs Analysis including survey design and development (open-ended and structured)
 - Locally gather data through job class group meetings, individual meetings, Performance Management (PMF) feedback and resultant Individual Development Plans (IDP) addressing performance and career goals to develop a comprehensive Needs Assessment of local needs;
 - Use the locally collected data to create the Statewide Needs Assessment report and plan accordingly to address identified needs either locally or statewide, as appropriate.
- Synthesis of information gathered
 - Prioritize projects based on criticality and numbers in need of intervention
- Based on the gathered information determine appropriate interventions to address the identified need
 - Design courses to address the identified knowledge and skills needs;
 - Collaborate with leadership on system interventions
 - Prioritize funding to support staff members' pursuit of master's degrees in rehabilitation counseling

The VR Program employs approximately 758 professional and paraprofessional rehabilitation staff. During SFY 2006, VR received 12,073 applications for services; developed 7,691 work plans; placed 4,342 Georgians with disabilities into competitive employment; and closed 4,477 client cases as successfully rehabilitated (status 26 closures). Caseloads averaged 125 clients.

Job Title	Total Positions	Current Vacancies	Projected need over next 5 years
Regional Director	13	0	3
Regional Unit Manager	48	2	10
Certified Rehabilitation Counselor	230	31	105
Provisional Rehabilitation Counselor	74	14	0
Rehabilitation Case Work Associate	15	1	0
Rehabilitation Employment Specialist	82	14	25
Rehabilitation Job Readiness Specialist	66	10	20
Rehabilitation Assistant	142	24	65

The overall vacancy rate for the program is approximately 17 percent. The vacancy rate for the Counselor series positions is approximately 14 percent. The VR Program is recruiting to fill the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor position with the Provisional Rehabilitation Counselor and the Rehabilitation Case Work Associate used to develop staff members to meet the CSPD standard of Certified Rehabilitation Counselor.

Contributing factors include:

- Retirements
- CSPD requirements
- Competition from other employers
- Insufficient applicant pool of certified rehabilitation counselors or those eligible to sit for certification.

Currently, six percent (6%) of all staff members are eligible to retire effective immediately if each were to choose the minimum of 30 years of service. Over the next five years, this figure will remain constant. Using the Individual Development Plan (IDP), the Human Resource Development Team and VR leadership are able to track, monitor and anticipate significant knowledge base changes due to the loss of experienced staff. The primary goal is to maintain adequate and competent staff to provide quality services to Georgians with disabilities.

System for Coordination with Institutions of Higher Education

VR continues to maintain established relationships with Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) that can assist it with meeting its CSPD requirements. VR currently collaborates with the following universities to provide coursework that will assist counselors in meeting the CRC standard: Auburn University, the University of Alabama, Fort Valley State University, Troy State University, Florida State University, the University of North Florida, Georgia State University, the University of Kentucky, University of South Carolina and Thomas University.

The VR Program also continues collaborative efforts with Georgia's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), specifically Albany State University and Clark-Atlanta University, to develop degree programs in rehabilitation counseling. And VR continues to maintain its relationship with the Fort Valley State University Rehabilitation Counseling Program.

The Georgia VR Program works with any and all schools that have an accredited master's program in Rehabilitation Counseling. Because qualifications are so tied to the CRC, the VR program recruits counselors who first meet the criteria of CRC. Working with the HBCUs allows recruiting from many types of minority groups and the disability community. HBCU missions greatly support the VR mission by targeting under-represented groups in larger numbers. HBCUs that offer rehabilitation counseling education offer the course of study to all eligible individuals with a priority to all minorities.

In collaboration with VR, Georgia State University was awarded a RSA long-term training grant to support further development of the master's program at GSU in order to enhance recruitment opportunities for Georgia's VR program. Through this relationship, certified rehabilitation counselors with the VR program mentor students throughout their studies, provide instructional time as guest lecturers, assist students to meet course requirements, and support qualified students in their pursuit of internship sites.

The Georgia State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) has taken an active role in retention activities. Through the efforts of the SRC, 36 VR staff members from all job classes are enrolled in the Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling program offered by the University of Kentucky.

The web-based graduate program expands the options available to VR employees who obtain a master's degree. The accelerated distance education program is to be completed in sixteen months, and in order to graduate candidates have the option to either take and pass the CRC exam, or take and pass a comprehensive exit exam.

The VR program currently has eleven staff members enrolled in the Rehabilitation Counseling Program at Thomas University and 36 staff members enrolled in the University of Kentucky program, which also awarded two counselors RSA scholarships. Of the 14 UK graduates for 2006, nine individuals have attained their CRC. Four individuals are planning to sit in the near future and one person is no longer with the agency.

**Georgia Rehabilitation Counseling Program
Enrollment and Graduates Data:**

Institutions	Students Enrolled	Employees Sponsored by GA CSPD or RSA Scholars	Graduates sponsored by GA CSPD	2006 Graduates
Georgia State University	37	0	0	16
Thomas University	61	11	3	12
Fort Valley State University	26	1	0	8

Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel

Individual Development Plan

The Individual Development Plan (IDP), as mentioned above, is a data collection tool, but also a planning tool for preparation and retention of qualified personnel. The IDP is established at the time of hire and maintained on a regular basis. At a minimum, the IDP is reviewed every six months. For those individuals involved in meeting CSPD requirements and/or actively pursuing advanced degrees, reviews are conducted at a minimum of every three months and, at times, monthly. The IDP establishes both long term career goals (beyond one year) and short term (annual) developmental and performance improvement goals.

The IDP serves as a tool to capture staff aspirations, identify what preparation is needed to attain those and, in the process, recruit, prepare and retain qualified personnel within the VR Program. It also provides a tracking method for the support provided. In supporting our personnel, the VR Program has a built-in source for potential employee/applicants for anticipated vacancies. Upon completion of the degree and attaining their CRC, those individuals can and are expected to apply for anticipated counselor vacancies.

Other VR Program staff members are encouraged to pursue position-specific certifications and, therefore, are increasing the quality of the vocational rehabilitation services they provide. Some of the certifications being obtained are Certified Resume Writer with the Professional Association of Resume Writers, Career Development Facilitator from the National Career

Development Association and the Employment Services Certificate from the University of Tennessee.

Recruitment of Individuals with Disabilities and Individuals from Minority Backgrounds

Efforts to promote recruiting and hiring of individuals with disabilities and from culturally diverse backgrounds are an integral part of the VR personnel process.

Relationships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) that offer Rehabilitation Counseling degrees, such as Fort Valley State University, Mississippi State University, and South Carolina State University are of great importance as a recruitment source for qualified rehabilitation professionals from minority backgrounds. Online and print resources such as the National Rehabilitation Association website, *Deaf Digest* and RESNA publications are also used to increase VR's visibility for recruitment of persons with diverse backgrounds.

VR welcomes and supports a diverse workforce by hiring individuals with disabilities. The program maintains affiliations with disability organizations and advertises career opportunities in disability related publications. Recruiting minorities, including people with disabilities, enables VR to employ highly competent people from all segments of society who can effectively support VR's mission of assisting people with disabilities to work in Georgia.

Internship Opportunities

The VR Program continues to recruit new counseling staff from institutions of higher education. Attendance at the RSA Region retention and recruitment meetings/trainings, regular contact with colleges and universities, and participation in job fairs to discuss paid internships and career opportunities within the VR Program have been extremely beneficial. Also, job and internship announcements are posted continuously on various websites including the one for the Georgia Department of Labor and the State of Georgia Job Site. VR also accesses the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training resource materials at Utah State University.

The agency has 24 paid internship opportunities. Since March 2006, VR has hosted a total of 16 interns from Fort Valley State University, Georgia State University, Troy State University, Wisconsin-Stout University, Mississippi State University, Thomas University, South Carolina State University, and the University of Tennessee. From this group of 16, VR hired four as certified rehabilitation counselors. VR currently has eight interns.

Retention

As is common with all state VR agencies, the Georgia VR Program continues to be challenged with the high attrition rate of vocational rehabilitation counselors, primarily because of salary limitations and the limited number of graduates from Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling programs.

VR re-established a CSPD committee to look at and make recommendations regarding succession planning. One purpose of the committee was to implement a plan that supports

quality service delivery and positive outcomes provided by VR program staff, specifically those in the counselor series. The recommended plan realigned the counselor series to accurately reflect the competency level with the job duties. VR's standard is Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, the only position authorized to independently perform the core functions of: Eligibility Determination, Determination of Priority Category, Development of Work Plans (IPE), Authorization of Funds, and Case Closure.

There are also two developmental positions, Provisional Rehabilitation Counselor and Rehabilitation Case Work Associate, which will be used to recruit and develop certified rehabilitation counselors. The committee is also looking into the utilization of VR resources to best retain qualified staff. The changes have created a clear career path for all employees, allowing staff statewide to work with a common understanding of position expectations.

Succession Planning

VR is anticipating the retirement of several leaders and is cognizant of the need for leadership succession. The agency's internal mentoring program serves as a tool for leadership development, as well as the leadership training discussed elsewhere in this document. This allows qualified staff the opportunity to more fully understand the role and responsibilities of current managers so that they can make informed decisions when choosing leadership positions within the agency. Similarly, the leadership succession program promotes internal recruitment of experienced VR managers into leadership positions as more senior managers retire or resign.

In addition, the "On-Boarding" developmental process allows incoming staff to have more in-depth, position-specific orientation and training. Simultaneously, the new staff receives the global and historical perspective of vocational rehabilitation that is necessary for a leadership role in whichever position is held. This information is provided via paper or electronic media. Each topic presented has learning objectives, information, tasks to complete for more in-depth self-study and a listing of resources. There is a General Knowledge Resource book available for all positions and a role specific resource book for the five major service providing positions.

Peer mentors for the new staff work closely with both the materials and the managers of the new staff in providing their services. Mentors bridge the gap between what is written and the best daily practices to achieve the ultimate positive outcome. As mentors, individuals participate in the complexities of developing an individual's abilities, thus experiencing what could potentially be their own future in management. Additionally, as new staff gains experience, many choose to return the positive support they received and become mentors.

Personnel Standards

VR's goal is to hire and retain staff with the competencies needed to improve individual performance and agency outcomes. Georgia state law does not require certification or licensure for rehabilitation professionals or paraprofessionals. Currently, Georgia has only established CSPD standards for the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor position, that of certification as a rehabilitation counselor – CRC.

Georgia's CSPD plan went into effect on April 1, 1999, and required all vocational rehabilitation counselors to obtain CRC credentials by December 31, 2006. When the plan was implemented, less than 30 percent of the counselors were certified. Currently over 70 percent of VR program leadership (staff members not in counselor roles but having impact on the quality of VR services) have the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credential with over 77 percent of our counselors meeting the standard of CRC.

The VR Program has 319 positions in the counselor series with 273 filled positions. There are 211 certified rehabilitation counselors (CRC), 55 provisional rehabilitation counselors and 7 case work associates. One hundred percent (100%) of the CRCs meet the standard and are eligible to perform the core functions of a certified rehabilitation counselor. The other 62 staff members in the counselor series have Individual Development Plans (IDPs) and are working towards the standard of Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. Of the 62 staff members, 34 are eligible to sit for the CRC exam but to-date have either not taken (needing more experience or CRC supervision) or passed the exam. VR's standard allows for non-CRC individuals to be hired and to work towards certification (CRC) in the counselor series with a reasonable timeframe to reach the standard.

The VR Program is concerned for those vocational rehabilitation counselors who did not meet the CSPD standard by December 2006. While they will continue to have a position within the GDOL/VR program, they will not be able to independently perform the following duties: Determination of Eligibility, Determination of Priority Category, Development of a Work Plan (IPE), Authorization of Funds, Closure of a Case, or mentorship with other staff members. VR will follow internal Human Resource policy to address the gap in qualifications and performance expectations. VR is committed to the implementation of a training plan to assist personnel, particularly vocational rehabilitation counselors, to meet the highest requirements in the State.

Status of Qualified Personnel

Certified Rehabilitation Counselors employed as Counselors

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
88	110	115	139	144	177	185	211

As the VR Program has successfully supported counselors in achieving their certifications, the focus is expanding to include other qualified rehabilitation personnel. VR analyzed the direct service providing positions and conducted a study on realigning staff to meet the needs of Georgians with Disabilities. The elements of the study included geography, availability of appropriate services, population estimates, staff expertise and expected retirements. Most recently the CSPD Committee has been re-employed as the best tool for analyzing and determining what is a "qualified rehabilitation professional" beyond the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. As the definition is clarified, systems are being placed to provide support to those who need additional training as well as to recognize those who set the standard.

Strategies for Recruitment, Retention and Hiring

Recruitment of all positions is an on-going process. Externally, for counselors, a consistent relationship with universities to provide and coordinate internships, mentoring and on-site presentations keeps the focus on state Vocational Rehabilitation as a viable employer. Internally, support for all staff towards the attainment of a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling promotes both retention and promotion. Both strategies seem to be fruitful.

For other positions, relationships within the Georgia Department of Labor and Rehabilitation Services, the Georgia Department of Human Resources and our collaborative partners have yielded an experienced source of applicants with backgrounds in employment services, social services and medical knowledge. Vocational Rehabilitation has a positive reputation as an employer that provides individualized developmental opportunities for all staff members, very similar to the same quality of service provided to our vocational rehabilitation clients.

Certified Rehabilitation Counselors serving in the role as counselor are compensated at a pay grade higher than provisional rehabilitation counselors. After a provisional rehabilitation counselor completes his/her master's degree (staff members have a reasonable timeframe to obtain experience and course work completion) and passes the CRC exam, he/she is eligible to be considered for promotion to the certified rehabilitation counselor pay grade.

Rehabilitation Case Work Associates have a 48 month timeframe to complete their master's degree program. Upon completion of the Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, Rehabilitation Case Work Associates are eligible for promotion into the Provisional Rehabilitation Counselor position. Upon attainment of the rehabilitation counselor certification (CRC) the Provisional Rehabilitation Counselor is eligible for an additional promotion.

Coordination with In-Service Training

The VR Program monitors and manages the developmental activities as outlined by the CSPD State Plan approved in 1998. This is managed in coordination with the Federal In-Service Training Grant for Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation and the use of Section 110 funds for training purposes.

The performance improvement coordinators and the 13 regional Human Resource Development (HRD) specialists work together to ensure that staff members in the counselor series are able to meet the standard and/or complete an Individual Development Plan (IDP) to meet the standard. Each region's HRD specialist monitors counselor IDPs, assures appropriate academic choices, and monitors student progress for grades and academic success. This information is shared with regional management teams, the VR Program's administrative operations manager, and performance improvement coordinators.

The VR Program works closely with universities in developing programs that meet the standards of the Commission on Rehabilitation Education (CORE). The VR director, regional directors, assistant VR program directors and other staff members serve as liaisons among the agency,

students, and universities to deal with issues that may arise during the process of meeting the standard.

The VR Program is committed to using in-service training grant funds to address Georgia VR's needs assessments. To that end, funds are expended for the planning, support and execution of training opportunities to meet the CSPD standard including degree programs, CRC accredited training and skill development opportunities.

Additionally, in-service training grant funds are directly supporting position-specific statewide knowledge and skills development for all unit positions. For the Rehabilitation Employment Specialists, training has been developed and is being delivered on ADA Title I, Accessibility Surveys, Job Analysis and Employer Relations, to name a few. For Rehabilitation Job Readiness Specialists, grant funds will support the development and implementation of advanced courses on resume development, interviewing skills and job search techniques for persons with disabilities and how to lead and motivate a job search club. With the increasing use of technology for case management and purchasing, the in-service training grant is supporting the development of courses designed to assist Rehabilitation Assistants who serve multiple rehabilitation counselors. Finally, the focus for Unit Managers is leadership, teamwork, coaching and hiring from an increasingly mobile workforce. This process is ongoing and continuous.

Staff Performance Evaluation

Annually, VR reviews performance standards for rehabilitation staff to determine if they are consistent with actual job functions, agency values, and Rehabilitation Act mandates. This review includes the Individual Development Plans to meet CSPD requirements. The annual Performance Management Form (PMF) for all VR staff includes activities and initiatives that are tied to improving the VR Program's production of successful employment outcomes.

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) continues to review and provide valuable input in various plans, policies, and procedures concerning recruitment, retention, staff development, and personnel standards of VR professionals. The SRC's comments have been incorporated where appropriate.

Staff Development

VR believes that well-trained professional staff members are essential to providing quality services to individuals with disabilities and achieving positive employment outcomes for VR consumers. VR is committed to continuous improvement of staff skills and providing opportunities for staff career development.

Each year, VR receives an In-Service Training grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to provide skills development for VR staff. The agency also takes advantage of all relevant training opportunities for staff, including the annual Georgia Rehabilitation Association training conference that assists vocational rehabilitation counselors in maintaining their certifications.

Staff members who aspire to supervisory or administrative roles are encouraged to participate in leadership courses, including: the interactive Georgia Department of Labor - Executive Commitment to Excellence in Leadership (EXCEL) program, GDOL's annual new supervisor training workshop for staff members who have assumed supervisory roles, and the Georgia State University - Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program Institute for New Supervisors. Each of these programs prepares individuals for leadership and administrative positions and builds on the skills that a new supervisor will need.

VR is committed to an accurate assessment of the training needs of all employees. The 13 regional Human Resource Development specialists assist regional management teams in ongoing assessments of staff developmental needs. Individually, this is tied directly to the performance appraisal process. Each year, these needs are addressed through regional training plans. These plans are used to foster sustainment training specific for each job class through regional training activities and agency-sponsored programs.

Annual training seminars for VR field staff positions emphasize performance improvement through skills and knowledge development critical to each of the field positions: Rehabilitation Unit Manager, Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, Provisional Rehabilitation Counselor, Rehabilitation Case Work Associate, Rehabilitation Employment Specialist, Rehabilitation Job Readiness Specialist, and Rehabilitation Assistant. The courses are designed to provide staff members with the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of persons with disabilities in their pursuit of employment and to facilitate the development of relationships with local businesses to create cohesion that produces employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Georgia.

The VR Assistive Work Technology (AWT) Unit is comprised of internal specialists who provide continuous information and service to staff in the area of rehabilitation technology. Bi- and tri-regional teams of rehabilitation engineers, technologists, technicians and occupational therapists have the necessary knowledge, skills and tools to provide technology expertise to service delivery teams. Team responsibilities include providing technology assessments for consumers and businesses, home and van modification recommendations and installation of adaptive computer equipment, seating, and positioning services, and design and fabrication of assistive technology when necessary.

VR is committed to maintaining a staff with state-of-the-art skills and knowledge of vocational rehabilitation theory and practice. A library of materials, in a variety of formats, including print, audiotape, videotape, Braille, large print, and CD-ROM, is maintained as part of the In-Service Training program.

VR regularly reviews the offerings available through a variety of sources, including materials from the National Clearing House of Rehabilitation Training, the Journal of Rehabilitation, list serves, Southeast Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center information, and publications of the Institute for Rehabilitation Issues. With access to the Internet and Intranet, staff members remain current on research findings and state-of-the art advances.

The Human Resource Development Team (HRDT) gathers information on regional and individual developmental needs to establish the statewide plan that addresses performance improvement in the VR program. Working with subject matter experts, the HRDT has created foundation courses for all field service positions. Some of the topics include: Rehabilitation Laws, Accessibility Surveys, Job Analysis, and Disability Awareness; these courses will be offered in 2007. Additionally, the HRDT continues to develop such courses as Job Readiness Training, Job Club, Coaching and Leadership. The Case Management course continues to be offered annually for all vocational rehabilitation counselors. The training addresses determination of eligibility, needs assessment, work plan development, expenditure of funds, case/caseload management, and case closures. All vocational rehabilitation counselors and unit managers are required to participate in this training. Through regional and state-wide training efforts, all VR staff members have access to such topics as assessment, vocational counseling, and rehabilitation technology.

The Performance Improvement Unit provides oversight and guidance and is responsible for coordinating efforts with the HRD specialists to monitor staff development plan progress on an annual basis.

Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

VR will continue to provide specific services for staff, applicants, clients and individuals based upon their needs. Interpreting, transliterating and captioning services are among the services provided for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind individuals. Every VR office has a telecommunication device for the deaf (TDD).

The agency currently contracts with Communication Access Network of America, Inc. to provide video remote interpreting services for VR staff and clients across the state. This service will help with the critical shortage of qualified interpreters in Georgia.

Braille, audiotapes, reader service, computer disks, CDs, large print, e-mail and other forms of assistance are provided for individuals who have visual impairments.

VR also utilizes Network Omni Translation Telephone Services to communicate with all non-English speaking consumers and constituents. Network Omni provides multilingual translation services in 150 languages.

Currently, there is a need for counselors who can communicate with Georgia's Hispanic population. Staff members are encouraged to participate in the opportunity to attend academic courses to enable them to communicate with persons whose second language is English. Staff members who are able to communicate in a second language fluently are eligible for salary supplement. Georgia VR networks with the Asian and Pacific Island Technical Assistance Center, and also participates in the annual Latino Summit.

VR currently has a staff person of Latino heritage in each of the geographic areas identified as having large Hispanic populations. Dedicated efforts are ongoing to recruit in these areas. Concentrated outreach training helps to address the needs of our diversified clientele, and.

maintaining relationships with HBCUs, whose efforts also focus on attracting students of Hispanic and Asian descent also reflects a key effort to address this recruitment issue.

Coordination of Personnel Development Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act

In coordination with the Georgia Department of Education (GDOE), VR is dedicated to providing quality services to Georgia's students with disabilities under the auspices of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

VR shares a strong and effective partnership with GDOE. The two agencies have established a state level cooperative agreement to assure that cooperation and collaboration exist in implementing and maintaining a system of vocational rehabilitation service delivery to eligible students with disabilities.

VR continues to be an active participant on the Georgia Statewide Transition Steering Committee, whose overall purpose is to bring together all interested parties, statewide, to provide input and participate in all possible avenues effecting the successful transition of youth with disabilities from school to adult activities. Through the VR Statewide Transition Services Coordinator, appropriate and relevant committee information is shared with VR Field Services, particularly VR counselors for transition and other counselors working with students.

VR and GDOE currently collaborate on many in-service training initiatives including the Touch the Future Expo and Transition Conference, a training conference focused on ensuring that people with disabilities transition into the future with assistive technology. In early November 2006, this semi-annual conference collaborated with the Georgia Department of Labor's (GDOL) annual Workforce Development Conference and brought together GDOL employees, educators, VR staff, providers of services for mental health, developmental disabilities, and addictive diseases, assistive technology, augmentative communication, and others. Workshops and seminars provided both focused and overlapping training, enhancing learning and information sharing among all participants.

VR also provides cooperative professional development programs for local high school special education teachers, job coaches, rehabilitation counselors, and community-based personnel who serve students with disabilities. Training focuses on development and implementation of community-based work transition services for students with disabilities.