

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

The Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL)/Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program’s Human Resource Development (HRD) unit has the primary responsibility for the relationship with educational institutions and maintenance of the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD).

Georgia’s long-term goals are:

- 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.
- Continue to link training to staff competencies.
- Work with the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to develop standards for all positions on a nationwide basis.

**COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

The GDOL/VR program collects personnel data regarding the number of positions and vacancies in each job category, the number of incumbents who are eligible for retirement during the next five years, their years of service with the state of Georgia, credentials, educational levels, and certifications within the agency.

During FY 2004, 764 professional and paraprofessional rehabilitation staff participated in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services for the GDOL/VR Program. During this period, GDOL/VR received 13,063 applications for services; developed 8,481 work plans; placed 4,231 Georgians with disabilities into competitive employment; closed 4,586 client cases as successfully rehabilitated (status 26 closures), and closed 3,483 client cases as unsuccessfully rehabilitated (status 28 closures). Caseloads averaged 64 clients.

<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Total Positions</b>	<b>Current Vacancies</b>	<b>Projected need over next 5 years</b>
Regional Director	13	0	6
Regional Unit Managers	50	3	10
Certified Rehabilitation Counselor	177	33	85
Rehabilitation Counselor	84	0	45
Rehabilitation Counselor Associate	11	0	10
Rehabilitation Employment Specialists	90	19	45
Rehabilitation Job Readiness Specialists	58	5	35
Rehabilitation Assistant	129	26	65

The overall vacancy rate for the program is over 14 %. The vacancy rate for the counselor job series (Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, Rehabilitation Counselor, Rehabilitation Counselor Associate) is running constant at 11%.

Contributing factors include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retirement</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CSPD Requirements</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competition from Other Employers</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient applicant pool for certified rehabilitation counselors or those eligible to sit for certification.</li> </ul>

Currently, three percent of all staff is 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. The primary goal is to maintain adequate and competent staff to provide quality services to Georgians with disabilities.

## **RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES**

### **Coordination with Institutions of Higher Education**

GDOL/VR continues to maintain established relationships with Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) that can assist GDOL/VR with meeting its CSPD requirements. GDOL/VR currently collaborates with San Diego State University, University of North Texas, Auburn University, the University of Alabama, Fort Valley State University, Florida State University, University of North Florida, Georgia State University, University of Kentucky, and Thomas University to provide coursework that will assist counselors in meeting the CRC standards.

GDOL/VR continues collaborative efforts with Georgia's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); Fort Valley State University, Albany State University, Clark-Atlanta University, Morehouse College, Morehouse College School of Medicine, and Spelman College, to develop degree programs in rehabilitation counseling.

Georgia State University in collaboration with GDOL/VR were awarded a RSA long-term training grant to support further development of the master's program at GSU to enhance recruitment opportunities for Georgia VR. Similar collaborative grant efforts are also in place with the University of Kentucky.

The Georgia State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) has taken an active role in retention activities. Through the efforts of the SRC, forty GDOL/VR staff 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 GDOL/VR employees who must obtain a master's degree to meet CSPD requirements. The accelerated distance education program is to be completed in sixteen months with the exit exam for the degree being the option to take and pass the CRC exam or take a comprehensive exit exam.

## Rehabilitation Counseling Program Enrollment and Graduates Data:

Institutions	Students Enrolled	Employees Sponsored by GA CSPD or RSA Scholars	Graduates sponsored by GA CSPD	2005 Graduates
Georgia State University	33	0	0	Information not avail.*
University of Georgia**	0	0	0	
Thomas University	46	17	7	0
Fort Valley State University	32	0	0	24
Auburn University	19	5	4	9
University of Alabama	11	2	1	19
San Diego State	94	4	3	4
University of North Texas (CDER)				11
University of Kentucky	40	40	19	19

\*Georgia State University does not have access to the number of graduates from the MRC program until graduation audits have been completed and students are cleared for graduation.

\*\* The University of Georgia's Master in Rehabilitation Counseling is still a degree that is offered at the University; however, enrollment in classes has been closed for the last decade.

### Recruitment of Individuals with Disabilities and Individuals from Minority Backgrounds

Efforts to promote recruiting and hiring of certified individuals with disabilities and staff from culturally diverse backgrounds is an integral part of the GDOL/VR personnel process.

Relationships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) 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.

GDOL/VR welcomes and supports a diverse workforce by hiring individuals with disabilities. This includes affiliations with disability organizations and advertising career opportunities in disability related publications. Recruiting minorities and people with disabilities enables GDOL/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

GDOL/VR continues to recruit new counseling staff from institutions of higher education. Attendance at the RSA Region IV Retention & Recruitment Conference, regular contact with colleges and universities, and participation in job fairs to discuss paid internships and career opportunities within the Georgia VR Program have been extremely beneficial. Also, job and

internship announcements are posted continuously on various websites including the GDOL webpage, the State of Georgia Job Site, and Oklahoma Clearinghouse web page.

GDOL/VR has 24 internship opportunities with 18 of them paid. Since March 2004, GDOL/VR has hosted a total of 18 interns from Fort Valley State University, Georgia State University, Auburn University, South Carolina State University, University of Tennessee, and University of Arkansas. Of this 18, GDOL/VR hired six as Certified Rehabilitation Counselors. GDOL/VR currently has six interns.

## **Retention**

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

GDOL/VR has established a Human Resources Realignment Committee to look at and make recommendations regarding succession management. The purpose of the Human Resource Realignment Initiative is to design a realignment model that supports implementation of qualitative and quantitative service delivery and outcomes of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program, and to check the accuracy and viability of the utilization of VR Resources.

The recommendations for realignment of the field services delivery staff have been implemented and the changes have created a clearer career path for all employees and allowed all the positions statewide to work from the same expectations. This has reduced the confusion of expectations across regional boundary lines and allowed the ability to transfer from region to region without having to learn new methods.

The GDOL/VR Program also created the position of vocational rehabilitation counselor associate (VRC-A), which allows a career path to the position of certified rehabilitation counselor.

## **Succession Planning**

GDOL/VR is anticipating the retirement of several leaders and is cognizant of the need for leadership succession. The agency's internal mentor program serves as a tool for leadership development. This program provides staff that are interested in leadership roles an opportunity to be mentored by current managers in a formalized series of activities. 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 GDOL/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 receive the global and historical perspective of vocational rehabilitation that is necessary for a leadership role in whatever position they hold.

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 resources listed. There is a General Knowledge On-Boarding Handbook for all positions and a role specific handbook for each major service providing position.

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**

GDOL/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. Georgia has only established CSPD standards for the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor positions, that of certification as a rehabilitation counselor – CRC.

On, April 1, 1999, Georgia's CSPD plan went into effect, requiring all vocational rehabilitation counselors to obtain CRC credentials by December 31, 2006. When the plan was implemented, less than 30% of the counselors were certified.

To date, the VR program has 305 positions in the counselor series. Of these, 177 are CRC Rehabilitation Counselor positions and 100% meet the standard with 33 vacancies. In the Rehabilitation Counselor series, there are 84 positions. Of this 84, 75% will meet the standard or retire before the December 31, 2006 deadline. The 11 Rehabilitation Counselor Associates are exempt from CSPD because they perform contractual duties; however five are graduating with a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling in May 2005.

Georgia VR is committed to the implementation of a retraining plan to assist personnel, particularly vocational rehabilitation counselors, to meet the highest requirements in the State. In FY 2004, funds totaling \$163,790.50 were expended to support these efforts. The source of funding included the Federal Training Grant and Social Security reimbursement funds.

**Status Of Qualified Personnel**  
Certified Rehabilitation Counselors

1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
54	88	110	115	139	144	177

## **COMPENSATION**

Certified Rehabilitation Counselors are compensated at a pay grade higher than vocational rehabilitation counselors. After a vocational rehabilitation counselor completes his/her Master's Degree and passes the CRC exam, he/she is eligible for promotion to the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor pay grade at the next pay period.

Rehabilitation Counselor Associates have three years to complete their Master's Degree program. Upon completion of the Master's Degree program, Rehabilitation Counselor Associates are promoted to Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors.

## **STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING**

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

Each year, GDOL/VR receives an In-Service Training grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to provide skills development for GDOL/VR staff. The agency also takes advantage of all relevant training opportunities for staff, including the annual Georgia Rehabilitation Association training conference and the Georgia Rehabilitation Counselors Association 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 GDOL Executive Commitment to Excellence in Leadership (EXCEL) program, GDOL's annual new supervisor training workshop for staff members who have assumed supervisor roles, and the GSU-RRCEP 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.

GDOL/VR is committed to an accurate assessment of the training needs of all employees. The 13 regional Human Resources Development/Continuous Quality Improvement (HRD/CQI) 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 vocational rehabilitation counselors emphasize performance improvement and training seminars for GDOL/VR Rehabilitation Employment Specialists emphasize performance improvement in the development of relationships with local businesses to create employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Georgia.

GDOL/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.

GDOL/VR regularly reviews the offerings available through a variety of sources, including the National Clearing House of Rehabilitation Training Materials, 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 remains current on research findings and state-of-the art advances.

The HRD/CQI team works together to gather information on regional and individual developmental needs in order to establish a statewide plan to improve performance in the GDOL/VR program. A standardized new employee orientation program has been implemented, which includes the use of an assigned mentor and assistance with the creation and implementation of the Individualized Developmental Plans.

The HRD/CQI Team also designed, with subject matter experts, case management training for all vocational rehabilitation counselors. The training addresses determination of eligibility, work plan development, expenditure of funds, case closures, and case management. All vocational rehabilitation counselors are required to participate in this training. The regional HRD/CQI specialists with subject matter experts are currently developing sustainment training for all field service positions.

Unit Managers/Regional Directors meet regularly for visionary planning and consideration of performance improvement issues. Seminars this year focus on cost containment of case service funds, leadership and ethics, succession planning, and strategies regional best practices for delivering quality service, providing services within parameters of policy, to meet/exceed federal performance indicators and standards, and the realignment of field service positions.

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

## **COMMUNICATION NEEDS OF DIVERSE POPULATIONS**

GDOL/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 GDOL/VR office has a Telecommunication Device for the Deaf.

The agency is currently in negotiation with Communication Access Network to provide Video Remote Interpreting equipment in VR offices across the state. This service will help with the critical shortage of qualified interpreters in Georgia.

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

GDOL/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.

The opportunity is provided for employees to attend academic courses to enable them to communicate with persons whose second language is English. Currently, there is a need for counselors who can communicate with Georgia's Hispanic population.

## **ASSISTIVE WORK TECHNOLOGY**

The Georgia VR Assistive Work Technology Services (AWT) is comprised of internal specialists who provide continuous education and service to staff in the area of rehabilitation technology. 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 assessment for consumers and businesses, home and van modification standards, recommendations of adaptive computer equipment, seating, and positioning, and design and fabrication of assistive technology when necessary.

## **COORDINATION OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER IDEA**

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

GDOL/VR shares a strong and effective partnership with DOE. 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.

In FY 2004, GDOL/VR furthered its already strong partnership with the Georgia Department of Education (DOE) by organizing and hosting joint meetings in all thirteen GDOL/VR Regions. The GDOL/VR State Transition Coordinator, Regional Directors, and HRD-CQI Specialists organized and hosted the meetings. Each LSS Special Education Director and transition-involved school staff were invited to talk about what we are doing together that works well, what could be improved, and how can we address the needs of students with disabilities even more efficiently and effectively.

GDOL/VR and DOE currently collaborates on many in-service training initiatives including the Touch the Future Expo and Transition Conference. This training conference ensures that people with disabilities transition into the future with assistive technology. Another event planned is the Orientation and Education Conference on Transition to be held in July 2005.

GDOL/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.

## **COORDINATION OF THE CSPD AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING**

The CSPD Coordinator is charged with monitoring and managing developmental activities as outlined by the CSPD State Plan approved in 1998. This individual is also charged with managing the Federal In-Service Training Grant for Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation and assuring that appropriate requests for expenditures are made.

The CSPD Coordinator works with the Performance Improvement Coordinator and the 13 regional HRD/CQI Specialists to assure that staff members are meeting the standards and completing the Individual Development Plan (IDP) with appropriate short and long-term goals. The Coordinator monitors counselor IDPs and assures appropriate academic choices. The Regional HRD/CQI Specialists monitor student progress locally for grades and academic success and also forwards all grades and training requests for classes to the CSPD Coordinator.

The Coordinator works closely with universities in developing programs that meet the standards of the Commission on Rehabilitation Education (CORE). The Coordinator also serves as the liaison between the agency, students, and university to negotiate fees to meet the rate that is equal to or less than the state rate for courses and to deal with issues that may arise during the process of meeting the standard.

The CSPD coordinator works with the Performance Improvement Coordinator to bring together the objectives of CSPD and Georgia VR's needs assessment. They commit to using in-service training grants funds toward the planning and execution of training opportunities, which are applicable to degree programs, CRC accredited training, and skill development opportunities. This process is ongoing and continuous.

## **STAFF PERFORMANCE EVALUATION**

Annually, GDOL/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 Review Form (PMF) of all GDOL/VR staff includes activities and initiatives that are tied to improving the GDOL/VR Program's production of successful employment outcomes.

## **REVIEW OF PLAN BY THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL**

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 GDOL/VR professionals. The SRC's comments have been incorporated where appropriate.