

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).

Georgia's 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, and beyond.
- 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. Additional data 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.

The Human Resource Development Team (HRDT) along with VR leadership applies the principles of Human Performance Improvement in our collection and analysis of data. Specifically:

- ✓ Performance Analysis (Front-End Analysis)
 - Identify organization's performance results and compare them to its' objectives and capabilities
 - Identify individual's performance results and compare them to his/her objectives and capabilities
 - Identify system issues related to above 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, Individual Development Plans (IDP) to develop Needs Assessment of local needs
 - Take all the above data and use it to create the Statewide Needs Assessment report and plan accordingly to address identified needs
- ✓ 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 and interventions to address identified need
 - Prioritize funding to support staff members pursuit of masters degree in rehabilitation counseling

The Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL), Vocational Rehabilitation Program, employs 764 professional and paraprofessional rehabilitation staff. During FY 2005, GDOL VR received 12,165 applications for services; developed 8,021 work plans; placed 4,387 Georgians with disabilities into competitive employment; closed 4,828 client cases as successfully rehabilitated (status 26 closures) as well as, closed 4,172 client cases as unsuccessfully rehabilitated (status 28 closures). Caseloads averaged 90 clients.

Job Title	Total Positions	Current Vacancies	Projected need over next 5 years
Regional Director	13	3	3
Regional Unit Managers	50	3	10
Certified Rehabilitation Counselor	185	24	105
Rehabilitation Counselor	68	0	0
Rehabilitation Counselor Associate	11	0	5
Rehabilitation Employment Specialists	90	10	25
Rehabilitation Job Readiness Specialists	58	4	20
Rehabilitation Assistant	129	12	65

The overall vacancy rate for the program is over 10 %. The vacancy rate for the counselor job series (Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, Rehabilitation Counselor, and Rehabilitation Counselor Associate) is running constant at 8%.

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

Currently, six 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 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); Albany State University, Clark-Atlanta University, to develop degree programs in rehabilitation counseling. Also, GDOL VR continues to maintain its relationship with the Fort Valley State University Rehabilitation Counseling Program.

The GA VR Program works with any and all schools that have an accredited masters program in Rehabilitation Counseling. Because our qualifications are so tied to the CRC, we recruit counselors who first meet the criteria of CRC. Working with the HBCUs affords us to recruit from many types of minority groups and the disability community. HBCUs missions are different than the more traditional university. Those institutions seek to educate under represented groups in larger numbers. HBCU that offer rehabilitation counseling education offer the course of study to all eligible individuals with a priority to all minorities.

Georgia State University in collaboration with GDOL VR 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 Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Through this relationship, Certified Rehabilitation Counselors mentor students throughout the length of 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, 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 obtain a master's degree. 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.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program currently has nine counselors enrolled in the Rehabilitation Counseling Program at Thomas University and twenty-five staff enrolled in the University of Kentucky program. The University of Kentucky awarded two counselors RSA scholarships.

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	39	0	0	10
University of Georgia*	0	0	0	0
Thomas University	46	17	9	24
Fort Valley State University	32	0	3	9

* 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 since 1993-94.

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. We also use net publications such as the NRA website and Deaf Digest and RESNA to increase our visibility in recruitment of persons with diverse 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 including, 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 paid internship opportunities. Since March 2005, GDOL VR has hosted a total of 25 interns from Fort Valley State University, Georgia State University, Auburn University, South Carolina State University, University of Tennessee, and University of Arkansas. Of this 25, GDOL VR hired ten as Certified Rehabilitation Counselors. GDOL VR currently has six interns.

Retention

As is 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, as well as the leadership training discussed on page six of this document. This program provides staff members who are interested in leadership roles and 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 receives the global and historical perspective of vocational rehabilitation that is necessary for a leadership role in whichever 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 a listing of resources. 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.

The VR Program has 297 positions in the counselor series; 24 of those positions are vacant. There are 185 CRC Rehabilitation Counselors, 68 Rehabilitation Counselors and 11 Counselor Associates. Seventy-five percent of the 68 Rehabilitation Counselors will meet the CSPD standard by December 31, 2006. The 11 Rehabilitation Counselor Associates are exempt from CSPD because he/she performs contractual duties. Georgia VR's standard allows for non-CRC to be hired and to work towards Certification (CRC) in the counselor series.

GDOL VR Program is concerned for those Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors who will not meet the CSPD standard by December 2006. For those who do not meet the standard, they will continue to have a job but they will not be able to perform the following duties: Determination of Eligibility, Development of a Work Plan (IPE), authorization of funds, closure of a case, or mentorship with other staff members. Georgia VR will follow internal Human Resource policy to address the gap in qualifications and performance expectations.

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 2005, funds totaling \$ 252,410.05 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

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

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 to be considered 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 well-trained professional staff members are 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 (HRD) 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 five field positions: Unit Manager, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Employment Specialist, 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.

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 Human Resource Development team (HRDT) gathers information on regional and individual developmental needs to establish the statewide plan that addresses performance improvement in the GDOL VR program. The HRDT is in the process of designing, with subject matter experts, foundational courses for all field service positions. Some of the topics include: Rehabilitation Laws, Accessibility Surveys, Job Analysis, Disability Awareness, Job Readiness Training, Job Club, Coaching and Leadership. The HRDT continues to offer case management training 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.

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.

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, e-mail 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.

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. GA VR continues to network with the Asian and Pacific Island Technical Assistance Center. GDOL VR also participates in the Latino Summit.

Georgia GDOL VR currently has a Latino staff person in each of the areas identified as having large Hispanic populations. The efforts to recruit in this areas never stop with a VR staff member dedicating a large portion of Outreach training to these focus areas to address the needs of our diversified clientele. Our relationships with HBCU are a key effort to address this issue in recruitment given their efforts to recruit and educate students of Hispanic and Asian descent.

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 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.

VR continues to be an active partner of the Georgia Statewide Transition Steering Committee, along with the new DOE Transition Coordinator. The overall purpose of the group is to bring together all interested parties, statewide, to provide input and participate in all possible avenues of effecting the successful transition of youth with disabilities from school to adult activities. The VR Statewide Transition Services Coordinator shares information gained through the Committee with VR Field Services, particularly VR Counselors for Transition and other counselors working with students.

GDOL VR and DOE currently collaborate 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. The next such conference is

planned for November 2006. An Orientation to Education Training Seminar was held in July 2005 in response to a survey of VR counselors who work with students with disabilities transitioning to employment. A need expressed within the survey was for a better understanding of the secondary and post-secondary educational systems, how they are organized and function at both the state and local levels, and how VR can more effectively interact with them. VR Counselors, Regional Directors and Unit Managers attended. Trainers and speakers were from local school systems, the DOE State Office, Board of Regents, Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE), Georgia Student Finance Commission, and included VR staff and VR clients.

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 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 Coordinator and the 13 regional HRD Specialists work together to assure that staff members are meeting the standards and completing the Individual Development Plan (IDP) with appropriate short and long-term goals. Each Region's HRD Specialist monitors counselor IDPs, assures appropriate academic choices, and monitor student progress for grades and academic success. This information is shared with regional management teams and the VR program Administrative Operations Manager, and Performance Improvement Coordinator.

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

The VR Program is committed to using in-service training grants funds toward the planning and execution of training opportunities to meet the CSPD standard and Georgia's VR needs assessments, 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 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.