

STATE'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES

The Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) Rehabilitation Services (RS) 110 Program includes the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program, the Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation (RWSIR), and the Business Enterprise Program (BEP). The 110 Program developed priorities and defined them in the mission, vision, goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan below with input from the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), RWSIR Executive Committee, BEP Committee of Blind Vendors, advocacy groups and constituents, public and private partners (including those in the Workforce Investment Act system), results of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment, public comment hearings (summarized in Appendix I) and analysis of the federal evaluation standards and performance indicators. This process also identified priority needs for facility improvements for Georgia's two residential rehabilitation programs. Specific strategies to achieve these goals and objectives are detailed in Attachment 4.11(d).

Georgia Department of Labor Rehabilitation Services **2008 Vocational Rehabilitation (110 Program)** **Strategic Plan**

Mission:

To prepare people with disabilities to achieve successful employment and independence and to support businesses in meeting their workforce needs.

We will accomplish this by collaborating with public and private partners and providing services that:

- Assist individuals with disabilities to attain their work goals and increase self-sufficiency through assessment, rehabilitation counseling, work skills preparation, training and education, assistive technology, job placement and support services.
- Assist employers to meet their business needs through referral of qualified job applicants with disabilities to fill vacancies, support in retaining job incumbents with disabilities, training and technical assistance.

Vision:

To be the premier organization that assists people with disabilities to maximize their work potential and level of independence.

Goals and Objectives:

- I. Assist people with disabilities to go to work.
 - a. Of the people with disabilities who commit to a work plan and participate in the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program, at least 55.8% (the federal performance standard) will obtain and retain employment for a minimum of 90 days in the fiscal year.

- b. The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) will boost employment opportunities for licensed blind vendors by adding two new facilities during the fiscal year.
 - c. The Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation (RWSIR) will increase the number of “work ready” VR Unit student graduates by 10% (15 students).
 - d. The 110 Program will expand capacity for comprehensive vocational assessments in areas of the state that have insufficient vocational evaluation resources.
 - e. The VR Assistive Technology Unit will increase access to assistive technology devices statewide to enable clients to go to work.
- II. Enhance services to unserved and underserved populations.
- a. The 110 Program will augment services for customers who are Blind, Deaf or Deaf-Blind to increase employment outcomes for this population by 5% (29 additional clients successfully employed).
 - b. The 110 Program will provide specialized staff training and resources to improve customer service for individuals with limited English proficiency.
 - c. The 110 Program will design customized vocational rehabilitation services for veterans, including a partnership between RWSIR and Fort Benning for veterans at the Martin Community Hospital.
 - d. RWSIR will develop transitional residential services for persons with traumatic brain injury and spinal cord injuries.
- III. Enhance transition services for students with disabilities.
- a. The VR Program will increase the number of transition students who go to work by 5% (47 additional clients successfully employed) during the fiscal year.
 - b. The VR Program will collaborate with local school systems and the Department of Education to increase the number of dedicated rehabilitation counselors located in the schools by at least two new cooperative agreements per year.
 - c. RWSIR will expand its partnership with the Department of Technical and Adult Education to develop at least two new certificate skills training programs for VR Unit students.
 - d. The BEP will create internships or mentoring opportunities for students who are blind to work with licensed blind vendors and/or explore careers in that field.
 - e. RWSIR will initiate replacing the dormitory, and both RWSIR and the Cave Spring Rehabilitation Center will enhance staffing patterns and improve training to increase capacity and improve services.
 - f. The VR Program will increase marketing efforts with parents, school nurses, counselors, teachers and administrators to increase referrals of Section 504 students.
- IV. Help employers meet their human resources needs.
- a. The 110 Program will cultivate relationships with the State Employer Committee and Local Employer Committees to increase the number of employers who hire VR clients for the first time.
 - b. The VR Assistive Technology Unit will provide technical assistance and training to assist employers in hiring and retaining employees with disabilities.
 - c. RWSIR will develop a new skills training program customized for at least one local employer.

Priority Facility Needs:

Developed with input received from public and private stakeholders, SRC site visits, the Comprehensive Needs Assessment survey regarding available community rehabilitation programs, and internal analysis, the 110 Program identified the following priority facility needs for the two state-owned residential rehabilitation centers. Participants at the public comment hearings (summarized in Appendix I) confirmed the value of these programs and the need for new facilities.

Priority #1 - Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation**Program Description:**

The Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation (RWSIR) Vocational Rehabilitation Unit (VRU) is one of only two residential rehabilitation programs in Georgia available to meet the needs of VR clients who are primarily ages 18 – 20 transitioning from high school to work or post secondary school. This comprehensive rehabilitation program is located on the historic Roosevelt campus in rural Warm Springs about 60 miles from Atlanta.

The VRU provides individualized rehabilitation services through educational and work preparation experiences in a residential community environment. Employers throughout the area provide work training opportunities that may lead to full time employment. Recreational therapy activities are provided at the internationally renowned Frank C. Ruzycski Center for Therapeutic Recreation. Also, medical rehabilitation services including speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy and inpatient hospital services are available on site as needed. The VRU provides transportation, counseling and support services for clients. An example of these individualized services is for VRU students in the Certified Nurse Assistant certificate training program at the West Georgia Technical College in LaGrange.

VR field counselors refer clients to the VRU when their educational experiences did not adequately prepare them for living independently and going to work. Many clients exit the public school system with a certificate of attendance instead of a diploma; thus, they are not allowed to access post secondary educational institutions. The VRU provides education and training that assists clients in achieving their high school diplomas or a GED. Clients often need VRU program services for driver's education, training and assistance in obtaining a driver's license. A valid driver's license is an essential key for employment and independence, particularly in rural Georgia. Young adults with significant disabilities benefit from the opportunity to live away from home in a dormitory setting to develop social and independent living skills that will enhance their ability to go to work.

The VRU graduated 147 students ready for post secondary school and/or work in State Fiscal Year 2006. There were 346 new referrals that year. The VRU holds four graduation ceremonies each year. The average length of a student's individualized program is 9 - 12 months. The VRU serves students with a variety of significant disabilities with the top three being Mental Retardation, Learning Disabilities and/or Cognitive Disorders.

Need for a New Residential Facility:

Students reside in a dormitory that is over 42 years old with multiple critical infrastructure issues including the electrical, plumbing, and HVAC systems. There are various safety and accessibility issues.

The current maximum capacity of the existing VRU dormitory is 160. The VRU does not maintain a waiting list, but the student admission dates are scheduled up to four months after referrals due to lack of bed capacity and other scheduling factors such as beds available for males or females and physical ability. For example, a student with physical disabilities and/or medical needs would require a bed on the first floor instead of the fifth floor. The VRU schedules new student admissions every week.

The RWSIR Advisory Committee and the VR field staff provided input that the VRU should shorten the length of time from referral to admission, increase the number of positive outcomes (work and/or school ready), and improve safety features of the VRU dormitory.

As described above, VR clients age 18-20 need this type of residential program to gain employment training and skills as well as social and independent living skills to be able to successfully transition from school to work or post secondary school. There are only two residential training programs in Georgia: the Roosevelt Warm Springs VRU and the Cave Spring Rehabilitation Center (CSRC) located in the Northwest Georgia Mountains about 20 miles north of Rome. While the RWSIR facility has a maximum capacity of 160 beds, the CSRC has 40, for a total of 200 beds available for the entire state. On June 30, 2006 there were 5,618 clients age 18 – 20 receiving VR services, and another 1,599 were closed on that date. Obviously, there is great potential for more clients to benefit from these programs if the facilities had the capacity.

The Georgia Department of Labor's top priority in its Fiscal Year 2008 State Budget Request for Bond Funds was \$9,932,000 in state funds [\$19.8 million total funds – 110 funds are needed as match] to design and construct a new Vocational Residential Facility. The proposed funding would pay the costs associated with obtaining a comprehensive design study and constructing a new facility. The new facility would provide a safe living environment for the students and staff, increase capacity to 200 beds and meet the VRU long-term programmatic needs.

Benefits of the New Facility:

1. Meets accessibility needs (entrance/exit – mobility)
2. Addresses health needs (eliminates asbestos, provides proper heating and air conditioning, water systems, etc.)
3. Resolves safety issues (example – living quarters: eliminating need for elevators, climbing stairs, potential falls from high places)
4. Enhances ability for prescribed programming:
 - Services to persons with sensory disabilities
 - Integration of ambulatory and non-ambulatory residents (and students with multiple assistance needs)
 - Accessibility to health management personnel
 - Increased bed capacity

5. Contributes a more efficient and effective student monitoring system which further addresses the overall safety and health issues.
6. Improves the location and number of accessible parking spaces. Parents, staff and students have made this request.
7. Allows for the current advanced technology to improve communication and safety:
 - New, improved intercom system
 - New, improved telephone system
 - New, improved cabling for computer access
 - New, improved alarm systems that address needs for all disability types (blind, deaf, deaf-blind, etc.)
8. Provides for increased services to underserved disability populations:
 - Blind
 - Deaf
 - Deaf-Blind
 - Worker's Compensation
 - Returning Iraq Vets
 - Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
 - Multicultural
9. Addresses ADA specifications, both physically and programmatically.
10. Enhances the VRU ability to provide state of the art Independent Life Skills Training.
11. Promotes students' acquisition of independent living and community living skills, including socialization and citizenship, through suite-style living quarters as in most college campuses.

Expected Results of the New Facility:

1. Increase the number of referrals by 25% (86 new referrals) in the first year.
2. Increase the number of clients served by 20% (80 additional clients) in the first year.
3. Increase the number of students graduating work ready and/or ready for post secondary school or further training by 10% (15 additional graduates) in the first year.
4. Create a nationally recognized state of the art residential program for VR customers.
5. Increase services to underserved populations including clients with sensory disabilities, post-TBI clients, Veterans returning home with disabilities, and Workers' Compensation clients.

Funding Needs:

1. 110 Funds to match the state bond for design and construction.
2. 110 Funds for dormitory equipment, furniture, surveillance/alarm systems, cabling, and other supplies.
3. Depending on the structure design, may need additional staff for residential services in the dormitory.

Priority #2 - Cave Spring Rehabilitation Center**Program Description**

The Cave Spring Rehabilitation Center (CSRC) is one of two residential rehabilitation programs in Georgia available to meet the needs of VR clients who are primarily ages 18 – 20 transitioning from high school to work or post secondary school. The CSRC provides individualized rehabilitation services through educational and work preparation experiences in the northwest Georgia mountains in Cave Spring, about 20 miles from Rome. Employers throughout the area

provide community work adjustment training opportunities that may lead to full time employment. The CSRC provides transportation, housing, counseling and support services to clients who attend the Georgia Highlands College or Coosa Valley Technical College.

CSRC is the only program in the state with an emphasis and staff skilled in serving clients who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. The CSRC serves students with a variety of significant disabilities, with clients having hearing impairments representing 50% of the current students. The other major disability groups include mental retardation or mental illness.

VR field counselors refer clients to the CSRC when their educational experiences did not adequately prepare them for living independently and going to work. Many clients exit the public school system with a certificate of attendance instead of a diploma; thus, they are not allowed to access post secondary educational institutions. The CSRC provides education and training that assists clients in achieving their high school diplomas or a GED. Clients often need CSRC program services for driver's education, training and assistance in obtaining a driver's license. A valid driver's license is an essential key for employment and independence, particularly in rural Georgia. There is a special need for driver's education services that provide for adequate time and communication skills for Deaf or Hard of Hearing students. Young adults with significant disabilities benefit from the opportunity to live away from home in a dormitory setting to develop social and independent living skills that will enhance their ability to go to work.

The CSRC had 44 students complete their training programs as ready for employment and/or post secondary school in State Fiscal Year 2006. There were 63 new referrals with 41 admissions that year. The total number served was 79. During the first seven months of State Fiscal Year 2007, the CSRC served 77 clients with an average of 23 clients on the waiting list each month (up from an average of 11 clients last year). The length of time from referral to admission is about 3-4 months. The average length of a student's individualized program is about 5 months, with students who attend post secondary colleges staying longer.

Need for a New Facility:

Students reside in a dormitory that is over 45 years old with multiple critical infrastructure issues including the electrical, plumbing, sewage and HVAC systems. There are various safety and accessibility issues.

The dormitory does not have enough accessible restrooms to adequately meet ADA standards. Client dormitory rooms include wardrobes and study areas that were built in 1962. These areas consist of plywood doors with hasps and pad locks for locks. No amount of paint or cosmetic work will help with the appearance of these areas after 45 years of use. They all need to be torn out and replaced.

The entire facility, including classrooms, needs to be replaced. For example, windows in the facility are original aluminum windows that were poor quality in 1962 when they were installed. They all need to be replaced. The total infrastructure of the facility is insufficient to meet growing demand.

The current maximum capacity of the existing dormitory is 40 beds, with capacity limited by staffing and support services as well as physical facility issues. As described above, VR clients

age 18-20 need this type of residential program to gain employment training and skills as well as independent living skills to be able to successfully transition from school to work or post secondary training and education. There are only two residential training programs in Georgia: CSRC and the Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation (RWSIR) located in rural Warm Springs about 60 miles south of Atlanta. While the CSRC has a maximum capacity of 40 beds, the RWSIR facility has a maximum capacity of 160, for a total of 200 beds available for the entire state. On June 30, 2006 there were a total of 5,618 VR clients age 18 – 20 receiving service, and another 1,599 were closed on that date. Obviously, there is potential for more clients to benefit from these programs if the facilities had the capacity.

The Georgia Department of Labor determined the RWSIR facility was the top priority for the State Fiscal Year 2008 Bond Request, and will need 110 funds to match that state bond if appropriated. When that facility is complete, the CSRC will be the next request for 110 funds to match a state bond to design and build an adequate facility for this program. Also, additional 110 funds will be needed to provide for adequate staffing and infrastructure of a new CSRC facility to meet the needs of young adults with significant disabilities, particularly those who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.