

**EVALUATION AND REPORT OF PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING IDENTIFIED GOALS
AND PRIORITIES AND USE OF TITLE I FUNDS
FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES**

The Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL)/Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program conducts an annual assessment of the effectiveness of program services. This assessment is carried out in accordance with evaluation standards and performance indicators established by the Rehabilitation Services Administration. The information is used as a benchmark for identifying positive achievements as well as areas that need improvement. Georgia VR exceeded five categories of the national standards.

Federal Program Evaluation Standards and Performance Indicators
--

Evaluation Standard 1- Employment Outcome. A Designated State Unit (DSU) shall assist any eligible individual, including an individual with a significant disability, to obtain, maintain, or regain high-quality employment.

- **Performance Indicator 1.1:** The number of individuals exiting the VR program who achieved an employment outcome during the current performance period compared to the number of individuals who exited the VR Program after achieving an employment outcome during the previous performance period.

Required Performance Level: Equal or exceed previous performance period.

Actual Performance: 249 (passed with an increase of 249 individuals served).	
○ # of Employment Outcomes for FY2002	3,912
○ # of Employment Outcomes for FY2003	4,161

Explanation for meeting RSA Standards:

The increase of 249 consumers achieving employment outcomes in FY03 is the result of concentrated marketing of VR services to employers and local businesses, increased availability of nontraditional employment options, restructured staff roles and responsibilities, and the co-location of several VR hub offices into GDOL Career Centers.

- **Performance Indicator 1.2:** Of all individuals who exit the VR program after receiving services, the percentage who are determined to have achieved an employment outcome.

Required Performance Level: 55.8%

Actual Performance: 50.57% (did not pass)	
○ # of Successful Employment Outcomes	4,161
○ # of Unsuccessful Employment Outcomes	8,228

Explanation for not meeting RSA standard:

During FY2003, a significant amount of the VR caseloads included high school students receiving transition services and TANF recipients.

GDOL/VR directs 38% of its resources towards transitioning students from school to post-secondary opportunities; employment is the predominant outcome. In FY2003, 3,640 students with disabilities received services and 616 achieved a successful rehabilitation outcome.

In SFY2003, under a contract with the Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program, VR provided assessment services to 2,426 TANF recipients with disabilities to determine if their disabilities served as a barrier to seeking and obtaining employment. Of the 2,426 TANF referrals, assessments were completed for 1,019 recipients and discontinued for 769 recipients; 536 were integrated into the VR Program; and 483 were referred back to DFCS with recommendations for other services. A significant number of the TANF recipients who applied for vocational rehabilitation services failed to participate thereby increasing the number of Status 28 case closures for the GDOL/VR Program.

Plan for Improvement:

To decrease the number of unsuccessful post-IPE (Status 28) closures, GDOL/VR has implemented strategies to utilize services to groups, ensure effective Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) planning, increase counselor and consumer contact, and benefits counseling to SSI/SSDI recipients.

GDOL/VR has developed two services to group categories to provide vocational exploration/career development services to individuals from a single referral source – including TANF and transition students. The new categories separate participants receiving assessment services from applicants who have agreed to participate in the VR process.

VR counselors will continue to receive comprehensive training in providing self-employment as an option for consumers. VR continues to emphasize effective referral and benefits counseling to SSI/SSDI beneficiaries, including Ticket to Work recipients, so that they can make informed choices about work. With comprehensive benefits analysis and counseling, SSI/SSDI beneficiaries and TTW recipients are able to weigh the benefits and risks associated with going to work, thus reducing the number of these recipients who discontinue their vocational rehabilitation program before obtaining a successful employment outcome.

- **Performance Indicator 1.3:** Of all individuals determined to have achieved an employment outcome, the percentage who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or Business Enterprise Program (BEP) employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage of \$5.15.

Required Performance Level: 72.6%

Actual Performance: 83.42% (passed)	
○ # of Employment Outcomes	3,471
○ # of Competitive Employment Outcomes	4,161

Explanation for meeting RSA Standards:

To successfully meet the employment needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, GDOL/VR maintains collaborative efforts and working relationships with a network of 24 local Community Rehabilitation Programs and 380 supported employment service providers. Each VR consumer engaged in supported employment programs are paid comparable wages for the same or similar work performed by non-disabled workers

Through community work adjustment training with local businesses, VR consumers are given the opportunity to participate in paid work experiences that simulate competitive expectations. They learn vocational skills, positive work behaviors, and job seeking skills that are necessary to compete for integrated, competitive employment. Many of these consumers are paid at least minimum wage, and are ultimately hired by the sponsored business at competitive employment wages.

- **Performance Indicator 1.4:** Of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage, the percentage who are individuals with significant disabilities.

Required Performance: 62.4%

Actual Performance: 87.87% (passed)	
○ # with Competitive Employment Outcomes	3,471
○ # of Competitive Employment Outcomes for All Individuals with Significant Disabilities	3,050

Explanation for meeting RSA standards:

The GDOL/VR Program operates under an Order of Selection system that ensures that individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected first for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services. The system is based on significance of disability. Individuals with significant disabilities are secondary priority, and all other eligible individuals in descending order of the severity of their disability are third priority.

- **Performance Indicator 1.5:** The average hourly earnings of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earning levels equivalent to at least the minimum wage as a ratio to the State’s average hourly earnings for all individuals in the State who are employed (as derived from the Bureau of Labor Statistics report “State Average Annual Pay” for the most recent available year).

Required Performance: 0.52

Actual Performance: 0.499 (did not pass)	
○ Average Hourly Wage for Individuals with Competitive Employment Outcomes-	\$7.35
○ Average Hourly Wage for State-	\$17.56

Explanation for not meeting RSA standard:

Many factors impede the potential for more success in the number of successful employment outcomes that consist of increased earning potential, health benefits, and career advancement. The presence of a significant disability can be a challenge when seeking competitive employment at or above state and national wage levels for GDOL/VR consumers. The Longitudinal Study on Vocational Rehabilitation Services Programs showed that Georgia consumers are younger; lack a high school education, and have little or no work experience. Additionally, 1/3 of the GDOL/VR caseloads are transition cases.

Because of the current economy, workers with more education and experience are accepting low-paying positions, which limits the job market options for workers with less education and less work experience.

Plan for Improvement:

GDOL/VR will continue to promote supported employment services and other supports to assist individuals with the most significant disabilities. VR will maintain collaborative relationships with corporations and government agencies in Georgia that promote equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Further, VR will implement Quality Assurance strategies to ensure proper coding of consumers employment wages.

- **Performance Indicator 1.6:** Of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage, the difference between the percentage who reported their own income as the largest single source of economic support at exit and the percentage who reported their own income as the largest single source of support at application.

Required Performance: 53.0

Actual Performance: 63.56 (passed)	
○ Primary Support is Own Income at Application	682
○ Primary Support is Own Income at Closure	2,888

Explanation for meeting RSA Standards:

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) assists Georgians who are blind or visually impaired to become profitable independent business operators, specifically vending facilities, snack bars, and food service establishments. Referrals are accepted from the VR Program and individuals are trained to become licensed vendors and are subsequently placed into a business enterprise. The average gross salary per vendor is \$42,000 per year with average annual sales of approximately \$250,000.

Standard Indicator 2: Equal Access to Services

Standard 2 measures whether individuals from minority backgrounds have been provided equal access to VR services at the same rate as non-minority individuals.

- **Performance Indicator 2.1:** The service rate for all individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio to the service rate for all non-minority individuals with disabilities.

Required Performance: .80

Actual Performance: .951 (passed)	
o Non-Minorities Exiting the VR Program	6,584
o Non-Minorities Who Received Services	4,183
o Minorities Exiting the VR Program	6,693
o Minorities Who Received Services	4,045

Explanation for meeting RSA Standards:

The implementation of services to groups for assessment purposes has been beneficial to the VR program. This practice allowed us to serve the TANF customer, many of who were minorities, and determine their interest and eligibility for services prior to opening a case for plan development.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

Strategic Agenda – 2003 and Beyond

Mission: Assist people with disabilities to work.

Vision: A workforce development system that serves Georgians with disabilities.

Goal #1 – INCREASE ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Make VR a great place to work and serve people with disabilities.

- Reduce voluntary separations.
- Increase employee productivity.

Strategy #1: Design organizational structure that challenges and supports staff professional growth and performance quality.

- Implemented comprehensive approach to address the recruitment, employment, retention, and support of all staff.
 - Initiated higher pay grade compensation for certified rehabilitation counselors.
- Implemented comprehensive professional development program for all VR field positions.
 - Encouraged and supported the participation of Program Assistants and Program Associates in the State of Georgia Professional Secretary Program.
 - Designated statewide funds for staff to attend local training activities.
 - Supported Georgia Rehabilitation Association training opportunities.
- Developed and implemented the on-boarding process that allows incoming staff to have more in-depth, position specific orientation and training.

Strategy #2: Create a work environment that inspires and enables staff to serve customers and achieve goals.

- Promoted local flexibility in VR operations while reinforcing statewide consistency in VR service quality.
- Capitalized on assistive work technology to accomplish the VR mission.
- Initiated the Human Resource Realignment model that supports 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.

Goal #2 – ENHANCE SERVICE CAPACITY

Serve more clients and employers with more resources.

- **Expand VR client base.**
- **Diversify funding sources.**
- **Improve client and employer satisfaction.**

Strategy #1: Identify new clients and better serve existing clients.

- Expanded clients and employers access to VR services by implementing and marketing the VR toll free telephone number.
- Established referral goals for collaboration with the other GDOL/Rehabilitation Services programs: *Disability Adjudication Services, Business Enterprise Program, Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation, and Georgia Industries for the Blind.*
- Implemented strategies to serve previously underserved populations (i.e., SSI/SSDI recipients, culturally diverse groups, youths with disabilities).
 - Followed through with local efforts to manage referrals from Disability Adjudication Services, and tracked Social Security reimbursements.
 - Recruited bi-lingual staff to serve broader populations.

Strategy #2: Create new services and improve existing services.

- Implemented internal quality assurance systems and practices.
 - Created a statewide customer service unit for the VR Program.
 - Trained all VRSST staff in advanced customer service.
- Provided leadership regarding services to persons with disabilities in the development of One-Stop employment programs.
 - Maintained leadership role on local Workforce Investment Boards.
 - Provided technical assistance to One-Stop Centers regarding assistive technology.
 - Provided disability sensitivity and awareness training to all staff at One-Stop Centers.
- Continued to refine specialized services for underserved populations (i.e., blind, deaf, deaf-blind, youth).
 - Established VR Counselor positions for specialized client services.

- Challenged Community Rehabilitation Programs to serve underserved populations.
- Sought alternative funding sources to enable VR to assist all persons with disabilities to work.
 - Collaborated with partners to create joint efforts and share resources.
 - Secured grant to fund Credit – Able, the Georgia Assistive Technology Guaranteed Loan Program.

Goal #3 – DEVELOP MARKET POTENTIAL AND POSITIONING

Broaden the services of the VR community (expand market partners’ opportunities to serve VR clients).

- **Increase VR participation with WIA and Ticket to Work partners in one-stops.**
- **Leverage advocacy and support for VR within the disability community.**

Strategy #1: Establish VR state office leadership in employment of persons with disabilities.

- Maintained statewide relationships with entities that share a role in assisting people with disabilities to work (e.g., *Rehabilitation Services Administration, Disability Adjudication Services, Georgia Business Enterprise Program, Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation, Georgia Industries for the Blind, Georgia State Rehabilitation Council, and the Georgia Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, Inc.*)

Strategy #2: Establish regional leadership for service improvement with strategic partners and providers.

- Developed and fostered relationships with community stakeholders (e.g., *local elected officials, Mayor’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, Community Rehabilitation Programs, Employment Networks, Chambers of Commerce, and WIA partners*).