

**COOPERATION WITH AGENCIES THAT ARE NOT IN THE
STATEWIDE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT SYSTEM
AND WITH OTHER ENTITIES**

The Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL)/Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program believes that cooperation and collaboration with agencies and entities is essential to assisting people with disabilities to work in Georgia. Such ongoing collaboration maximizes resources and addresses all aspects of individuals' lives that impact their ability to obtain, retain, and maintain employment.

VR is strongly allied with partners of the Statewide Workforce Investment System. However, the agency also maintains cooperative agreements and working partnerships with agencies and entities outside the workforce investment system.

Statewide Independent Living Council

The Georgia Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) works with VR to develop the State Plan for Independent Living. A major part of this plan includes "the development of a network of Centers for Independent Living (CILs) – private, nonprofit, community-based corporations that assist people with significant disabilities to live more independently and reach their goals to independence.

In an effort to maintain and strengthen this partnership and to further the common goal of providing the best possible services to Georgians with disabilities, VR and the Georgia Independent Living Network (GILN), entered into a cooperative agreement. The GILN includes The Statewide Independent Living Council of GA, disABILITY Link, disABILITY Link NW, Living Independence for Everyone, Walton Options for Independent Living, Disability Connections, Disability Resource Center, Bainbridge Advocacy Individual Network, and Multiple Choices.

Department of Human Resources/Division of Family & Children Services

The VR Program contracts with the Department of Human Resources (DHR)/Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS) to provide assessments to Georgia Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients. In FFY 2006, VR offered assessment services to a total of 232 TANF recipients. No TANF cases were carried over from FFY 2005. Of these referrals, assessments were completed for 179 recipients. Of these, 86 were referred to the VR Program; and 93 were referred back to DFCS with recommendations for services. The assessment process was discontinued for 38 of the referrals. Fifteen (15) of the referrals were carried forward to FFY 07

Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Project

As a participant in a cooperative agreement with the Social Security Administration, the VR Program's Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) project, known as Georgia Rehabilitation Outreach Program (GROUP) provides information and assistance to Social Security

beneficiaries with disabilities, including transition-to-work aged youths. WIPA services help beneficiaries understand the role of work incentives and how employment will impact their Social Security and state benefits, thus allowing them to make informed choices about work.

GROUP has joined alliances with the Social Security Administration's Area Work Incentives Coordinator, Shepherd's Benefits Navigator and Georgia Protection & Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) to form the WIPA Network Group. These agencies collaborate on various Ticket to Work and Work Incentives initiatives across the State regarding the impact of working on social security and health care benefits.

EmployAbility Program

The Albany Advocacy Resource Center/EmployAbility Program began in October 2006. This pilot program is a collaboration between VR and EmployAbility to train and place persons with disabilities to work. The program has three steps. The first step is the referral that includes assessment, work adjustment and job readiness training. The second step includes job development. The third step is job retention and follow-up. The goal of the program is to place difficult to place clients and to open doors to employment that have not traditionally been available to VR clients in southwest Georgia.

Muskogee Vocational Rehabilitation Program

The Muskogee Vocational Rehabilitation (MVR) program entered its second five-year grant cycle with the Section 121 Project in 2006. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program has maintained a cooperative relationship with the MVR Program since its inception. MVR aims to empower American Indians with disabilities to maximize employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence, and inclusion and integration into society. Through this partnership with the Lower Muskogee Creek Indian Tribe, the VR Program provides disability assessment, evaluation, and referral services to clients of the tribe. Georgia VR has several staff members who are dedicated to assisting the MVR Program with providing vocational rehabilitation services to its tribal members. The VR regional director in that area schedules regular meetings with MVR staff to ensure that interagency referral and information sharing exist to assist in eligibility determinations and the development of individualized plans for employment.

To ensure increased collaboration, VR includes MVR staff in appropriate agency training programs and VR staff is provided training on the Indian culture and its relationship to disability and work. VR staff are active members of Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR), and represent VR at annual Native American summits, conferences, and on the MVR Advisory Council. The MVR director is an active member of the State Rehabilitation Council.

Georgia Department of Education

VR shares a strong and effective partnership with the Georgia Department of Education (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. The current Cooperative Agreement between GDOE and VR became effective as of December 1, 2005, and will remain in effect for ten (10) years, unless a revised agreement is developed and signed prior to the end of that period. The Agreement defines terms and specifies the roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency.

In addition to the state level agreement, VR has also established a collaborative agreement opportunity with GDOE and local school systems (LSS). Each involved LSS receives intensive, dedicated rehabilitation services for the purpose of earlier identification of and intervention with students with disabilities. In FY 2006, eighty (80) school systems took advantage of this opportunity.

VR and the LSS share financial responsibilities under the collaborative agreement; each agency contributes monetary and in-kind services to support projects that promote transition for students with disabilities.

Department of Corrections

The Department of Corrections Transitional Centers and the Vocational Rehabilitation Program have a long-standing partnership assisting offenders who have disabilities. Traditional Centers are community-based centers that are located across the state. They prepare offenders nearing the end of their prison term for life in the community and VR services help the offenders prepare for and maintain employment.

Interagency Councils and Local Committees

To avoid duplication of effort and to enhance the number of individuals served, the VR Program and State Rehabilitation Council have developed working relationships and coordinate activities with other Georgia councils. Linkages and productive relationships exist with the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, Mayors' Committees on Employment of People with Disabilities, Georgia Mental Health Planning Council (MHP), Georgia Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, Inc., Georgia Brain & Spinal Cord Injury Trust Commission, the Council on American Indian Concerns, and other Georgia rehabilitation service agencies.

Local Community Organizations and Businesses

VR regional programs continue to establish cooperative relationships with community organizations and businesses that affect the lives of people with disabilities. These organizations include, but are not limited to, chambers of commerce, city and county governments, criminal justice systems, urban leagues, churches, health care and social assistance services, housing authorities, and educational institutions.