

## **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, VR also maintains cooperative agreements and memoranda of understanding (MOU) with agencies and entities outside the workforce investment system.

### **Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)**

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 (CIL) – private, nonprofit, community-based corporations that assist people with significant disabilities to live more independently and reach their goals to independence.

CILs assist people with all types of disabilities by providing the following core services: *information and referral, peer support, independent living skills training, and advocacy.*" In addition to these core services, CILs may provide other independent living services such as *home modification, orientation and mobility, outreach to nursing homes, assistive technology, computer training skills, etc.*

During FY2003, the Georgia CILs provided independent living services to 2,949 Georgians with significant disabilities.

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, Living Independence for Everyone (LIFE), Walton Options for Independent Living, Disability Connections, Access Center for Independent Living, Bainbridge Advocacy Individual Network, and Bridges to Independence.

### **Department of Human Resources (DHR)/ Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)**

The GDOL/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 SFY 2003, VR offered assessment services to a total of 2,426 TANF recipients; 726 referrals were carried over from SFY02 and 1,700 were new referrals for SFY03. Of these referrals, assessments were completed for 1019 recipients; 536 were integrated into the VR Program; and 483 were referred back to DFCS with recommendations for services. The assessment process was discontinued for 769 of the referrals. Six hundred thirty-eight referrals were carried forward to SFY04.

Seventy-seven percent of the clients completing assessment in SFY03 were determined to have a disability: 36% were found to have mental impairments (psychosis, neurosis, personality disorder, etc.), 16% were found to exhibit mental retardation, and 18% were found to have orthopedic impairments. Based on the needs identified through the assessment process, DFCS maintains contracts with the Georgia Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Addictive Diseases (MHDDAD) to ensure that services are available to TANF recipients who are identified as having mental health or mental retardation issues. In SFY03, 164 TANF cases referred through the VR TANF program were closed as successfully rehabilitated.

### **Benefits Planning, Assistance, and Outreach (BPAO) Project**

As a participant in a cooperative agreement with the Social Security Administration, the VR Program's Benefits Planning, Assistance, and Outreach (BPAO) project, known as Georgia Rehabilitation Outreach Program (GROUP) provides information and assistance to Social Security beneficiaries with disabilities, including transition-to-work aged youths. BPAO services help beneficiaries understand how employment will impact their Social Security and state benefits, thus allowing them to make more informed choices about work.

GROUP has joined alliances with Shepherd's Benefits Navigator, Walton Options' Project 20/20, and Georgia Protection & Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) to form the Georgia Ticket to Work Taskforce. These agencies conduct Ticket to Work Public Awareness Workshops across the State regarding the impact of working on social security and health care benefits.

### **Department of Community Health**

The GDOL/VR Program uses state dollars to fund services to 305 persons with disabilities on Extended Employment (EE) and Supported Employment (SE) (on-going support) slots at Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) throughout Georgia. There are 223 EE slots and 52 SE slots. Of the 52 SE slots, 31 persons with disabilities are Medicaid recipients who qualify for Medicaid Waivers. GDOL/VR has partnered with the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) for provision of "Supported Employment/On-going Support Services" to consumers at local CRPs. This partnership will allow persons with disabilities on EE and SE slots to receive Supported Employment Medicaid Waivers.

### **Interagency Councils and Local Committees**

To avoid duplication of effort and to enhance the number of individuals served, the GDOL/VR Program and State Rehabilitation Council have developed working relationships and coordinate activities with other Georgia councils. Linkages and productive relationships have been forged with the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (DD Council), Mayors' Committees on Employment of People with Disabilities, Georgia Mental Health Planning Council (MHP), Georgia Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, Inc., the Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force, 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, educational institutions, Mayor's Committees for the Employment of People with Disabilities, and Youth Councils.