PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION
(COMBINED OR GENERAL)

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan [13] must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA:

[13] Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(iii) of WIOA

A. INPUT OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

All agencies, except for those that are independent consumer-controlled commissions, must describe the following:


The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) received input from the West Virginia State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) members and chairperson regarding the Unified State Plan to be submitted by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners in 2020. The input and the agency responses are reported below.

Observation 1: The partnership between WV DRS and the Department of Education is imperative for the successful Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) of high school students evolving into the workforce. To reinforce this partnership, there is a profound need for preserving open communication. This will assure students are referred to vocational rehabilitation at a younger age and have a more informed understanding of community-based services offered by WV DRS.

Recommendation: The WV SRC recommends this component be continued to strengthen knowledge of policies, referral processes, as well as, emerging trends and practices on an annual basis.

Observation 2: A priority for Vocational Rehabilitation is reaching students during their secondary education (9th – 12th grades.) This is imperative for our youth as they start early in identifying their career paths. The creating of an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) early to outline a student’s vocational goal area and necessary services needed to support this goal is important. This provides a direction for a student’s success when transitioning from high school to the next phase of life whether continuing their education or entering the workforce. The agency has VR counselors assigned to all secondary schools in West Virginia with offices physically located in several high schools in West Virginia.

Once students are preparing to leave the secondary school system and move forward into higher education the students, their parents and advisors/counselors may not be fully aware of services available through WV DRS. Placing Pathways banners at all West Virginia high schools has helped to increase awareness of available transition resources for students.

Recommendation: The WV SRC recommends that WV DRS continue working with high schools and/or vocational schools to establish VR offices to be physically located on additional campuses of our schools. DRS will continue to improve outreach and access to services for
children in non-traditional educational settings. This would provide access to VR counselors for assistance to those students and their families to secure services at an earlier age, as funding allows.

Observation 3: The Council is very impressed with the success of the Career Exploration Opportunities (CEO) Program for youth between the ages of 14 and 21 that was conducted throughout West Virginia during the summer of 2019. Based on the Pre-ETS concept, the summer program provided students with the tools and information in seeking long-term career success. The program provided Job Exploration Counseling, Workplace Readiness Training, Counseling on Postsecondary Education Opportunities, and Instruction in Self-Advocacy. Vendors provided and/or completed all training materials, space, training, participant pre- and post-assessments, attendance logs, and summary report at completion.

Recommendation: The WV SRC recommends the CEO Program be continued, as funds allow, to provide transitioning students with the opportunity to become educated and experience their career paths. This will also provide WV DRS additional resources while developing relationships and growing referral networks with employers throughout the State.

Observation 4: Identifying Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) and other service providers who can optimize an individual’s independence and provide supports in helping someone maximize their employment opportunities is a valuable resource. These programs can help individuals achieve their employment goals, aid in career choices & advancements and help in overcoming obstacles.

Recommendation: The WV SRC recommends WV DRS assure current lists of CRPs and service providers are available for students and/or their supports to make an informed, individual choice to aid them in future planning be available on the Agency website, from school counselors or VR counselors.

Observation 5: Integrating and coordinating with WIOA partners in the Workforce Development System is a priority to achieve unified goals. The Agency participates and organizes meetings and events to demonstrate a common mission and vision between partners to increase opportunities for employment for people with disabilities.

Recommendation: The WV SRC recommends continuing to participate in the joint functions and provide educational and networking opportunities whenever the occasion arises. Disseminating brochures, signage and/or informational materials is suggested.

Observation 6: Business owners and managers are continually seeking employees who want to work; however, businesses may not know how to remove barriers. In many instances, businesses are not aware of the technical assistance, ADA training, on the job accommodations, supported employment options and financial benefits that might be available through the Workforce Development System.

Recommendation: The WV SRC recommends educating businesses on the advantages their company may experience having hired a person with a disability is the foremost important detail when considering hiring a person. Conducting workshops, having power point/video presentations, disseminating quality brochures and resource guides for a company’s management & staff is paramount. Creating an email blast for a concise one- or two-page monthly newsletter for West Virginia businesses, highlighting success stories, training incentives and recognizing businesses who have hired or been long time supporters for hiring people with disabilities is an effective tool to market WV DRS.
Observation 7: Educating the general public regarding the WV DRS to ensure knowledge and the continuum of agency services and programs is crucial. The agency utilizes their website, newspaper articles, statewide magazine advertisements, community events, social media and public broadcasting to bolster awareness of WV DRS in all areas of the state.

Recommendation: The WV SRC recommends this practice be continued with an emphasis directed to our underserved areas of the State.

Observation 8: West Virginia's demographics and cultural backgrounds can be challenging; therefore, communication must be innovative. Finding the most efficient avenue to educate students and their families regarding available WV DRS services and programs is an ongoing obstacle. Effective, beneficial communication is a key factor.

Recommendation: The WV SRC recommends that WV DRS:

- continue to keep students and their families abreast about services and programs offered by the agency using more social media and community transition events: and,
- increase the visibility and access of VR staff assigned to their respective schools by making school presentations, using VR displays, exhibiting posters in prominent locations and having an increased presence at Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and other transition planning meetings.

Observation 9: The agency expects an influx of youth who have drug and/or alcohol related issues and will need services in the future. The agency is not only concerned about the youth having substance related disorders of their own, but also the long-term effects of prenatal opiate exposure. This will be an area that will require VR staff to have more diverse training in these specialized programs and skill sets.

Recommendation: The WV SRC recommends that the Agency continues to provide staff with the training and technical assistance needed to expand their knowledge of drug addiction related diseases and adverse childhood experiences that will affect transition services (ACES.)

Observation 10: The national trend focusing on working more closely with disabled individuals who are within the corrections system, WV DRS has implemented a position for a Behavioral Health and Corrections Specialist. The focus will be on individuals with mental illness and/or other cognitive disabilities.

Recommendation: The WV SRC recommends that the Agency continue to strengthen and expand relationships with the Behavioral Health and Corrections communities for individuals with disabilities who are served in the correctional system.

Observation 11: Transportation issues are persistent not only in WV, but nationally. The lack of personal and public transportation in many areas of West Virginia continues to be an ongoing challenge. WV DRS offers varying opportunities for instruction in learning to drive when barriers are present. All West Virginia high schools currently offer their students driver’s education classes. For adults who have lost their driver’s license, regaining them may be difficult due to the law and their ability to reimburse the system the required fees.

Recommendation: Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs) should include driver’s education assessments for students with disabilities who may require accommodations in order to drive. This may require:

- occupational, developmental visual evaluations;
• driver education instructors in the state being supplied with the information available outlining the agency’s driving program that offers technical and adaptive support or training; and,

• ensuring WV DRS counseling staff are knowledgeable of advocacy resources available to individuals who need assistance in regaining provisional licenses for driving privileges and continuing to provide transportation assistance when necessary for employment purposes.

Observation 12: As funding allowed, WV DRS has conducted VR State Conferences. Speakers from a myriad of areas have been brought to these conferences to expand knowledge, update staff on new regulations, changes in the law, motivate employees and bring new creative ideas for program and service delivery. These conferences also provided the opportunity for the VR staff from throughout the state to spend several days sharing experiences, hearing state and national issues, talking with guest speakers while networking with administrative staff and their peers to have a better understanding of Agency workings.

Recommendation: The Council encourages promoting team building and giving the opportunity for an educational experience to enhance job performances. This is vital to the continuing success of the Agency and enriching staff. The Agency Quality Assurance (QA) professionals should keep staff well advised of ongoing emerging practices, policy changes and trends in the respective districts. Partnering with other agencies for joint conferences will also strengthen VR best practices.

CONSUMER SATISFACTION

As part of its program improvement efforts, DRS continues to support the implementation of consumer satisfaction surveys of its clients to ensure quality services for DRS consumers. WV SRC conducts the consumer satisfaction surveys (with full DRS assistance and cooperation). WV SRC is primarily responsible for completion of the consumer satisfaction survey for VR consumers. DRS continues to provide and supplement fiscal and human resources needed for its successful completion.

WV SRC members selected a survey method that allows former DRS clients and individuals who were not accepted for VR services to be contacted via mail surveys as soon as they exit DRS from various VR statuses throughout the fiscal year. Selected highlights of the 2019 Consumer Satisfaction Survey of DRS Clients as reported by WV SRC are presented below.

The latest consumer satisfaction report, entitled, Consumer Satisfaction: Report of Survey Findings, was prepared by the WV SRC in December 2019. The findings were based on consumer satisfaction information gathered from 150 responses across the six DRS districts. Respondents to the consumer satisfaction survey were asked to rate their agreement with statements about their interactions with DRS. The ratings were "strongly agree," "agree," "neutral," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." Respondents were provided an option to indicate replies that were neutral or that the survey item was not applicable.

Responses for the 2019 survey, overall, are slightly higher than the reported satisfaction in previous years. The mean rating across the ten satisfaction items is 80% for 2019 versus 78% mean rating for 2018 and 76% for 2017.

The data generally show that those whose cases are closed as "unsuccessful" (i.e., closed without an employment outcome) are less likely to report high levels of satisfaction with the services they received. This year, while that pattern held, the observed differences were slightly less
extreme than in previous years. This year, the mean rating for the “successful” group (i.e., closed with employment) was 96% versus a mean rating of 65% for the “unsuccessful” group.

Major findings of the consumer satisfaction survey include: respondents felt that their rehabilitation counselor treated them with respect (78%), their questions were answered clearly by DRS (83%), they were involved in their plan development (74%), their counselor stayed in contact so they knew what was happening (79%), and they received the services they needed (72%). Respondents also reported that they knew what each step of their IPE would be (85%) and their counselors told them about job opportunities (89%). Consumers also reported high ratings for accessibility of local offices (89% gave an "Above Average" or "Excellent" rating), their counselors (83%), and the overall experience with DRS (79%).

The consumers were asked to recall which client’s rights information had been explained to them. There were 121 individuals who responded that at least one right had been explained (81% of the sample). Most individuals indicated that they had received several rights explanations. The most commonly explained rights to consumers were (1) their participation in developing the rehabilitation plan (92%) and (2) choice of how services were provided (74%). When asked about needs that were not met by rehabilitation services, 64 of the 113 consumers who responded to this question reported that they had no additional needs (57%). Consumers who did report additional needs most commonly requested education/training, employment-related services, medical services, and financial services.

The survey participants were asked for comments on their experience with DRS. A total of 69 people provided feedback to this question. Of these, 29 expressed praise or gratitude for DRS services, 19 made other statements of explanation or inquiry, and 21 offered criticism. Overall, the level of satisfaction reported for the period continues to be high, as the overall satisfaction increased from 78% to 80%. To maintain high quality of services and promote a greater satisfaction level for our consumers, DRS welcomes and considers compliments, complaints, suggestions, and recommendations that our clients reported in the consumer satisfaction survey.

The WV SRC and DRS were also interested in examining the pattern of responses for transitioning youth (clients who were age 24 or younger). Youth surveys were color-coded so the participants could be isolated. Their responses formed a subset of 78 returned surveys. Overall, youth satisfaction was equivalent to the responses of the whole group, at 80%. Transitioning youth respondents felt that their rehabilitation counselor treated them with respect (79%), their questions were answered clearly by DRS (78%), their counselor stayed in contact so they knew what was happening (76%), and they received the services they needed (73%). Youth respondents also reported that they knew what each step of their IPE would be (86%), DRS counselors helped them develop a plan to get a job (75%), and their counselors told them about job opportunities (90%). Transitioning youth also reported high ratings for accessibility of local offices (90% gave an "Above Average" or "Excellent" rating), their counselors (84%), and the overall experience with DRS (81%).

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning discussions occur on a monthly basis at DRS Executive Management Group meetings, which include representatives of the SRC and Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). Needs assessment results are shared with the SRC and SILC. DRS Goals and Priorities were presented at meetings of the SRC, where the SRC has opportunities for input. The SRC meetings include a variety of stakeholders, including representatives from the Client Assistance Program, SILC, and other state agencies.
In January 2020, DRS held public “Q and A” Sessions in Morgantown, WV and Charleston, WV to receive comments and questions from VR stakeholders pertaining to the Vocational Rehabilitation section of the Unified State Plan. There were a total of 14 attendees at the sessions. Several questions and comments were posed during the meetings. These included questions regarding outreach and marketing efforts by DRS and how DRS is serving high school students with disabilities under WIOA.

To ensure transparency and public awareness regarding the Program Year (PY) 2020 VR section of the Unified State Plan, DRS posted a draft version on the agency’s website for review.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT’S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL’S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS; AND

DRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 1:

DRS agrees that its partnership with the WV Department of Education (WVDE) is vital to the success of the provision of Pre-ETS to high school students with disabilities. In Program Year (PY) 2019, DRS hosted a joint conference with the Office of Special Education within WVDE which was attended by both DRS counselors and Special Education Staff and Teachers statewide. DRS anticipates similar conferences in the future. Special Education Teachers have also been trained to use the Pathways to the Future website with their students, as well as instructional materials regarding Pre-ETS to be used in the classroom. Additionally, because a DRS counselor is assigned to every WV high school, DRS counselors are in frequent communication with teachers, students, and other educational staff.

DRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 2:

DRS agrees that it is important for transitioning youth (TY) with disabilities to begin the vocational rehabilitation process as early as appropriate. DRS is open to the recommendation and has requested that counselors identify any possible opportunities for embedded VR offices within high schools. Relatedly, the West Virginia School for the Blind has made a request, to which DRS has agreed, to have on-campus DRS counseling staff available to provide services, including Pre-ETS, in an expeditious manner. If additional opportunities arise, DRS will move forward to establish offices, where appropriate and agreed upon by both parties.

In support of this aim, DRS currently has fifty-nine (59) vocational rehabilitation counselors assigned to serve TY, including a counselor assigned to each high school in the state. Nineteen (19) counselors are assigned exclusively to TY territories, allowing for more time and resources to provide outreach and services, particularly Pre-ETS to high school students. These counselors are also beginning outreach to students in the ninth grade to ensure sufficient time to provide Pre-ETS and develop and implement a plan for the student’s transition from high school to post-secondary employment or training.

Additionally, DRS has made concerted efforts to provide outreach and services to non-traditional education settings for youth with disabilities, such as juvenile centers and facilities, Youth Reporting Centers, and other similar locations. The youth in these settings are afforded the same opportunity to receive Pre-ETS and other VR services as individuals in traditional settings, as appropriate.

DRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 3:

DRS agrees that the CEO Summit program should be continued, as funds allow. In 2019, DRS sponsored numerous Summit events, utilizing the assistance of local CRPs. This allowed a greater number of students to be reached by the program and have content presented that was
more geographically relevant. DRS hopes to continue to implement CRP efforts in the future to continue the CEO Summits that provide a tremendous benefit to West Virginia’s students with disabilities.

DRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 4:

DRS agrees that CRPs are a valuable resource to consumers with disabilities in pursuit of their employment goals. As such, DRS makes consistent efforts to maintain and improve relationships with CRPs, including maintenance of an up-to-date listing of all CRPs providing each of the acknowledged CRP services. In doing so, DRS counselors are better able to inform consumers of the CRP services that are available to them in their geographic area. Additionally, CRP information can be found on the Pathways to the Future website (www.pathwayswv.org), under the Employers tab.

DRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 5:

DRS agrees that integration and coordination with WIOA partners of WorkForce WV and WV Adult Education is highly important. Since the implementation of WIOA, DRS has worked diligently to coordinate its efforts with its WIOA core partners in order to more effectively and efficiently serve the workforce of the state, including employers and job seekers, especially those with disabilities. At the state level, DRS representatives meet with WIOA partners on a monthly basis at minimum. Additionally, many DRS staff are co-located with other WIOA partners at American Job Centers to facilitate services to its customers, including individuals with disabilities. DRS will continue, as appropriate, to disseminate information to its WIOA partners to inform them of events, best practices, and other relevant information, in the most accessible means available.

DRS Employment Specialists continuously collect employment information from their business contacts. This information, including job orders for open positions, is immediately input into the WorkForce WV’s online Mid Atlantic Career Consortium (MACC) system and shared within the Workforce Development System (WDS).

DRS will continue to serve on Business Service Teams with WorkForce WV, Adult Education, local workforce development boards, and other related entities. Through training and standardizing informational materials, when possible, these team members, including DRS Employment Specialists, provide a full range of WDS information when making visits to employers. This will allow the WDS to maximize the impact of employer visits and ensure that businesses are aware of all resources available through the WDS.

DRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 6:

DRS agrees that educating businesses and employers, including their management, is an important step toward competitive, integrated employment for individuals with disabilities. True to this idea, DRS has an in–house Employer Services Section that specializes in providing employers with disability–related information, services, and pre–screened job seekers. The DRS Employer Services Section has 9 Employment Specialists that cover all 55 counties in West Virginia. DRS’ team of Employment Specialists provide business owners and employers with critical business options and assistance in staffing, employee retention strategies, education on disability–related issues, job accommodations, and information about financial incentives for employers who hire individuals with disabilities. DRS will continue to utilize these Employment Specialists to promote the connection of employer to job seeker with disabilities. DRS will consider the use of newsletters to businesses, highlighting success stories and training incentives in order to increase employers’ awareness.
DRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 7:

DRS agrees with the recommendation to continue efforts to inform the general public about the availability of DRS services. In recent years, the agency has focused on reaching out to stakeholders of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services, including potentially underserved/unserved consumers with disabilities from minority backgrounds. DRS utilizes the latest technology for this purpose, including a web map that includes turn–by–turn directions to each office to help potential consumers more easily find DRS field offices. As a result, DRS has maintained a constituency that is similarly proportioned to the state as a whole regarding race and ethnicity and is well represented by individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds.

Additional activities include the sponsoring of community events and statewide radio advertisements. In 2020, DRS plans to continue to identify effective ways to reach out to consumers with disabilities, including potentially underserved/unserved populations using various methods. Additionally, with the ongoing implementation of WIOA, an additional focus for DRS is to reach out to high school students, including their parents and service providers in the community.

DRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 8:

DRS agrees that effective, good communication is a key factor in making sure that students and their families are aware of DRS services and programs that are available for eligible individuals as they begin preparing for post–secondary school goals. DRS engages in a variety of outreach activities to ensure widespread information dissemination that is beneficial for students with disabilities preparing to leave the school setting. These activities include sponsoring community events, attending job fairs, passing out brochures, and speaking to classrooms.

Additionally, the agency has a counselor assigned to each high school in West Virginia as well as liaisons assigned to institutions of higher education around the state. This on–site presence assists the agency in developing and maintaining working relationships, on a personal level, with students and school staff. Counselors provide outreach materials, including a specialized brochure for transition students. The brochure highlights the DRS Transition program, including eligibility requirements and available services. The brochure has the agency’s website address where additional information about the DRS Transition program is available. DRS will continue to explore new, effective methods of information dissemination to secondary schools and institutions of higher education.

In the agency’s effort to educate parents, DRS utilizes the West Virginia Parent Training and Information, Inc (WVPTI). The WVPTI is the only organization in West Virginia charged by the U.S. Department of Education/Office of Special Education Programs to serve as the state's Parent Training and Information Center. As mandated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the WVPTI provides parents of children with disabilities with the information and skills necessary to become effective partners in their children’s provisions for special education and related services, including vocational rehabilitation services provided by DRS.

Furthermore, DRS will continue to consult with state and local education officials regarding the use of newsletters and registration packets to inform students and their families about DRS services. DRS counselors and special education teachers across the state also emphasize the use of the Pathways to the Future website to students with disabilities. Many high schools have banner displays promoting the use of the website as well. Finally, DRS counselors attend IEP and other transition planning meetings when they are invited and will continue to do so, in accordance with the law.
DRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 9:

DRS agrees with the issues raised by the SRC regarding the potential increase in the number of consumers having drug and/or alcohol related issues. In addition to the implementation of a Behavioral Health and Correction Specialist at the state level, DRS has been proactive in this area in recent years by providing training to counselors. Training has occurred at the State Training Conference in the past and will continue to take place at future conferences, as appropriate. This training will assist counselors in enhancing their service provision to individuals with addiction by providing an overview of the disease of addiction and an examination of historic, current, and future treatment modalities.

DRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 10:

DRS agrees with the SRC about the importance of working with organizations and individuals with behavioral health issues and previous incarcerations, including individuals in juvenile detention programs. As mentioned, the agency has implemented a Behavioral Health and Corrections Specialist to focus on outreach and comprehensive service provision to these individuals. The specialist will maintain working relationships with related national and state organizations, assist in the training of counselors in these specialized areas, and ensure that the agency is providing quality and timely services to these individuals.

DRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 11:

DRS agrees that driving and transportation in general are often a barrier to employment for West Virginians with disabilities of all ages. DRS continues to seek solutions to transportation issues and maintains this as an agency goal and priority. During the initial phase of the vocational rehabilitation process, DRS counselors discuss transportation-related issues with consumers. Counselors work with consumers to address and resolve any identified disability-related employment barriers; services to circumvent barriers are included in Individualized Plans for Employment and may include transportation services. DRS also emphasizes individualized transportation services, including driver training, bioptic training, vehicle modification, and vehicle purchase, when necessary. DRS agrees that counselors need to stay abreast of resources available to consumers with disabilities regarding driving licensure, including provisional licensure, in order to best meet their needs for employment-necessary transportation.

DRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 12:

DRS agrees that training conferences are extremely valuable for agency staff members. In the past, these conferences have provided expert speakers, training sessions, and networking opportunities for field staff from across the state. Additionally, it is an enriching experience for staff members to meet others from across the state. The conference promotes cohesiveness among VR staff, as well as promoting team building, in order to serve consumers with disabilities statewide. In PY 2019, DRS and WVDE held a joint conference, bringing DRS counselors and special education teachers across the state together. DRS intends to continue conferences of this nature in the future.

3. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS.
The agency is basically in agreement with the input and recommendations provided by the SRC. Please see the previous section for the full DRS responses to the SRC input and recommendations.

**B. REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS**

When requesting a waiver of the statewideness requirement, the designated State unit must identify the types of services to be provided by the program on a non-statewide basis. The waiver request must also include written assurances that:

1. **A LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY WILL PROVIDE THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WAIVER REQUEST;**

This agency has not requested a waiver of statewideness

2. **THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL APPROVE EACH PROPOSED SERVICE BEFORE IT IS PUT INTO EFFECT; AND**

This agency has not requested a waiver of statewideness

3. **REQUIREMENTS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN WILL APPLY TO THE SERVICES APPROVED UNDER THE WAIVER.**

This agency has not requested a waiver of statewideness

**C. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM**

Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system with respect to:

1. **FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS;**

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) maintains cooperation and coordination with various agencies and entities. This section describes DRS association with agencies or entities that are not in the statewide workforce development system, education officials, private non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers, and supported employment and extended services providers for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

DRS continues to maintain strong relationships with many agencies and organizations that are not in the statewide workforce development system and whose functions, in some capacity, involve the provision of services to individuals with disabilities. The association with other organizations occurs with varying degrees of involvement depending upon joint initiatives that may be planned and/or that may occur within any given year. Generally, DRS representatives may be included in advisory functions for other agencies, as are other agencies with the strategic planning that occurs within DRS. Some examples include:

- A DRS representative is actively involved with the West Virginia Behavioral Health Planning Council in the monitoring and oversight of behavioral health services in the state. The DRS representative participates in quarterly Council meetings and serves on various subcommittees.
- DRS representatives participate with the West Virginia Developmental Disabilities Council. DRS maintains a close working relationship with the staff and members of this Council and has provided support and received effective feedback for its work.

- DRS is represented on the State's Interagency Collaborative Team (ICT), a group (including agencies not under the state workforce development system) centered around WorkForce WV to provide on-going attention to addressing issues that will build and continually improve the statewide Workforce Development System (WDS). The team is the single State-level interagency group for addressing issues or concerns regarding building and maintaining the most effective and efficient implementation of the overall WDS in WV. DRS participates in and hosts regular, monthly meetings of the ICT, and is one of the signatories of the ICT Memorandum of Understanding, which is drafted annually. The ICT membership includes:

  - Department of Commerce – WorkForce WV – WV Employment Service
  - Department of Commerce – Division of Rehabilitation Services
  - Department of Commerce – Development Office – Community Development Division
  - Department of Commerce – Development Office – Business Industry Development
  - Bureau of Senior Services – State Unit on Aging
  - Council for Community and Technical College Education
  - Department of Education – Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development
  - Department of Education – Office of Diversion and Transition Programs
  - Department of Health and Human Resources – Bureau of Children and Families
  - Department of Health and Human Resources – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
  - Department of Health and Human Resources – Food Stamp Employment and Training, United States Department of Agriculture

- DRS has a good working relationship with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) at the district level, which allows direct referrals of appropriate veterans from VA facilities to its rehabilitation technology unit for assistive technology and rehabilitation engineering services. Furthermore, DRS maintains liaisons for all VA offices in WV.

2. STATE PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

With respect to state programs carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, DRS has a memorandum of understanding with the West Virginia Assistive Technology System (WVATS) of the West Virginia University Center for Excellence in Disabilities (CED). The purpose of this MOU is to delineate the working relationship between DRS and the CED in order to provide effective services to individuals with disabilities and their families, ensuring statewide coverage of assistive technology needs.

CED provides free services, statewide, to individuals of all ages and abilities. Device demonstrations are available, in the CED office and in the community, for individuals to receive hands-on guidance from knowledgeable CED staff. Device loans are also available to allow individuals to try-out a device before purchasing or to use during a short-term disability (up to 30 days). CED provides technical assistance to government agencies, institutes of higher
education, industry, and other entities. This technical assistance includes consultation on AT related programs and service design. When appropriate, CED provides information and referrals to ensure individuals are connected with available resources relating to disability needs, assistive technology (AT) devices, and funding options.

CED also provides professional development and group training around the state. These trainings are customized to increase knowledge, skills, and competencies in AT devices and service delivery. Popular training topics include:

- Creating accessible documents
- Creating accessible PowerPoint presentations
- AT and transition
- Switch access basics
- iPads as AT
- AT for recreation
- AT for aging

CED WVATS activities are overseen by a Consumer Advisory Council, of which a DRS representative is a member. Similarly, the CED is represented on the West Virginia State Rehabilitation Council, which works closely with DRS to help ensure that all West Virginians with disabilities are provided with an equal opportunity to receive the vocational rehabilitation (VR) service(s) for which they are eligible.

The CED also receives partial funding from DRS in exchange for direct services to eligible individuals in need of AT that is unavailable directly from DRS. DRS has an AT unit, which provides AT solutions to eligible individuals with AT needs statewide. With the additional assistance of the CED, assurances are made that high-quality AT solutions can be provided statewide at any time. Additionally, both parties agree to consult with each other on an as-needed basis for atypical cases.

Individuals and families receiving AT services at the CED who are 14 years of age or older will also receive information on the eligibility requirements for DRS and the vocational rehabilitation services they provide. If an eligible individual in the VR system requests AT services from the CED, DRS staff will make the proper referral. DRS will also refer eligible individuals to the CED in the event that DRS is unable to provide, through their AT unit, the necessary AT.

3. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

Although DRS does not maintain a formal agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the office of the Under Secretary for Rural Development, it provides rehabilitation services as necessary to eligible migrant and seasonal farm workers with disabilities. Another available resource is the WV AgrAbility Project, a USDA–funded program established to assist farmers and farm families who need to find ways to accommodate their disabilities in order to remain active in agriculture.

DRS shares the vision of WV AgrAbility that is to enhance quality of life for farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural workers with disabilities, so that they, their families, and their
communities continue to succeed in rural America. More specifically, “success” may include:
gainful employment in production agriculture or a related occupation; access to appropriate
assistive technology needed for work and daily living activities; evidence-based information
related to the treatment and rehabilitation of disabling conditions; and targeted support for
family caregivers of WV AgrAbility customers. WV AgrAbility addresses a wide variety of
disabling conditions in agriculture, including, but not limited to:

- Arthritis
- Spinal cord injuries/paralysis
- Back impairments
- Amputations
- Brain injury
- Visual impairments
- Hearing impairments
- Disabling diseases
- Cerebral palsy
- Respiratory impairments
- Head injury

WV AgrAbility continues to work with DRS in advocating for services for WV farmers. WV
AgrAbility also provides training for allied health professionals on farm culture, how to tailor
treatments to the farmer, and using assistive technology on the farm for Vocational
Rehabilitation Counselors, Physical Therapists, and Occupational Therapists. WV AgrAbility
continues advocacy efforts with DRS, positively impacting DRS’ view on agriculture in WV as a
viable self-employment option.

If a WV AgrAbility participant becomes a DRS consumer, they may receive vocational
rehabilitation services to help them reach their employment goal. Services may include:

- Evaluation and assistance in purchasing recommended adaptive devices
- Assistive technology
- Rehabilitation technology
- Home, business and/or vehicle modification
- Assistance for vocational training
- Physical or mental health restoration
- Self-employment and business-related services, if applicable

4. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH; AND

DRS works with a variety of non–educational agencies serving out–of–school youth. The
primary coordinated activities serving this population are with Workforce Innovation and
Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners – WorkForce WV and the regional workforce development
boards. DRS strives to coordinate referrals and services to eligible out-of-school youth served by the WIOA youth programs that are overseen by WorkForce WV and the regional workforce development boards. These partnerships allow for improved service delivery through the blending of resources and expertise among the agencies. For example, sharing costs allows DRS and other agencies to enhance outreach efforts, serve increased numbers of out-of-school youth, and improve outcomes for participants.

In addition to DRS’ reliance on WIOA partners in serving out-of-school youth, the agency continues to use community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) that have become a DRS-acknowledged vendor, to support the needs of this population across the state.

DRS also maintains communication and works with other non-educational agencies that serve out-of-school youth in order to introduce and provide VR services. These agencies include Youth Reporting Centers under the WV Division of Juvenile Services and Peer Support Centers, funded by the WV Bureau for Behavioral Health. Youth Reporting Centers are community-based centers that provide intervention programs for at-risk youth and also provide reintegration services for youth returning to the community. The Peer Support Centers provide a variety of support services for qualifying youth with behavioral health conditions.

5. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS.

West Virginia’s State Use Program was created by the legislature in 1984 and strengthened in 1989. The program allows employment opportunities to be created for citizens with disabilities through nonprofit Community Rehabilitation Programs. The State Use Law allows these programs and their clients to produce commodities and perform services for various state agencies without requiring competitive bidding. Prices charged for these special commodities and services are established by the governor-appointed Committee for the Purchase of Commodities and Services from the Handicapped.

The Governor’s Committee consists of six (6) members appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. One member is selected by the Governor to serve as chairperson. Members represent the following:

- a private citizen who is conversant with the problems incidental to the employment of persons with disabilities,

- a representative of a producing nonprofit workshop,

- a representative of the Division of Rehabilitation Services,

- a representative of the Department of Administration who is knowledgeable in the purchasing requirements of the state,

- a representative of private business who is knowledgeable in the activities involved in the sale of commodities or services to governmental entities, and

- a representative of organized labor who is knowledgeable in matters relating to employment of people with disabilities.

Members serve two-year terms. There is also an ex-officio, non-voting member of the committee who is appointed by the Director of the Purchasing Division. This person serves as the Executive Secretary. There are no geographical or political party constraints on who may be appointed.
The state network of CRPs is critical to the effective and efficient delivery of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with significant disabilities. As of October 2019, there are 72 DRS-acknowledged parent company CRPs in West Virginia located at 80 service sites. Many of these CRPs participate in state use contracting programs. DRS maintains working relationships with non-profit CRPs in West Virginia that provide supported and direct employment, community-based assessment, and/or work skills assessment. CRPs also provide employment readiness services such as life skills and work adjustment, job site training, and trial work experience. While respecting freedom of choice, DRS encourages work center programs to expand community-based programs for these individuals. Any CRP meeting the DRS acknowledgment process will be permitted under a written Vendor Acknowledgment to bill for services provided to DRS consumers. In order to become a DRS-acknowledged vendor, an applicant must request, complete, and return a Vendor Acknowledgment Packet. Upon receipt of the completed packet, a recommendation to acknowledge or not acknowledge will be made to the DRS Director.

The Vendor Acknowledgment Packet contains an application for Vendor Acknowledgment to provide supported employment services, an annual data summary that provides the agency’s name, address, contact information, a checklist of those DRS services they will be providing, and a Vendor Acknowledgment form addressing conditions of and payment for services rendered to DRS consumers.

A signed Vendor Acknowledgment indicates that the vendor agrees to follow conditions set forth regarding standards, anti-discrimination, indemnification, and conditions/standards of operation. The acknowledgment is good for three years.

D. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

Describe:

1. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT’S PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AS WELL AS PROCEDURES FOR THE TIMELY DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL OF INDIVIDUALIZED PLANS FOR EMPLOYMENT FOR THE STUDENTS

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) has cooperative agreements with the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) Office of Special Education, the WVDE Division of Technical and Adult Education, Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development, local education agencies (county boards of education), and the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind. The current cooperative agreement between DRS and WVDE (the state education agency) went into effect on July 17, 2019. The cooperative agreements between DRS and WVDE, both at the state and the local levels, assure that each student with a disability in the state who needs special education, vocational education, and/or vocational rehabilitation services is identified and that the appropriate services, including pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS), are made available to the individual. The cooperative agreements cover:

- Determination of agency responsibility;
- Transition and Pre-ETS planning;
- Outreach and identification;
The following excerpt from the current formal agreement between DRS and WVDE outlines the coordination and documentation requirements, including the provision of Pre-ETS and transition services, for students seeking subminimum wage employment:

“SUBMINIMUM WAGE EMPLOYMENT

Section 511 of the WIOA imposes requirements on Education and Rehabilitation with regard to youth with disabilities seeking subminimum wage employment. Rehabilitation and Education shall work cooperatively to ensure that the individual, before beginning work that is compensated at a subminimum wage, has completed, and produces documentation indicating completion of, each of the following actions:

1. The individual has received pre-employment transition services that are available to the individual under section 113, or transition services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.) such as transition services available to the individual under section 614(d) of that Act (20 U.S.C. 1414(d)).

2. The individual has applied for vocational rehabilitation services under title I, with the result that-
   a. the individual has been found ineligible for such services pursuant to that title and has documentation consistent with section 102(a)(5)(C) regarding the determination of ineligibility; or
   b. the individual has been determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services;
   c. the individual has an individualized plan for employment under section 102;
   d. the individual has been working toward an employment outcome specified in such individualized plan for employment, with appropriate supports and services, including supported employment services, for a reasonable period of time without success; and
   e. the individual's vocational rehabilitation case is closed; and
   f. the individual has been provided career counseling, and information and referrals to Federal and State programs and other resources in the individual’s geographic area that offer employment-related services and supports designed
to enable the individual to explore, discover, experience, and attain competitive integrated employment; and

g. such counseling and information and referrals are not for employment compensated at a subminimum wage provided by an entity described in this subsection, and such employment-related services are not compensated at a subminimum wage and do not directly result in employment compensated at a subminimum wage provided by an entity described in this subsection.

Any student considering subminimum wage employment upon exiting high school should be referred to Rehabilitation. When appropriate, Rehabilitation may request documentation from Education for purposes related to this section. Rehabilitation will collect and document the necessary prerequisites, corresponding services, and information (described above) required of individuals (aged 24 and younger) seeking subminimum wage employment. This documentation will be provided to the individual within 45 days after the completion of services, or 90 days if a longer period of time is needed due to extenuating circumstances.

Furthermore, this agreement assures, pursuant to 34 CFR 397.31, that Rehabilitation and Education agree not to enter into a contract or other arrangement with an entity for purposes of operating a program in which youth with disabilities are employed at subminimum wage.”

DRS has a long history of closely working with the state and local education agencies. Since the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), DRS has further strengthened these working relationships. DRS has worked with the WV Office of Special Education to align WV Department of Education policy with aspects of WIOA, particularly the provision of Pre-ETS. Education and DRS have jointly developed materials that are distributed to special education students and teachers across the state.

During FY 2019, DRS held a joint training conference with the WV Office of Special Education. This conference, the WV Capacity Building Institute, provided cross-training to over 200 staff from education and over 125 staff from DRS to ensure that services are provided more effectively and efficiently. Attendees gained an enhanced understanding of the roles and responsibilities of DRS and WVDE, and how to better serve WV students with disabilities. Due to the success of this training conference, future joint conferences are being planned with the WV Office of Special Education.

Also, during FY 2019, in-depth training was provided to special education teachers in 19 counties across the state, including the WV Schools for the Deaf and the Blind. The training covered DRS’ “Pathways to the Future” Pre-ETS website. In upcoming years, special education teachers from remaining counties and the Office of Diversion and Transition Programs will receive the training.

DRS’ Pathways to the Future materials were updated in FY 2019 and distributed to students with disabilities across the state during the 2019-2020 school year. The materials include:

- Pre-ETS transition slide guide
- Parent/student guide
- Transition Services Planner
- Sample Lessons for Life After High School

As part of its ongoing outreach activities, DRS developed new Pathways to the Future banners and posters during FY 2019. These are being distributed to all high schools in the state to
ensure that students, parents, and teachers are aware of the availability of Pre-ETS. Additional outreach using large posters will target eighth grade, career and technical education, and postsecondary students at locations across the state to ensure that students ages 14-21 are aware of the availability of Pre-ETS. The banners are also used by DRS during job fairs, transition fairs, and other activities involving students with disabilities.

As part of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), DRS attempted a one-on-one Pre-ETS needs assessment discussion with teachers and administrators in all of West Virginia’s 55 counties. DRS was able to get participation from 110 high schools in 54 (out of 55) counties in 2019. While all six DRS districts were represented, no schools from Jefferson County (in District 6) participated in this particular part of the CSNA, despite repeated requests. However, DRS does have information regarding Pre-ETS need from different sources (e.g., consumers and DRS counselors) in all 55 WV counties. DRS continues to ensure that Pre-ETS are available to students with disabilities on a statewide basis. Details and results of this assessment are provided in the Statewide Assessment section of the state plan.

To better serve students, DRS has offices located in some of the state’s largest schools, as well as the WV Schools for the Deaf and the Blind. Additionally, counselors visit every high school in the state to initiate rehabilitation services needed for transition from school to work. This allows the counselor to develop a collaborative relationship and assist the student in identifying goals, services, and service providers related to employment options prior to transition. In FY 2019, there were 73 rehabilitation counselors assigned to work with the state’s 55 local education agencies and the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and Blind.

School rehabilitation counselors also are invited to participate in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings. During these meetings the counselor describes DRS services, policies, and procedures as appropriate. The DRS counselor determines the student’s eligibility and order of selection category utilizing information generated from the school, the student, and DRS. Prior to or shortly after the student’s IEP transition meeting occurs, development begins on the student’s Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) so both the student and counselor have an idea of what rehabilitation services will be necessary to meet the student’s vocational goal. Therefore, if the student needs additional training or assessment prior to vocational goal determination, this information is already collected so that planned rehabilitation services may begin. IPE development and approval for students with disabilities, including those able to be served if DRS is on an order of selection, will begin as early as appropriate during the transition process, but before the student, determined to be eligible, leaves the school setting.

DRS also assists WVDE with Graduation 20/20, a West Virginia initiative that uses a data driven intervention framework developed by the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD) to address issues that have negatively impacted school completion. Graduation 20/20 utilizes the innovation configuration on evidence-based transition practices and predictors of post school success to guide professional learning which was published by the Collaboration for Effective Educator, Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR) Center. The program, using tools from NDPC-SD and CEEDAR, trains local school-based teams and team leaders to diagnose the causes of dropout and develop site-specific improvement plans and strategies.

Information about the DRS school program is widely disseminated to education professionals, as well as students and their parents. An updated fact sheet and new brochure explaining DRS transition services is available. DRS has negotiated an agreement with the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission for its consumers who attend in-state public colleges and universities. The agreement describes the financial responsibility of DRS and the appropriate
public institution of higher education, provides procedures to resolve interagency disputes, and coordinates policies and procedures to ensure timely delivery of vocational rehabilitation services. To better serve individuals in post-secondary school, DRS has liaisons assigned to 43 post-secondary community/technical colleges, 4-year colleges, and universities across the state.

DRS also coordinates with the WVDE Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development, a WIOA core partner, to better serve individuals receiving adult education. The agencies have a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and collaborate at the state and local level. The MOU includes screening students for potential disabilities, including learning disabilities, and the collaboration between WVDE and DRS to provide necessary accommodations (e.g., assistive technology, interpreters) for eligible individuals. DRS will evaluate the disability or disabilities and provide specific recommendations regarding testing accommodations, recommendations for instructional accommodations and recommendations for job accommodations. If it is found that the student requires assistive technology (which includes information technology products such as software application, operating systems, web-based information applications, web accessibility, video equipment, multimedia products, and office equipment) then WVDE and DRS will share, as appropriate, the cost for this technology. If it is determined that the person has a hearing disability and it is deemed necessary that an interpreter, CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation), note-taker, or other appropriate accommodations be provided, then WVDE and DRS will share the cost. WVDE will only hire qualified interpreters who are registered through the West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

2. INFORMATION ON THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY WITH RESPECT TO:

A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ASSIST EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING VR SERVICES;

The formal agreement includes the following:

CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Rehabilitation agrees to provide consultation and technical assistance services to Education, as well as to LEAS, in order to aid them in the planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including pre-employment transition services and other vocational rehabilitation services. Rehabilitation will provide Education and LEAs with information, as appropriate, regarding disability awareness, disability etiquette, accommodations and assistive technology, eligibility for Rehabilitation and the application process, vocational rehabilitation services, the availability of community-based services, independent living, competitive integrated employment, and career pathways. Additionally, Rehabilitation will provide consultation and technical assistance to Education and LEAs regarding pre-employment transition services including job exploration and labor market
information, opportunities for work-based learning experiences, post-secondary enrollment opportunities, work place readiness training opportunities, and self-advocacy.

Rehabilitation assures that communication with Education officials shall be done in the most meaningful and convenient manner possible. To that end, Rehabilitation will provide consultation and technical assistance through a variety of methods, including face-to-face contact, phone calls, e-mail, conference calls, and video conferencing.

B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS;

The formal agreement includes the following:

TRANSITION AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES PLANNING

It is important that Education and Rehabilitation work together to determine logistics for providing transition and pre-employment transition services. The IEP and the IPE must be developed with coordinated goals, objectives and planned services for effective and successful transition to post-school settings. Each agency will cooperate to provide referral, support, relevant documentation, and assistance to the agency with responsibility for services.

IDEA 2004 and WIOA require the individual’s participation in the development of the IEP and IPE, respectively, and emphasize informed choice. Identification of transition services for the IEP is focused on a coordinated set of activities which considers the student’s preferences and interests. Likewise, the IPE is developed by a rehabilitation counselor and the individual by identifying goals through reviewing assessments, individual strengths, resources, interests, and needs. Education and Rehabilitation provide both awareness and exploration activities in the areas of living, learning, and work to support decisions about post school outcomes. This interagency cooperation assures the provision of transition and pre-employment transition services that prepare the student to pursue adult goals.

The participation of Rehabilitation counselors in the IEP process will help students and parents understand the differences in and facilitate the provision of educational and rehabilitation services. To this end, Rehabilitation counselors should be invited to IEP meetings, when appropriate, to provide information on available services and eligibility requirements. The Rehabilitation counselor may also assist in the development and coordination of the IEP and the IPE. Both Education and Rehabilitation should document any coordinated services outlined in both the IEP and the IPE. Planning, coordinating and providing transition and pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities may be conducted at the state and local level to maximize service provision and individual choice.

Professional development activities between Education and Rehabilitation, when and where appropriate, shall be provided and facilitated by Education and/or Rehabilitation staff, including support of regional transition teams, participating in topic specific learning events and book studies.

C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES;

The formal agreement includes the following:

DETERMINATION OF AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY
Education, through participation in IDEA 2004, has assured the USDE that it has established general supervisory authority over all education programs administered within the State. General supervisory authority means that:

1. All programs serving eligible students meet all requirements of IDEA 2004;
2. All programs serving eligible students within the state must meet State standards; and
3. Funds which support services to eligible school age students with disabilities, including state and local education funds and funds under Title V, Title VI, Title IX, and Title XX of the Social Security Act, will continue to provide any and all services provided by these funds prior to the passage of IDEA 2004; and no program will alter eligibility requirements for participating in federal, state, and local programs in order to increase the financial responsibility of agencies receiving IDEA 2004 funds. Part B of IDEA does not limit the responsibility of agencies other than educational agencies for providing for and paying for some or all of the costs of FAPE to students with disabilities in the State.

The State Education Agency (SEA) and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) have responsibility for providing appropriate special education and related services for each eligible student with a disability, ages 3 to 21, enrolled in the public-school system. For each eligible student with a disability at age 16 or younger, if determined appropriate, the transition service needs of the student must be identified, including interagency linkages. From the perspective of the SEA and LEAs, students with disabilities shall have equal access to services that are normally provided by public schools for non-disabled individuals, provided that reasonable accommodations or modifications can be made.

Transition services are defined in IDEA 2004 as a coordinated set of activities for a student with an exceptionality that are designed within a results-oriented process focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the student to facilitate movement from school to post-school activities including postsecondary education; vocational education; competitive, integrated employment; continuing and adult education; adult services; independent living or community participation.

Rehabilitation is mandated by WIOA, in collaboration with local education agencies (LEAs), including the county-level Boards of Education in each of West Virginia’s 55 counties, to provide or arrange for the provision of pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities (ages 14-21) in need of such services who are eligible or potentially eligible for Rehabilitation services - specifically, those students with an IEP and those students with a disability for the purposes of section 504. The five required pre-employment transition service activities are: 1) job exploration counseling; 2) work-based learning experiences; 3) counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs; 4) workplace readiness training; and 5) instruction in self-advocacy.

Rehabilitation is required to conduct, at a local level, a CSNA to determine the need for the five required Pre-ETS activities. The CSNA will be used to determine: 1) the level of need for each of the required Pre-ETS activities, statewide; 2) the amount of service provision delivered by the Education system regarding these five required activities; and 3) the amount of service gap that remains for Rehabilitation to provide. Those Pre-ETS activities not provided by Education will be supplemented by Rehabilitation, as appropriate, and based on the availability of resources.

For students with disabilities, the responsibility for vocational services rests with Rehabilitation. Rehabilitation will provide services, which are legally the responsibility of Rehabilitation, for those individuals determined to be eligible for Rehabilitation services.
Eligibility for Rehabilitation services is determined by the following criteria:

- An individual must have a physical or mental impairment which, for that individual, constitutes or results in a substantial impediment for employment; and
- The individual can benefit in terms of an employment outcome from vocational rehabilitation services.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF EDUCATION

Education assumes responsibility for all expenses incurred in the provision of special education and related services to achieve FAPE when those services, including assistive technology devices and services, are necessary for the student's educational program or course of study, as well as participation in school activities and during the pendency of any interagency dispute.

Private Insurance Funds: With regard to services required to provide FAPE to an eligible student under this part, Education may access a parent’s private insurance only if the parent provides informed consent consistent with federal regulations pursuant to IDEA 2004. Each time Education proposes to access the parent's private insurance, it must:

1. Obtain written parental consent; and
2. Inform the parent that their refusal to permit the school district to access the private insurance does not relieve the school district of its responsibility to ensure that all required services are provided at no cost.

Public Insurance Funds: Education may use the Medicaid or other public insurance benefits programs in which a student participates to provide or pay for services required. With regard to services required to provide FAPE to an eligible student under this part, Education may not:

1. Require parents to sign up for or enroll in public benefits or insurance programs in order for their child to receive FAPE under IDEA regulations;
2. Require parents to incur an out-of-pocket expense, such as the payment of a deductible or co-pay included in filing a claim for services provided pursuant to this part, but may pay the cost that the parent otherwise would be required to pay; and
3. Use a student’s benefits under a public benefits or insurance program if that use would (a) decrease available lifetime coverage or any other insured benefit; (b) result in the family paying for services that would otherwise be covered by the public benefits or insurance program and that are required for the child outside of the time the child is in school; (c) increase premiums or lead to the discontinuation of benefits or insurance; or (d) risk loss of eligibility for home and community-based waivers, based on aggregate health-related expenditures.

To access a student's public insurance (e.g., Medicaid reimbursement), the school district must obtain and maintain documentation of parent/adult student consent specifying the records to be disclosed, the services to be provided, and the extent, frequency, and duration of the services. The school district must also obtain parent/adult student consent if billable services (i.e., type, amount and/or duration) are revised at any time. The parents must be informed that their refusal to consent to the release of information does not relieve the school district of its responsibility to ensure that all services are provided at no cost to the parents.

If Education is unable to obtain parental consent to use the parent's private insurance, or public benefits or insurance when the parents would incur a cost for a service specified on their child's
IEP, the school district may use Part B funds to pay for services to ensure FAPE. To avoid a financial cost to parents who otherwise would consent to use private insurance or public benefits or insurance if the parent would incur a cost, the school district may use its Part B funds to pay the cost the parents otherwise would have to pay to use the parents’ benefits insurance (e.g., the deductible or co-pay amounts).

Proceeds from public or private insurance will not be treated as program income as pursuant to 34 CFR 580.25(2). If a school district spends reimbursements from Federal funds (e.g., Medicaid) for services under this part, those funds will not be considered "State or local" funds for purposes of the maintenance of effort provisions of Part B of IDEA 2004.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF REHABILITATION

Rehabilitation may be responsible for services that occur outside of the school environment that are vocationally oriented and are specifically intended to prepare students with disabilities to transition into postsecondary training or work, including pre-employment transition services, in accordance with the CSNA. Rehabilitation is not otherwise responsible for payment of any service that has not been directly agreed to during the development of a student’s IEP and is not included as a service on a student’s IPE for Rehabilitation services. Rehabilitation is not responsible for career development activities that are part of a School to Work initiative within the school system. The responsibility for implementing the requirements of Department of Education Policy 2510 remains with the school system.

The transference to the student of assistive technology devices that have been purchased by an LEA will occur consistent with the surplus equipment policies and regulations in existence within each LEA. After the student has exited the school system, Rehabilitation may reimburse the LEA at a rate in accordance with the surplus equipment policy, dependent upon the student’s continued need or desire for the equipment, the condition of the equipment, and its future usefulness.

D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES.

At present, DRS has representation in all high schools in all 55 WV counties. DRS counselors/staff regularly communicate with local school personnel to promote the awareness and usage of VR services. When permitted, DRS school counselors maintain an office in high schools to strengthen the DRS resolve to serve students with disabilities (ages 14-21). DRS continually sponsors grants and activities to educate all stakeholders in high schools about VR services and employment opportunities for students with disabilities.

The State Education Agency (SEA) and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) have responsibility for providing appropriate special education and related services for each eligible student with a disability, ages 3 to 21, enrolled in the public-school system. For each eligible student with a disability at age 16 or younger, if determined appropriate, the transition service needs of the student must be identified, including interagency linkages. From the perspective of the SEA and LEAs, students with disabilities shall have equal access to services, which are normally provided by public schools for non-disabled individuals, provided that reasonable accommodations or modifications can be made.

It is important that Education and Rehabilitation work together to determine logistics for providing transition services. The IEP and the IPE must be developed with coordinated goals, objectives, and planned services for effective and successful transition to post-school settings.
Each agency will cooperate to provide referral, support, and assistance to the agency with responsibility for services.

The formal agreement includes the following:

OUTREACH AND IDENTIFICATION

Rehabilitation and Education will continue to utilize a variety of activities to provide outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who are in need of transition and pre-employment transition services. These activities will be conducted both jointly and individually for students with IEPs, students with 504 plans, and other potentially eligible students with disabilities not currently receiving services. Activities may include, but are not limited to, participation in career/job fairs, presentations to students and parents, website links, brochures, surveys, conferencing between Rehabilitation School Counselors and School Counselors, and regularly scheduled contact with individual schools.

Outreach activities and student identification will be conducted as early as possible, preferably during the students’ 10th grade year and shall include information regarding (1) the purpose of the Rehabilitation program; (2) the eligibility requirements of the Rehabilitation program; (3) the application procedures of the Rehabilitation program; and (4) the scope of services that may be provided by the Rehabilitation program.

E. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Describe the manner in which the designated State agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit VR service providers.

Cooperative Agreements with Private Non-Profit Vocational Rehabilitation Service Providers

The state network of Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) is critical to the effective and efficient delivery of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to individuals with significant disabilities. CRPs also provide services, including pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS), to students with disabilities. As of October 2019, there are 72 DRS-acknowledged parent company CRPs in West Virginia located at 80 service sites. There are also an additional 67 Student Transition to Employment Program (STEP) vendors that focus on serving students with disabilities.

DRS maintains working relationships with non-profit CRPs in West Virginia that provide supported and direct employment, community-based assessment, and/or work skills assessment. CRPs also provide employment readiness services such as life skills and work adjustment, job site training, and extended employment assessment. While respecting freedom of choice, DRS encourages work center programs to expand community-based programs for these individuals.

Any CRP meeting the DRS acknowledgment process will be permitted under a written Vendor Acknowledgment to bill for services provided to DRS consumers. In order to become a DRS-acknowledged vendor, an applicant must request, complete, and return a Vendor Acknowledgment Packet. Upon receipt of the completed packet, a recommendation to acknowledge or not acknowledge will be made to the DRS Director.

The Vendor Acknowledgment Packet contains an application for Vendor Acknowledgment to provide supported employment services, an annual data summary that provides the agency’s name, address, contact information, a checklist of those DRS services they will be providing, and
a Vendor Acknowledgment form addressing conditions of and payment for services rendered to DRS consumers.

A signed Vendor Acknowledgment indicates that the vendor agrees to follow conditions set forth regarding standards, anti–discrimination, indemnification, and conditions/standards of operation. The acknowledgment is good for three years.

CRPs can also supplement work exploration activities and provide opportunities for VR consumers, especially students, statewide. DRS also utilizes school personnel as CRP vendors as part of STEP. These teacher/vendors work with students outside of school hours to provide them with CRP services such as community-based assessment, work skills assessment, work adjustment training, job placement, and job coaching. The students benefit from working with a trusted adult who is already familiar with the student’s strengths and weaknesses. This eliminates the need for new and/or additional assessment by the service provider. Furthermore, this program allows DRS to ensure services are available in rural areas. DRS has made it an agency goal and priority to expand CRP service availability.

F. ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Describe the designated State agency’s efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) continues to concentrate efforts on educating interested parties regarding the process of becoming a non–traditional provider source for supported employment services. A variety of supported employment provider choices are needed, particularly due to the rural nature of the state.

DRS continues to focus on providing technical assistance and coordinating training for vendors of supported employment services, DRS staff members, and staff members of other public and private agencies. DRS keeps current on changes and advances in supported employment through documented research, literature, and reviews of best practices.

Other agencies with which DRS collaborates for the provision of time–limited supported employment services are:

1. West Virginia Developmental Disabilities Council funds;
2. West Virginia Title XIX—Home and Community–Based Waiver Program for intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) recipients; and
3. Social Security Administration work incentives programs.

In implementing school–to–work transition services for individuals exiting the school system, DRS also collaborates with family resource networks.

Through a combined effort with other disability organizations, $78,000 was appropriated (annually since 2017) by the West Virginia Legislature for supported employment follow–along services (extended supported employment services). DRS serves as the fiscal agent for these funds. DRS has created program guidelines governing the use of state–appropriated funds for extended services under the supported employment program created by state statute in 1993. The sole use of the state funds attached to this program is to provide extended services for
individuals not eligible from any other funding source. All providers of supported employment services may access these funds for individuals who are eligible under the guidelines. At the end of Program Year 2019, DRS had sponsored 37 individuals in the extended supported employment program so they could maintain and retain their jobs within the community. This figure represents the cooperative efforts of 10 CRPs.

Agreements between DRS and all acknowledged providers of supported employment services document collaboration for extended services. Each agreement details the time–limited and extended services that DRS will secure through the vendor.

Extended services specified in the agreement will be provided by the vendor and include, at minimum, monitoring two hours per month (no more than eight) at the job site of each individual unless the individual can be better served through off–site monitoring. If off–site monitoring is determined to be appropriate, it must, at a minimum, consist of two hours per month with the individual and at least one contact with the employer during those hours. The vendor also agrees to provide other support services as needed and specified in the Individualized Plan for Employment.

In addition to the basic vendor agreement identifying the time–limited and extended services to be mutually provided by DRS and the vendor, DRS has attempted to collaborate with other agencies and organizations to provide funding for extended services.

These sources of extended supported employment services are:

1. West Virginia Title XIX—Homes and Community–Based Waiver Program for I/DD recipients;
2. DRS program funds for persons receiving extended services at DRS–acknowledged CRP work centers; and
3. Social Security Administration programs such as Impairment Related Work Expenses and Plan To Achieve Self Support for approved Social Security recipients.

DRS continues its efforts to expand the number of acknowledged vendors of supported employment services, particularly in areas underserved and unserved within the current system. As of September 2019, the number of supported employment service providers was 61, an increase of 23 providers since Fiscal Year 2006.

G. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

Describe how the designated State unit will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of:

1. VR SERVICES; AND

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) believes that coordination with employers is integral to improving the workforce development system. Gathering/collecting information about employer needs, which will also be shared with other Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners, allows DRS to provide training and other services to vocational rehabilitation (VR) consumers in order to meet business needs and expectations of current and future workers. To optimize its coordination with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities for consumers with disabilities, DRS takes a multi–faceted approach. DRS utilizes its own personnel in addition to partnering with WorkForce WV to coordinate with employers across the state. Additionally, DRS has
specific programs/strategies to identify employment and career exploration opportunities for students with disabilities, including the provision of pre–employment transition services (Pre-ETS). The strategies that DRS uses are described below.

DRS has an in–house Employer Services Section that specializes in providing employers with disability–related information, services, and pre–screened job seekers. The DRS Employer Services Section has nine employment specialists that cover all 55 counties in West Virginia. DRS’ team of employment specialists provide business owners and employers with critical business options and assistance in staffing, employee retention strategies, education on disability–related issues, job accommodations, and information about financial incentives for employers who hire individuals with disabilities. In the previous fiscal year, employment specialists provided 814 services to 529 employers, attended 60 job fairs, coordinated with WorkForce WV, attended statewide and local Business Services Team meetings, participated in rapid response events, attended local workforce development board (WDB) meetings, provided Job Clubs for students with disabilities, and participated in opportunities for collaboration with community colleges, community rehabilitation programs, and other organizations responsive to workforce needs of businesses.

Sample of services provided to employers:

– Pre–screened qualified applicants to reduce employers’ cost of recruitment and hiring.

– Consultation, recommendation, and training for retention of employees who acquire a disability.

– Technical assistance on the Americans with Disability Act (ADA).

– Accessibility options and solutions.

– Employer on–site disability awareness training.

– Information on tax credits available to employers.

Direct contact with employers is a key strategy to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities for VR consumers, including students with disabilities. Employment Specialists contact employers to identify current and future job openings. To complement this, DRS utilizes labor market information provided by WorkForce WV to identify the top employers in each county; contact is always made with the top ten employers in each county. When meeting with employers, employment specialists provide valuable information, including the DRS Employer Resource Guide. The resource guide provides the following information:

– Staffing services;

– Training programs and incentives for hiring people with disabilities;

– Financial incentives;

– Accessibility assessments;

– Accommodating employees with disabilities;

– Basic disability etiquette;

– Attitudinal barriers;

– Americans with Disabilities Act;
- Locating a DRS office; and
- Where to find additional resources.

The Employer Services Section maintains a database of each DRS–employer interaction with employment specialists. The information collected includes the business name, contact person, and current job openings by occupation. If needed, a referral to the DRS Rehabilitation Technology Unit is made to address workplace accommodations. This list is distributed to field staff to potentially match a job–ready VR consumer with a current job opening. Through positive working relationships, 47 employers, including some of the largest in the state, now send job postings directly to DRS’ Employer Services Section.

DRS also coordinates with employers through participation and membership in various community and regional organizations. These activities range from employer–specific organizations to public– private partnerships and allow DRS to better understand the needs of employers while jointly developing employment–related activities. Some of these partnerships include:

- Regional WDBs;
- Tri-State Society for Human Resource Management;
- Cabell County Family Resource Network;
- Greater Wheeling Reentry Policy Council;
- Chamber of Commerce of the Mid-Ohio Valley;
- Workforce Business Services Units – Fayette, Greenbrier, Mercer, Monroe, Nicholas, Pocahontas, Raleigh, Summers, and Webster counties; and
- Employment Specialists attend Community Relations Board meetings at the Federal Prisons in Alderson and Beckley.

Another key strategy to coordinate with employers is through collaboration with WorkForce WV, a WIOA core partner. WorkForce WV is the state agency that oversees numerous U.S. Department of Labor programs. This partnership takes place at all levels, including local offices, regional workforce development boards, and state level Interagency Collaboration Team meetings. These partnerships have been of great benefit for West Virginians with disabilities seeking training and employment.

Because of the services it provides, WorkForce WV has the largest database of both job seekers and job openings in the state. DRS is able to tap into these resources to identify current employment opportunities for VR consumers, identify needs of employers across the state, and utilize detailed labor market information to assist individuals (including students) with disabilities in identifying future career opportunities. This allows VR consumers to identify potential employment opportunities and any training or other VR services that are required for the job. Additionally, job–ready VR consumers can create an account with WorkForce WV to match with employers seeking workers with specific skills they already possess.

2. TRANSITION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES.

In addition to the previously described activities, the Employer Services Section also works with employers to better serve transitioning youth with disabilities, including providing career exploration opportunities for students with disabilities. In 2015, DRS debuted the Positive
Outcomes Within Education and Rehabilitation (POWER) program. POWER is a job shadowing program that offers transitioning students, who may be having a difficult time choosing a career path, the opportunity to experience an occupation by spending time with a professional working in the students' vocational goal/career field of interest. The POWER program allows the student the opportunity to experience an occupation prior to committing to training. It guides the student to take a serious, realistic look at the occupation, allowing the student to make a more informed choice. As of November 2019, 85 employers have agreed to host job shadowing experiences with DRS’ POWER program.

Employment specialist services, including Pre-ETS, provided to students with disabilities:

- POWER job shadowing program;
- Transition fairs;
- Job readiness workshops;
- Job clubs;
- Interviewing;
- Resume preparation;
- Application assistance;
- Dressing for an interview/employment;
- Job retention and good work habits;
- Job search and employer contacts;
- Assist students in locating employment opportunities and assisting with applying to openings; and
- Advocating on the student’s behalf to employers when requested by the student.

H. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

Describe how the designated State unit will collaborate with the State agency responsible for administering each of the following programs to develop opportunities for competitive integrated employment, to the greatest extent practicable:

1. THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT;

DRS maintains a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Medical Services (BMS), the state agency responsible for the State Medicaid plan under the title XIX of the Social Security Act; this is also known as the Waiver program. An advisory group for the program is constituted with the WV Developmental Disability Council (WVDDC). DRS has a position on the council. DRS and BMS interact as part of this advisory group through the WVDDC. The primary involvement of the title XIX Medicaid Waiver program in fostering competitive, integrated employment outcomes through vocational rehabilitation is by mandating referral to DRS and providing ongoing support funding for those cases closed by DRS in Supported Employment. The WVDDC also advises BMS on policy development and meeting unmet needs of those participating in the title XIX Medicaid Waiver program.
In addition to interacting with title XIX Medicaid Waiver staff as part of the WVDDC meetings, DRS participates in two subcommittees; Employment First and Medley Management. The Employment First committee focuses on promoting employment for intellectually/developmentally disabled (IDD) individuals as a first option among services providers, legislators, state policy makers, and the community at large. The Medley Management committee provides oversight and advice to the Bureau for Behavioral Health on the state’s Medley program, which serves a specific group of IDD individuals that are at risk of institutionalization. These are often individuals that are also title XIX Medicaid Waiver eligible. On both of these committees, DRS promotes a focus on competitive, integrated employment outcomes.

DRS counselors will, at the time of application, gather information regarding an individual’s third-party resources, including Medicaid. If it is determined that the individual receives Medicaid benefits, BMS will provide all Medicaid-covered services to the individual, regardless of that individual’s continued status with DRS. If an individual is approved to receive services from DRS and begins to receive Medicaid benefits at a later time, BMS will provide all Medicaid-covered services to the individual from that time forward.

Individuals receiving services from BMS will receive information on the eligibility requirements for DRS and the services DRS provides. If an individual receiving services from BMS expresses a desire to work, he or she will be referred to DRS at that time. Similarly, DRS consumers who are Medicaid-eligible will be referred to BMS.

DRS also maintains an MOU with the Division of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD), within the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau for Behavioral Health (BBH), the State agency with primary responsibility for providing services and supports for individuals with intellectual disabilities and individuals with developmental disabilities. DRS interacts with both BBH and its subsidiary, DIDD.

DRS, BBH, and DIDD agree to collaborate to facilitate delivery of services, including extended services, to individuals with the most significant disabilities in the following ways:

– The DIDD program manager and DRS will interact regularly as part of the WVDDC meetings, as well as on the Employment First and Medley Management committees. The Employment First committee focuses on promoting employment for IDD individuals as a first option among services providers, legislators, state policy makers, and the community at large. The Medley Management committee provides oversight and advice to the BBH on the state’s Medley program, which serves a specific group of IDD individuals that are at risk of institutionalization. On both of these committees, DRS promotes a focus on competitive, integrated employment outcomes.

– The BBH administers several Customized Employment grants with vendors of DRS. BBH and DRS will jointly train the Community Rehabilitation Programs receiving these grants as well as DRS staff working with these programs.

– BBH and DRS will work together in mediating problems in cases being served jointly in the programs.

– DRS will meet monthly with BBH staff to review applicants for an Unmet Needs funding program to foster assistance to IDD individuals where traditional funding sources do not provide needed supports.
Individuals receiving services from BBH or DIDD will receive information on the eligibility requirements for DRS and the services DRS provides. If an individual receiving services from BBH or DIDD expresses a desire to work, he or she will be referred to DRS at that time.

DRS collaborates with the BBH and its partners, in order to provide quality and timely vocational rehabilitation services to West Virginians with behavioral health conditions who qualify.

DRS and BBH staff regularly attend various meetings to receive program updates which allows for collaboration whenever possible. Examples of meetings include:

- The Olmstead Council – DRS and BBH are both state agencies that are required to participate in quarterly Olmstead Council meetings. Olmstead v. L.C. (1999) is a landmark United States Supreme Court decision upholding the civil rights of people with disabilities (including those with behavioral health conditions that result in disability) to receive services and supports in the most integrated setting in the community.

- BBH and DRS are two of the principal state agencies that must have membership on the West Virginia Behavioral Health Planning Council (WVBHPC) and attend quarterly meetings working together and with others to accomplish the goals of the council. The WVBHPC is a unified voice that promotes wellness, recovery, and resiliency for all West Virginians. The primary purpose of the WVBHPC is to advocate for and evaluate the provision of community-based behavioral health services.

- DRS and BBH are two of the principal state agencies that must have membership on the West Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) and attend quarterly meetings allowing each agency to get program updates and collaborate wherever possible. The West Virginia SILC’s mission is to ensure persons who have disabilities have access to community-based resources that promote personal choice and facilitate the achievement of their independent living goals.

2. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES; AND

DRS maintains an MOU with the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, BMS, the state agency responsible for the State Medicaid plan under the title XIX of the Social Security Act; this is also known as the Waiver program. An advisory group for the program is constituted with the WVDDC. DRS has a position on the council. DRS and BMS interact as part of this advisory group through the WVDDC. The primary involvement of the title XIX Medicaid Waiver program in fostering competitive, integrated employment outcomes through vocational rehabilitation is by mandating referral to DRS and providing ongoing support funding for those cases closed by DRS in Supported Employment. The WVDDC also advises BMS on policy development with the goal of meeting unmet needs of those participating in the title XIX Medicaid Waiver program.

In addition to interacting with title XIX Medicaid Waiver staff as part of the WVDDC meetings, DRS participates in two subcommittees, Employment First and Medley Management. The Employment First committee focuses on promoting employment for IDD individuals as a first option among services providers, legislators, state policy makers, and the community at large. The Medley Management committee provides oversight and advice to the Bureau for Behavioral Health on the state’s Medley program, which serves a specific group of IDD individuals that are at risk of institutionalization. These are often individuals that are also title XIX Medicaid Waiver

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eligible. On both committees, DRS promotes a focus on competitive, integrated employment outcomes.

3. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau for Behavioral Health is the federally designated State Authority for mental health and substance abuse, as well as the lead agency for intellectual and developmental disabilities and provides planning, direction, training and funding for prevention, treatment and recovery services throughout the state. DRS also maintains an MOU with the Division of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD), within the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau for Behavioral Health (BBH). DRS interacts with both BBH and its subsidiary, DIDD.

DRS, BBH, and DIDD agree to interact in the following ways to facilitate delivery of services, including extended services, to individuals with the most significant disabilities:

- The BBH administers several Customized Employment grants with vendors of DRS. BBH and DRS will jointly train the Community Rehabilitation Programs receiving these grants as well as DRS staff working with these programs.
- BBH and DRS will work together in mediating problems in cases being served jointly in the programs.
- Individuals receiving services from BBH or DIDD will receive information on the eligibility requirements for DRS and the services DRS provides. If an individual receiving services from BBH or DIDD expresses a desire to work, he or she will be referred to DRS at that time.

DRS collaborates with the BBH and its partners in order to provide quality and timely vocational rehabilitation services to West Virginians with behavioral health conditions who qualify.

DRS and BBH regularly attend various meetings together to receive program updates which allows for collaboration whenever possible. Examples of meetings include:

- The Olmstead Council – DRS and BBH are required state agencies that participate in quarterly Olmstead Council meetings. Olmstead v. L.C. (1999) is a landmark United States Supreme Court decision upholding the civil rights of people with disabilities (including those with behavioral health conditions that result in disability) to receive services and supports in the most integrated setting in the community.
- BBH and DRS are two of the principal state agencies that must have membership on the West Virginia Behavioral Health Planning Council (WVBHPC) and attend quarterly meetings working together and with others to accomplish the goals of the council. The WVBHPC is a unified voice that promotes wellness, recovery, and resiliency for all West Virginians. The primary purpose of the WVBHPC is to advocate for and evaluate the provision of community-based behavioral health services.
- DRS and BBH are two of the principal state agencies that must have membership on the West Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) and attend quarterly meetings allowing each agency to get program updates and collaborate wherever possible. The West Virginia SILC’s mission is to ensure persons who have disabilities have access to community-based resources that promote personal choice and facilitate the achievement of their independent living goals.
I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT; DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

Describe the designated State agency's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated State unit, including the following:

1. SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

A. QUALIFIED PERSONNEL NEEDS

Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs with respect to:

I. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL WHO ARE EMPLOYED BY THE STATE AGENCY IN THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES IN RELATION TO THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS SERVED, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY;

DRS is committed to providing a comprehensive system of personnel development (CSPD) that complies with Section 101(a)(7)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 and Section 721(a)(7)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014. Members of the State Rehabilitation Council are afforded the opportunity to review and comment upon this entire section, particularly the DRS plan for recruitment, preparation, and retention of qualified personnel, agency personnel standards, and staff development needs and activities.

Provisions of this section should assist in recruiting and retaining qualified staff members to ensure skilled personnel are available to provide rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, these endeavors will help ensure an improved level of competence and expand and improve vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities, especially those with the most significant disabilities, allowing them to reach employment.

The Human Resources Unit is primarily responsible for performing DRS personnel administration activities in keeping with guidance from the West Virginia Division of Personnel (WVDOP), Rehabilitation Services Administration, Social Security Administration, and other appropriate bodies. The DRS Staff Development Unit administers the in-service training grant program. The Quality Assurance (QA) Unit also works closely with the Field Services Unit to ensure quality and timely training for new field counselors and rehabilitation services associates (RSAs).

The following narrative describes the DRS CSPD and policies, procedures, and activities relating to the establishment and maintenance of standards to ensure that personnel needed within DRS are appropriately and adequately prepared and trained for DRS operations.

DRS Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development Needs

Statistics and information utilized for personnel planning are maintained within the Human Resources Unit. DRS administrators have the ability to review salary, pay grade, job title, reporting unit, and personal employee information. Such information is available to DRS Assistant Directors and District Managers who use it for planning, hiring negotiations, and pay equity. DRS retiree information may also be obtained from these databases.

The Human Resources Senior Manager periodically (at least monthly) maintains and provides statistical data to the DRS Director. The data are a list of the number of individuals under
various classifications who are employed by DRS in the provision of rehabilitation services. This includes a ratio of the number of counselors to the number of consumers served each year. DRS estimates the ratio of consumers served (6,466) to the number of counselors (80) will be 81 in Federal Fiscal Year (FY) 2021.

Each year, the DRS Director receives a summary report that estimates and projects the number of such personnel that will be needed during the next five–year period. In November 2019, DRS had 80 counselors in various offices across the state. Of the 80 counselors, DRS had 33 Rehabilitation Counselors, 32 Senior Rehabilitation Counselors, 12 Certified Rehabilitation Counselors and 3 Rehabilitation Counselor Trainees. DRS believes its existing counselors and field staff members are needed to provide services to consumers who are currently in the DRS system.

DRS had several unfilled positions as of November 2019: 27 Rehabilitation Counseling positions, 17 Senior Rehabilitation Counselor positions, 4 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor positions and 4 Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee positions. Each unfilled position is being used to expand the number of field counselors when needed.

A breakdown by personnel category, including the number of personnel in relation to the estimated number of individuals served in FY 2021, is as follows (information current as of November 2019):

- Rehabilitation Counselors, 60 total positions, 27 vacancies, and 7 projected vacancies over the next five years. The number of Rehabilitation Counselors in relation to the number of individuals served is 108.

- Senior Rehabilitation Counselors, 49 total positions, 17 vacancies, and 10 projected vacancies over the next five years. The number of Senior Rehabilitation Counselors in relation to the number of individuals served is 132.

- Certified Rehabilitation Counselors, 16 total positions, 4 vacancies, and 6 projected vacancies over the next five years. The number of Certified Rehabilitation Counselors in relation to the number of individuals served is 404.

- Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee, 6 total positions, 4 vacancies, and 0 projected vacancies over the next five years. The number of Rehabilitation Counselors in relation to the number of individuals served is 1,078.

- Fiscal personnel, 14 total positions, 7 vacancy, and 1 projected vacancy over the next five years. The number of Fiscal personnel in relation to the number of individuals served is 462.

- Administrative Services personnel 24 total positions, 8 vacancies, and 6 projected vacancies over the next five years. The number of Administrative Services personnel in relation to the number of individuals served is 269.

- Field Services personnel, 158 total positions, 43 vacancies, and 77 projected vacancies over the next five years. The number of Field Services personnel in relation to the number of individuals served is 41.

- Support Services personnel (e.g., human resources, rehabilitation technology unit), 31 total positions, 9 vacancies, and 12 projected vacancies over the next five years. The number of Support Services personnel in relation to the number of individuals served is 209.
II. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND

Each year, the DRS Director receives a summary report that estimates and projects the number of such personnel that will be needed during the next five-year period. In November 2019, DRS had 80 counselors in various offices across the state. Of the 80 counselors, DRS had 33 Rehabilitation Counselors, 32 Senior Rehabilitation Counselors, 12 Certified Rehabilitation Counselors and 3 Rehabilitation Counselor Trainees. DRS believes its existing counselors and field staff members are needed to provide services to consumers who are currently in the DRS system.

DRS had several unfilled positions as of November 2019: 27 Rehabilitation Counseling positions, 17 Senior Rehabilitation Counselor positions, 4 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor position and 4 Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee positions. Each unfilled position is being used to expand the number of field counselors when needed.

III. PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY, WHO WILL BE NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES IN 5 YEARS BASED ON PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED, INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL EXPECTED TO RETIRE OR LEAVE THE FIELD, AND OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS.

DRS expects to see a decrease in the number of consumers in its caseload system, from 8,240 individuals in FY 2019 to a projected 7,824 individuals in FY 2025. DRS administrators believe that the expected future caseload size will be managed by existing counseling personnel and the gradual filling of the 52 vacant counselor positions over the next five years. Additionally, DRS employs 36 RSAs to assist Counselors with their caseloads, in order to more efficiently meet the needs of the increasing numbers of consumers.

The following information presents a range of the number of counselors and other agency personnel projected to leave DRS employment after becoming eligible for early retirement under the West Virginia Public Employees Retirement System by FY 2025. Of the 23 counselors who will be eligible, there will be 7 Rehabilitation Counselors, 10 Senior Rehabilitation Counselors, and 6 Certified Rehabilitation Counselors. DRS continues to experience a gradual retirement of counselors and other personnel. The agency expects this trend will continue over the coming years.

B. PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

I. A LIST OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE THAT ARE PREPARING VR PROFESSIONALS, BY TYPE OF PROGRAM;
DRS annually collects information from higher education institutions that provide training to prospective rehabilitation personnel. Based on information provided by West Virginia University (WVU) and Marshall University, WVU reports 42 students enrolled in the Clinical Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling graduate program in the Fall 2018 semester and 11 graduates in the 2018–2019 period. For the Counseling graduate program, WVU reports 45 enrolled students and 21 graduates in the 2018–2019 period. For the Social Work graduate program, WVU reports an enrollment of 124 students and 83 graduates in the 2018–2019 period.

The report from Marshall University shows 178 students in fall 2018 and 35 graduates in Counseling graduate programs for 2018-19. It also reports 103 students in fall 2018 and 33 graduates in Psychology graduate programs for 2018-19.

II. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS, BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; AND

DRS annually collects information from higher education institutions that provide training to prospective rehabilitation personnel. Based on information provided by WVU and Marshall University, WVU reports 42 students enrolled in the Clinical Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling graduate program in the Fall 2018 semester and 11 graduates in the 2018–2019 period. For the Counseling graduate program, WVU reports 45 enrolled students and 21 graduates in the 2018–2019 period. For the Social Work graduate program, WVU reports an enrollment of 124 students and 83 graduates in the 2018–2019 period.

The report from Marshall University shows 178 students in fall 2018 and 35 graduates in Counseling graduate programs for 2018-19. It also reports 103 students in fall 2018 and 33 graduates in Psychology graduate programs for 2018-19.

III. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED DURING THE PRIOR YEAR FROM EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS WITH CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, OR WITH THE CREDENTIALS FOR CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, BROKEN DOWN BY THE PERSONNEL CATEGORY FOR WHICH THEY HAVE RECEIVED, OR HAVE THE CREDENTIALS TO RECEIVE, CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE.

DRS annually collects information from higher education institutions that provide training to prospective rehabilitation personnel. Based on information provided by WVU and Marshall University, WVU reports 42 students enrolled in the Clinical Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling graduate program in the Fall 2018 semester and 11 graduates in the 2018–2019 period. For the Counseling graduate program, WVU reports 45 enrolled students and 21 graduates in the 2018–2019 period. For the Social Work graduate program, WVU reports an enrollment of 124 students and 83 graduates in the 2018–2019 period.

The report from Marshall University shows 178 students in fall 2018 and 35 graduates in Counseling graduate programs for 2018-19. It also reports 103 students in fall 2018 and 33 graduates in Psychology graduate programs for 2018-19.

2. PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

Describe the development and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated State unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.
DRS Recruitment Efforts

DRS will continue its efforts to recruit and advance employees of traditionally under-represented groups such as people with disabilities, seniors, women, and members of racial or ethnic minority groups.

DRS Re-training Efforts for Existing Rehabilitation Professionals

DRS is in full compliance with the CSPD requirement and its standard to employ only rehabilitation counselors who (1) possess a master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling or a counseling–related field, or (2) are employees who have two years of full–time or equivalent part–time paid experience in the position of Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee. As stated above, DRS makes no exceptions to the state standard when hiring new rehabilitation counselors. Therefore, the agency provides for existing personnel to receive the training necessary to meet requirements of the state standard.

As part of its non–discriminatory employment practices, DRS ensures that all personnel are selected for employment without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. The DRS affirmative action plan is updated annually, and the agency has formally adopted this policy of non–discriminatory employment practices.

3. PERSONNEL STANDARDS

Describe the State agency’s policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) to ensure that designated State unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

A. STANDARDS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH ANY NATIONAL OR STATE-APPROVED OR -RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION, LICENSING, REGISTRATION, OR OTHER COMPARABLE REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO THE PROFESSION OR DISCIPLINE IN WHICH SUCH PERSONNEL ARE PROVIDING VR SERVICES; AND

To ensure a high standard of competency and credentials for its qualified rehabilitation professionals, DRS has established job classifications. The lowest standard for Rehabilitation Counselors requires a master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling, counseling and guidance, social work, or closely related behavioral science field; or two years of experience as a Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee. Senior Rehabilitation Counselors require: (1) a master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling or counseling–related field; and (2) two years of full–time or equivalent part–time paid professional experience in vocational rehabilitation counseling. Certified Rehabilitation Counselors require: (1) a master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling or counseling–related field; (2) current national certification as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor or Certified Vocational Evaluator or current West Virginia licensure as a Licensed Professional Counselor; and (3) at least three years of full–time or equivalent part–time paid professional experience as a rehabilitation counselor.

DRS has established the position of Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee. An employee in this position is under direct supervision and performs work at the entry level in a probationary, training capacity which is intended to qualify the employee for specific duties for this position. The employee may become eligible for the position of Rehabilitation Counselor after two years of full–time or equivalent part–time paid experience in the position of Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee. Minimum qualifications for the Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee position are a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited college or university in counseling and guidance, social work, nursing, special education, or related behavioral science or human service field; or
a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited college or university with three years of full-time or equivalent part-time experience in the position of Rehabilitation Services Associate.

DRS strives to recruit graduates of accredited master’s degree programs in rehabilitation like the one at WVU, but it does not require the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credential as the minimum qualification for a new counselor. Graduates of accredited master’s degree programs in rehabilitation counseling are eligible for certification by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC), which sets the national standards for quality rehabilitation counseling services in the U.S. DRS encourages the achievement of CRC by existing counselors and gives special preference to applicants with the CRC credential and qualified applicants with disabilities and from minority backgrounds.

The DRS standard is specific to rehabilitation counselors only and is consistent with registration requirements of WVDOP—the DRS state hiring authority. WVDOP administers and scores unassembled examinations to potential rehabilitation counselor candidates.

To ensure that counselors and other personnel remain up to date with evolving labor force needs and the needs of individuals with disabilities, DRS provides ongoing training opportunities for its field staff in group and individual settings. This occurs through educational activities such as the State training conference, periodic district-level training sessions, continuing education credit opportunities (Certified Rehabilitation Counselor), and training sessions by DRS Quality Assurance Specialists and DRS Employment Specialists. These activities allow DRS counselors and field staff to enhance their knowledge of labor force needs and ultimately better serve individuals with disabilities.

Individuals not meeting the above personnel standards for rehabilitation professionals are ineligible to interview for vacant rehabilitation counseling positions. Classification specifications for each position utilized by DRS are available through the WVDOP website: https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/wv/classspecs.

When employing new rehabilitation counselors, DRS makes no exceptions to its standard and provides the training necessary to meet requirements of the state standard only to existing personnel. These efforts are described later in this section.

Should qualified candidates be unavailable, the DRS Director, Assistant Directors, Human Resources Manager, and the Unit Manager or District Manager may re-assess staffing/consumer needs and re-assign qualified employees to assume duties of the vacant position. Qualified DRS retirees may also be re-hired on a contractual/intermittent basis until permanent qualified employees can be hired.

The career ladder for advancement within the rehabilitation counseling ranks requires additional experience and credentials as well as increased responsibilities.

DRS Requirements for Qualified Rehabilitation Paraprofessionals

In order to more efficiently meet the needs of its consumers, DRS upgraded several clerical positions to paraprofessional status. A Rehabilitation Services Associate must be a high school (or equivalent) graduate and have at least four years of full-time or equivalent part-time paid experience in paraprofessional or responsible clerical office support work, which requires familiarity with casework procedures and delivery of direct consumer services in a state vocational rehabilitation services agency. A bachelor’s degree from an accredited four-year college or university may be substituted for the required experience. The WVDOP specification for the Rehabilitation Services Associate position may be accessed at https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/wv/classspecs.
A Rehabilitation Services Associate assists qualified rehabilitation counselors in several ways: providing information about the rehabilitation process and services available to interested applicants and members of the general public; obtaining information needed to complete the application process; initiating vocational diagnostic interviews; arranging medical, psychological, and vocational evaluations for DRS consumers; and assisting consumers in applying for student financial aid.

DRS employed 36 Rehabilitation Services Associates as of November 2019. These paraprofessionals are assigned to DRS offices throughout West Virginia. To ensure statewide coverage, at least one is located within each DRS district.

System of Staff Evaluation

DRS requires that each permanent employee receive an annual job performance evaluation. Work performance of probationary employees is reviewed upon completion of the third and sixth (and for certain job classifications, twelfth) months during a probationary period. This evaluation system enables DRS to monitor the job performance of all staff members and identify areas of weakness and skill deficiencies that need training or remediation, as well as areas of strong performance. The evaluation also provides a systematic method of determining training needs for all staff members.


To ensure a high standard of competency and credentials for its qualified rehabilitation professionals, DRS has established job classifications. The lowest standard for Rehabilitation Counselors requires a master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling, counseling and guidance, social work, or closely related behavioral science field; or two years of experience as a Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee. Senior Rehabilitation Counselors require: (1) a master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling or counseling-related field; and (2) two years of full-time or equivalent part-time paid professional experience in vocational rehabilitation counseling. Certified Rehabilitation Counselors require: (1) a master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling or counseling-related field; (2) current national certification as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor or Certified Vocational Evaluator or current West Virginia licensure as a Licensed Professional Counselor; and (3) at least three years of full-time or equivalent part-time paid professional experience as a rehabilitation counselor.

DRS has established the position of Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee. An employee in this position is under direct supervision and performs work at the entry level in a probationary, training capacity which is intended to qualify the employee for specific duties for this position. The employee may become eligible for the position of Rehabilitation Counselor after two years of full-time or equivalent part-time paid experience in the position of Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee. Minimum qualifications for the Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee position are a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited college or university in counseling and guidance, social work, nursing, special education, or related behavioral science or human service field; or a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited college or university with three years of full-time or equivalent part-time experience in the position of Rehabilitation Services Associate.

DRS strives to recruit graduates of accredited master’s degree programs in rehabilitation like the one at WVU, but it does not require the CRC credential as the minimum qualification for a new counselor. Graduates of accredited master’s degree programs in rehabilitation counseling
are eligible for certification by the CRCC, which sets the national standards for quality rehabilitation counseling services in the U.S. DRS encourages the achievement of CRC by existing counselors and gives special preference to applicants with the CRC credential and qualified applicants with disabilities and from minority backgrounds.

The DRS standard is specific to rehabilitation counselors only and is consistent with registration requirements of WVDOP—the DRS state hiring authority. WVDOP administers and scores unassembled examinations to potential rehabilitation counselor candidates.

To ensure that counselors and other personnel remain up to date with evolving labor force needs and the needs of individuals with disabilities, DRS provides ongoing training opportunities for its field staff in group and individual settings. This occurs through educational activities such as the State training conference, periodic district-level training sessions, continuing education credit opportunities (Certified Rehabilitation Counselor), and training sessions by DRS Quality Assurance Specialists and DRS Employment Specialists. These activities allow DRS counselors and field staff to enhance their knowledge of labor force needs and ultimately better serve individuals with disabilities.

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When employing new rehabilitation counselors, DRS makes no exceptions to its standard and provides the training necessary to meet requirements of the state standard only to existing personnel. These efforts are described later in this section.

Should qualified candidates be unavailable, the DRS Director, Assistant Directors, Human Resources Manager, and the Unit Manager or District Manager may re-assess staffing/consumer needs and re-assign qualified employees to assume duties of the vacant position. Qualified DRS retirees may also be re-hired on a contractual/intermittent basis until permanent qualified employees can be hired.

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4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Describe the State agency’s policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that, consistent with section 101(a)(7)(C) of the Rehabilitation Act, all personnel employed by the designated State unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

A. A SYSTEM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS WITHIN THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT, VOCATIONAL COUNSELING, JOB PLACEMENT, AND REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING TRAINING IMPLEMENTED IN COORDINATION WITH ENTITIES CARRYING OUT STATE PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998; AND

Staff Development and Training Activities

The selection of DRS participants for training activities is based upon documented organizational, unit, or individual training needs. Training programs will be provided for all classes and types of staff members on an internally assessed priority basis. Particular emphasis is placed on programs addressing assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, policy and procedure, ethics, and rehabilitation technology. DRS does not discriminate in the selection of trainees for these programs based on age, sex, religion, disability, and national or ethnic origin.

DRS is committed to utilizing only institutions or training facilities that are accessible programmatically and architecturally free of other barriers with respect to trainees with disabilities. In addition, DRS will ensure that program materials are accessible in the most appropriate format for all participants with disabilities (assistive communication devices, interpreters, large print, audio tapes, Braille material, etc.). The technology to ensure these accommodations is available through various support units within DRS. Moreover, to promote equal access for individuals with disabilities in facilities of higher education, DRS houses a rehabilitation counselor on campus at Marshall University.

The majority of the training needs are met through local training and the agency’s annual State Training Conference. DRS also maintains strong cooperative and collaborative relationships with institutions of higher education, particularly those receiving funds from the Rehabilitation Services Administration to train rehabilitation professionals. This is to ensure that personnel needed within DRS are appropriately and adequately prepared for employment.

Throughout FY 2019, DRS continued to utilize a group training approach for newly hired counselors and RSAs. The training is led by QA Unit staff members and consists of three two-day sessions, provided on a quarterly basis for new hires. The first session is titled “New Counselor/RSA Training” and provides introductory materials as well as training on case
management and agency policies and procedures. The second and third sessions cover Decision Tree Training, detailing appropriate case work practices from referral to closure. In addition to the training, a CRP services overview is provided in a one-on-one format. While staff members are on location in Nitro, WV, they receive a Rehabilitation Services Program overview and a tour of the DRS Rehabilitation Technology Unit.

This approach ensures that all rehabilitation counselors and paraprofessionals receive standardized and accurate training. QA Unit staff members conduct regular case record reviews to ensure compliance with federal, state, and agency casework standards. Any deficiencies identified from the reviews are addressed through appropriate training.

All Staff Development Unit-sponsored programs provide continuing education credits that assist DRS CRCs, Licensed Professional Counselors, and members of other certified groups to maintain or obtain their certification. DRS has received approval authority from the CRCC to provide CRC continuing education credits for training programs meeting CRCC criteria.

In FY 2019, 32 DRS managers and supervisors attended management training events to meet the requirements for the West Virginia Division of Personnel Policy 18, which mandates specialized training for all supervisors and managers. New managers and supervisors are required to take eight classes in the first two years. All appropriate DRS staff members attended these required courses.

During FY 2019, the agency held several training conferences. In July, 80 staff members participated in the Blind/Visually Impaired Conference to improve services to that population. In August, 160 rehabilitation staff members participated in the agency’s Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Training Conference and 94 staff members attended the agency’s Clerical Conference. The agency also held a joint training conference, the WV Capacity Building Institute, with the WV Department of Education, Office of Special Education. These conferences help ensure that all staff members are connected to the overall mission and vision of the agency.

In 2019, 34 different training sessions were approved for CRC credits, totaling 48.25 clock hours. DRS staff confront the challenge of refining and improving their skills and knowledge while dealing with the current explosion of knowledge, technology, and treatment modalities. The agency will continue to make intensive efforts to provide ongoing information that will ensure the skills of DRS employees are responsive to the needs of the people they serve.

With respect to training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, DRS maintains a working relationship and a formal memorandum of understanding with the West Virginia Assistive Technology System (WVATS). In West Virginia, the WVATS, under the Center for Excellence in Disabilities at West Virginia University, is the administrator of the assistive technology grant. DRS is also represented on the West Virginia Assistive Technology Board and works with WVATS in a number of ways, including:

- Maintain an updated resource database for Assistive Technology services in West Virginia;
- Participate in special projects (i.e., finding and advocating for accessible recreational resources);
- Provide information resources, awareness and training for consumers and professionals in assistive technology services and devices;
- Provide information to WVATS partners regarding DRS and other disability related subjects; and
– Participate as a member on an interagency team, Partnerships in Assistive Technologies, with a focus of interagency collaboration for the provision of Assistive Technology training and conferences.

B. PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND OTHER SOURCES TO DESIGNATED STATE UNIT PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS.

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- Maintain an updated resource database for Assistive Technology services in West Virginia;
- Participate in special projects (i.e., finding and advocating for accessible recreational resources);
- Provide information resources, awareness and training for consumers and professionals in assistive technology services and devices;
- Provide information to WVATS partners regarding DRS and other disability related subjects; and
- Participate as a member on an interagency team, PATHS, with a focus of interagency collaboration for the provision of Assistive Technology training and conferences.

5. PERSONNEL TO ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATION NEEDS

Describe how the designated State unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.

West Virginia does not have large populations of ethnic groups who speak a language other than English. Consequently, DRS has not experienced difficulties making its programs accessible and available statewide. The agency's main language accessibility needs concern people who are deaf, and each DRS district is staffed with a specialist counselor providing full access to programs and services for people who have deafness or hearing impairments.

DRS continues to work with the West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to train and certify interpreters in order to strengthen the network of providers for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. Numerous workshops and seminars are conducted to
increase the number of interpreters, improve their communication skills, and provide better statewide coverage. These coordinated efforts will continue as needed.

DRS also ensures that its employees and consumers with blindness or visual impairments receive information and materials in their preferred mode of communication through various accommodations. Upon request, various DRS support units provide such services as assistive communication devices, large print and/or Braille materials, audiotapes, and electronic (computer) copies.

6. COORDINATION OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit’s comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

DRS will continue to coordinate its system of personnel development with the West Virginia Department of Education’s (WVDE) personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act/No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. This coordination will include collaborative efforts to share information, liaison activities, and cooperative training endeavors for DRS school counselors, teachers, and WVDE employees, particularly those assigned to the Office of Special Education.

The DRS state level liaison attends WVDE training functions related to special education and disseminates information about education policy or law changes to DRS school counselors as needed. DRS school counselors also receive information during their annual meeting. DRS school counselors also participate in cross–training efforts. In some areas of the state, DRS school counselors and managers participate in local interagency planning groups where training issues are discussed and planned.

J. STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

1. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE REHABILITATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, PARTICULARLY THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF THOSE:

A. WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

To comply with provisions of Title I, Section 101, State Plans, of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 and Section 721, State Plans, of the Rehabilitation Act as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) and the West Virginia State Rehabilitation Council (WV SRC) conducted a three–year comprehensive statewide assessment of the vocational rehabilitation (VR) services needs of individuals with disabilities in West Virginia. The WV SRC established a sub-committee on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), which includes a representative from the Client Assistance Program (CAP), to work with the State Plan and Program Evaluation (SPPE) Unit of DRS in conducting the needs assessment study in 2018. The WV SRC–DRS Joint Committee on Needs Assessment was established in Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 to oversee the needs assessment activity. Joint committee members including those selected by WV SRC and DRS personnel were fully committed to the needs assessment study and want to ensure successful completion of its objectives.
Four major objectives of the comprehensive statewide needs assessment study included examination of the rehabilitation needs of: (1) individuals with significant and most significant disabilities, including their needs for supported employment services; (2) individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program; (3) individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce development system; and (4) youth with disabilities, and students with disabilities, including their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services. The role of community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) as service providers was reviewed to address the need to establish, develop, or improve CRPs in West Virginia.

To maintain effective and comprehensive service delivery programs for West Virginians with disabilities, the needs assessment identified various service needs of individuals with significant and most significant disabilities. Some needed services such as transportation, housing, and personal assistance are beyond the scope of the state VR program and thus, require coordination and cooperation among a diverse range of public and private agencies and other organizations serving West Virginians with disabilities. The needs assessment recognized the service providers’ perceptions of the needs of consumers with disabilities, including rehabilitation services associates, counselors, supervisors and managers of DRS, CRPs, and Workforce Development Board members throughout West Virginia.

As part of the WV SRC–DRS Joint Committee on Needs Assessment, the SPPE Unit conducted the needs assessment study for the agency in conjunction with WV SRC, which was fully involved from inception to the reporting of the results.

As part of the intake process for VR services, a question regarding service needs was posed to potential DRS consumers at the time of application. The reported service needs were then recorded in the DRS electronic case management system. In 2018, SPPE staff members conducted a qualitative analysis of the reported service needs of 1,004 persons with disabilities of various age and disability groups statewide. These individuals represent a good sample of consumers with significant disabilities that will continue to seek assistance from agencies in coming years, ceteris paribus. All 55 counties in West Virginia were represented in the sample. The demographic profile of these individuals with significant disabilities consists of the following characteristics:

Gender: 51.7% male, 47.0% female, 1.2% no response, and 0.1% did not self-identify;
Race: 90.8% White, 9.0% Other (African American/Hispanic/ American Indian/Asian), 0.2% Unspecified;
Age: 59.2% under 22 years old, 16.8% 22-34 years, 9.0% 35-44 years, 13.7% 45-64 years, 1.3% 65 years or older; and
Primary Impairment: 6.4% Sensory/Communicative Impairments, 18.2% Physical Impairments, 75.4% Mental Impairments.

Comments from the 1,004 DRS case management records were analyzed and grouped into one or more of five general service themes: education, training, health, employment/CRP, and support. More specific service themes, within each general theme, were then determined for each comment.

As part of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, DRS identified the following as the most frequently reported service needs in each of the categories of Education, Training, Health, Employment/CRP, and Support, based on the qualitative analysis of the reported service needs of 1,004 consumers with significant disabilities. The approximate percentage of consumers with significant disabilities reporting each service need is also listed below.

EDUCATION (22.2%): Other (59.2%); 2-yr or 4-yr College (40.8%); Vocational Education (2.7%); High School Education (1.8%); Graduate Degree Education (1.8%); Tutoring (0.9%).

TRAINING (38.7%): Business/Vocational Training (73.3%); Drive Training/Licensing (12.6%); Other (10.5%); Job Search Training/Assistance (7.7%); Career Planning Training (4.9%); On-The-Job Training/Job Trial (0.5%); Work Adjustment Training (0.5%); Independent Living Skills (0.3%).

HEALTH (4.3%): Hearing/Audiological Services (44.2%); Psychological/Psychiatric (25.6%); Other (23.3%); Eye Care (2.3%); Speech/Communication Therapy (2.3%).

EMPLOYMENT/CRP (78.1%): Job Placement (90.1%); Vocational Counseling and Guidance (12.2%); Other (3.3%); Vocational Evaluation (2.0%); Supported Employment (SE, 0.8%); Psychological Evaluation (0.6%); Community-Based Assessment (0.5%); Job Coaching Other Than SE (0.5%); Life Skills Training (0.4%); Small Business Development (0.4%); Worksite Modification or Accommodation (0.4%); Direct Placement by CRPs (0.3%); Work-Related Tools or Equipment (0.3%); Labor Market Information (0.1%).

SUPPORT (8.6%): Financial Assistance (69.8%); Other (9.3%); Assistive Technology (8.1%); Housing Assistance (5.8%); Transportation (5.8%); Orientation/Mobility Services (1.2%); Assistive Devices (1.2%); Vehicle Modification (1.2%).

Of the statewide total of 1,004 persons with significant disabilities at the time of their DRS application, 655 persons were determined to be of transition status (age 24 and under). The demographic profile of this subset of transition status individuals with significant disabilities consists of the following characteristics:

Gender: 53.0% male, 47.0% female;

Race: 91.5% White, 8.4% Other (African American/Hispanic/American Indian/Native Hawaiian/Asian), 0.2% Unknown;

Age: 81.4% under 20 years old, 18.6% 20–34 years; and

Primary Impairment: 4.4% Sensory/Communicative Impairments, 11.5% Physical Impairments, 84.1% Mental Impairments.

As part of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, DRS identified the following as the most frequently reported service needs in each of the categories of Education, Training, Health, Employment/CRP, and Support, based on the qualitative analysis of the reported service needs
of 655 transitioning youth with significant disabilities. The approximate percentage of transitioning youth with significant disabilities reporting each service need is also listed below.

**EDUCATION (28.1%):** Other (58.7%); 2-yr or 4-yr College (42.4%); Vocational Education (0.9%); Graduate Education (0.5%); High School Education (0.3%); Tutoring (0.3%).

**TRAINING (45.2%):** Business/Vocational Training (72.6%); Drive Training/Licensing (13.5%); Other (11.8%); Job Search Training/Assistance (6.8%); Career Planning Training (5.4%); On-The-Job Training/Job Trial (0.7%); independent living skills (0.3%).

**HEALTH (2.9%):** Psychological/Psychiatric (42.1%); Hearing/Audiological Services (31.5%); Other (21.1%); Speech/Communication Therapy (0.3%).

**EMPLOYMENT/CRP (75.4%):** Job Placement (88.3%); Vocational Counseling and Guidance (16.4%); Other (2.4%); Vocational Evaluation (2.4%); Psychological Evaluation (0.8%); Community-Based Assessment (0.8%); Job Coaching Other Than SE (0.5%); Life Skills Training (0.4%); Small Business Development (0.2%); Direct Placement by CRPs (0.2%); supported employment (0.2%).

**SUPPORT (9.5%):** Financial Assistance (87.1%); Other (6.5%); Housing Assistance (3.2%); Assistive Technology Services (3.2%); Transportation (1.6%).

Of the statewide total of 1,004 persons with significant disabilities at the time of their DRS application, 90 persons were determined to be of minority status. The demographic profile of this subset of minority status individuals with significant disabilities consists of the following characteristics:

- **Gender:** 55.1% male, 44.9% female;
- **Race:** 3.3% American Indian, 2.2% Asian, 75.6% African American, and 18.9% Hispanic;
- **Age:** 52.2% under 20 years old, 21.1% 20–34 years, 6.7% 35–44 years, 17.8% 45–64 years, 2.2% 65 years or older; and
- **Primary Impairment:** 6.7% Sensory/Communicative Impairments, 16.7% Physical Impairments, 76.7% Mental Impairments.

As part of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, DRS identified the following as the most frequently reported service needs in each of the categories of Education, Training, Health, Employment/CRP, and Support, based on the qualitative analysis of the reported service needs of 90 consumers with significant disabilities from minority backgrounds. The approximate percentage of consumers with significant disabilities from minority backgrounds reporting each service need is also listed below.

**EDUCATION (21.1%):** Other (63.2%); 2-yr or 4-yr College (42.1%); Graduate Degree Education (5.3%).

**TRAINING (45.6%):** Business/Vocational Training (75.6%); Drive Training/Licensing (14.6%); Job Search Training/Assistance (9.8%); Other Training (4.9%); Career Planning Training (4.9%).

**HEALTH (7.7%):** Other (57.1%); Psychological/Psychiatric (42.9%); Hearing/Audiological Services (14.3%).

**EMPLOYMENT/CRP (77.8%):** Job Placement (92.9%); Vocational Counseling and Guidance (7.1%); Other (5.7%); Supported Employment (1.4%); Job Coaching Other Than SE (1.1%).
SUPPORT (8.9%): Financial Assistance (75.0%); Assistive Technology Services (25.0%); Other (12.5%).

Of the statewide total of 1,004 persons with significant disabilities at the time of their DRS application, 13 persons were determined to be aged 65 years or older. The demographic profile of this subset of *individuals with significant disabilities aged 65 years or older* consists of the following characteristics:

Gender: 38.5% male, 61.5% female;

Race: 84.6% White, 15.4% Other (African American/Hispanic/American Indian/Native Hawaiian/Asian), 0.0% Unknown;

Age: 100% 65 years or older; and

Primary Impairment: 23.1% Sensory/Communicative Impairments, 53.8% Physical Impairments, 23.1% Mental Impairments.

As part of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, DRS identified the following as the most frequently reported service needs in each of the categories of Education, Training, Health, Employment/CRP, and Support, based on the qualitative analysis of the reported service needs of 13 consumers with significant disabilities aged 65 years or older. The approximate percentage of consumers with significant disabilities aged 65 years or older reporting each service need is also listed below.

EDUCATION (0.0%).

TRAINING (15.4%): Drive Training/Licensing (100.0%).

HEALTH (7.7%): Hearing/Audiological Services (100.0%).

EMPLOYMENT/CRP (76.9%): Job Placement (90.0%); Other (10.0%).

SUPPORT (30.8%): Assistive Technology (25.0%); Orientation/Mobility Services (25.0%); Housing Assistance (25.0%); Vehicle Modification (25.0%).

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY OF DRS FIELD STAFF ON THE NEEDS OF PERSONS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES

DRS is mandated under the federal Rehabilitation Act to periodically conduct a needs assessment of persons with significant disabilities. As part of this process and in conjunction with WV SRC, DRS issued a survey in 2018 to its field staff, including rehabilitation services associates, counselors, supervisors, and managers. The SPPE Unit developed a multiple-choice and open-ended response survey for DRS field staff to provide feedback on the service needs and service gaps of their consumers. The comprehensive survey asked them to offer their perceptions of the service needs and service gaps of persons with significant disabilities being served, including students with disabilities’ need for pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS). The survey also obtained the specific areas where service needs and gaps were perceived to exist. The survey instrument and methodology were based on previous needs assessment studies, as they generated valid and reliable information on the service needs of persons with significant disabilities in West Virginia.

Surveys were distributed by email from SPPE Unit staff to District Managers, who then distributed the surveys to field staff in their purview. Field staff were informed of the value and importance of their responses to the CSNA survey. Field staff were given approximately one month for survey completion and were told to contact SPPE Unit staff with any questions.
regarding the survey. Field staff were also instructed to submit completed surveys to the SPPE Unit via email. The survey was completed and submitted by 100 DRS field staff, including rehabilitation services associates, counselors, supervisors, and managers.

**Respondent Information**

The survey collected information about the respondent for use in data analyses and to assist DRS in making targeted and necessary changes based on the service needs and service gaps by office and district.

Respondents were asked to provide information about their primary caseload by selecting from: General Field, Blind/Visually Impaired, School/Transition, Deaf/Hearing Impairment. Respondents could select 'Other' and write-in a caseload not listed.

Respondents were asked to provide their DRS office location(s) and which county or counties in the state they covered.

Respondents were also asked to provide the number of years they have worked in field services. Respondents were asked to indicate job titles they have held at DRS by selecting from the following: Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee, Rehabilitation Counselor, Senior Rehabilitation Counselor, Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, Field Office Manager/Supervisor, District Manager, or Rehabilitation Services Associate. Respondents could also select 'Other' and write-in their job title if not listed.

**Assessing Service Needs and Service Gaps**

The main objective of the survey was to assess the service needs and service gaps for DRS consumers with significant or most significant disabilities. Seventy-one services were placed into six categories: Educational, Training, Health, Employment and CRP, Support, and Pre-ETS. Each service was accompanied by checkboxes in two columns: Need and Gap. Respondents were asked to “please indicate whether most of the consumers you serve in your area can benefit from the service” by placing an ‘X’ in the Need column for that service. Additionally, respondents were asked to “indicate whether you feel there is a service gap (i.e., services are needed, but not available in sufficient quantities) for each service by placing an ‘X’ in the Gap column.” In each category (with the exception of Pre-ETS), respondents were also given the opportunity to include an “other” service by writing in and acknowledging whether a need or gap existed for that service.

Services from the survey are listed below by category:

**Educational Services** — High School Education, Special Education Service, Vocational Education, Adult Basic Education, 2-yr or 4-yr College, Graduate Education, Tutoring, and Literacy Instruction.


**Health Services** — Physician’s Services, Speech/Communication Therapy, Substance Abuse Treatment, Eye Care, Dental Care, Hospital Services, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Hearing/Audiological Services, and Psychological/Psychiatric Treatment.
Employment and CRP Services — Labor Market Information, Extended Assessment, Work Adjustment Training, Community Based Assessment, Trial Work Experience, Psychological Evaluation, Vocational Evaluation, Vocational Counseling and Guidance, Job Placement, Small Business Development, Worksite Modification or Accommodation, Work Skills Assessment, Life Skills Training, Direct Placement by CRPs, Job Development, Supported Employment (SE), Job Coaching Other than SE, Extended Supported Employment Service (ESES), and Work-related Tools or Equipment.

Support Services — Personal Assistant/Attendant Services, Reader Services, Orientation/Mobility Services, Housing Assistance, Assistive Devices (e.g., cane, wheelchair), Services to Family Members, Child Care, Peer Support, Post-Employment Services (follow-up), Transportation, Vehicle Maintenance/Repair, Financial Assistance, Assistive Technology Services, Interpreter Services, Home Modification, and Vehicle Modification.

Pre-Employment Transition Services — Job Exploration Counseling, Work-Based Learning Experiences, Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities, Workplace Readiness Training, and Self-Advocacy Training.

**Overall Service Needs for DRS Consumers**

The survey included five questions where respondents were asked to list UP TO FIVE services that consumers need in their service area. The question was repeated for 1) consumers with disabilities in DRS general territories, 2) transitioning youth with disabilities (age 24 and younger), 3) individuals who are deaf/hearing impaired, 4) individuals who are blind/visually impaired, and 5) minority individuals with disabilities. Respondents were also asked to indicate if they did not have experience working with consumers described in each question.

**Barriers to Employment**

Respondents were asked to “indicate (with an 'X') whether any of the following are substantial barriers, preventing the consumers you serve from gaining and/or maintaining employment.”

Respondents were provided a list of the following 17 potential barriers:

- Slow Job Market
- Employer Attitudinal Barriers
- Consumer Attitudinal Barriers
- Lack of Long-Term Support after Job Placement
- Lack of Qualified Service Providers
- Loss of Disability Benefits and/or Food Assistance
- Family Support
- Lack of Available Rehabilitation Services from CRPs
- Lack of Physical Access to Employer or Services (e.g., ramps, etc.)
- Adequate Housing
- Lack of Information Regarding Disability Resources
- Lack of Personal Care Attendant Services
• Child Care
• Transportation
• Inadequate Medical Care and/or Medical Insurance
• Lack of Time Spent with VR Counselor
• DRS Budget Restriction

Space was provided to write-in and rate an additional barrier not found on the list, if needed.

Integration with Core Partners

The survey included three open-ended response questions regarding respondents’ familiarity, experience, and recommendations on integrating services with Workforce Development System Core Partners of WorkForce WV and WV Adult Education:

1. In the space below, please describe your familiarity with the services that WorkForce WV and WV Adult Education provide and the level of need that our consumers with significant disabilities have for those services.

2. Please comment on your experiences with integrating service with WorkForce WV and WV Adult Education (e.g., using Labor Market Information, referrals to and from WorkForce WV, co-serving a client with Adult Education). In addition to your experiences, please discuss other activities that DRS could conduct with our core partners to further help our consumers with significant disabilities.

3. Please provide recommendations on how to better facilitate our partnerships with WorkForce WV and WV Adult Education (e.g., specific cross-trainings, co-location, etc.).

Other Comments

The survey concluded with two open-ended response questions: 1) "What can DRS provide you to better serve our consumers and help you perform your job more effectively and efficiently?" and 2) “Please provide any additional comments regarding unmet service needs of individuals with significant or most significant disabilities with whom you work.”

Results

Results are based on 100 surveys that were completed and submitted by DRS field staff.

Respondent Information Primary Caseload

General Field caseloads were reported as the primary caseload by 39 (39% of the 100 respondents) respondents, while 34 (34%) reported a primary caseload of School/Transition. Six (6%) reported Blind/Visually Impaired primary caseloads and Deaf/Hearing Impaired primary caseloads were reported by three (3%) respondents. Twenty-one (21%) respondents indicated a primary caseload of “Other.” These were generally managers with a specialty caseload, but also included some Rehabilitation Service Associates (RSAs). One of the “Other” respondents indicated a “School/Transition” and “Family” caseload. Two of the “Other” respondents indicated a mixed caseload of General Field and School/Transition. Further examination led to these respondents being categorized as having a primary caseload of School/Transition.

Office Location
The total number of respondents by district and office location are as follows:

District 1 (28 Respondents) — Charleston-14, Point Pleasant-3, Ripley-0, Spencer-1, Teays Valley-7, Multiple-3.

District 2 (20) — Clarksburg-6, Elkins-2, Morgantown-5, Fairmont-2, Weston-2, Multiple-3.

District 3 (6) — Parkersburg-0, New Martinsville-0, Weirton-5, Wheeling-1.

District 4 (10) — Beckley-2, Lewisburg-0, Oak Hill-0, Princeton-3, Summersville-3, Multiple-2.

District 5 (21) — Huntington-14, Logan-2, Marshall University-1, Mullens-1, Welch-2, Multiple-1.

District 6 (15) — Keyser-2, Martinsburg-3, Moorefield-4, Romney-0, Multiple-6.

**Years of Experience in DRS Field Services**

Of the 100 respondents, 98 reported the number of years worked in DRS Field Services. Respondents had varying amounts of experience working in Field Services, from less than one year to 35 years (mean = 9.4 years). Many respondents (34%) reported four or fewer years of Field Services experience.

**Titles Held**

All 100 respondents reported having held at least 1 title in Field Services. Of the 100 respondents, 19 reported having been Rehabilitation Counselor Trainees, 73 had been Rehabilitation Counselors, 37 had been Senior Rehabilitation Counselors, and 19 had been Certified Rehabilitation Counselors. There were 20 current/former RSAs, 20 current/former Branch Office Managers/Supervisors, and 7 current/former District Managers.

**Service Need/Use**

Service need/use for each service was assessed to allow respondents to indicate which services their consumers need/use most often. This was done independently of the service gap assessment as some services may be highly needed/used but are readily available and therefore do not require an increase in availability.

Services that were identified as needed by 50% or more of the total respondents are listed for each service category below with the percentage of respondents in parentheses:

**Educational Services**

Vocational Education (89%), 2-year or 4-year College (78%), Tutoring (73%) High School (66%), Special Education (60%), and Adult Basic Education (59%).

**Training Services**

Job Search Training/Assistance (85%), Career Planning (75%), Life Skills Training (75%), On-the-job Training/Job Trial (73%), Business Vocational (72%), Independent Living Skills (67%), Drive Training/Licensing (65%), Work Adjustment Training (62%), and Training on Disability Rights (59%).

**Health Services**

Psychological/Psychiatric Treatment (76%), Substance Abuse Treatment (58%), Physician's Services (57%), and Eye Care (50%).
**Employment and CRP Services**

Labor Market Information (79%), Vocational Counseling and Guidance (79%), Job Placement (79%), Community Based Assessment (73%), Psychological Evaluation (72%), Work Skills Assessment (71%), Vocational Evaluation (70%), Job Development (68%), Work Adjustment Training (66%), Direct Placement (66%), Life Skills (65%), Job Coaching (other than Supported Employment; 58%), Work-related tools or equipment (53%), and Trial Work Experience (51%).

**Support Services**

Transportation (81%), Financial Assistance (57%), and Assistive Technology (55%).

**Pre-Employment Transition Services**

Job Exploration Counseling (72%), Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities (72%), Workplace Readiness Training (69%), Work-Based Learning Experiences (66%), and Self-Advocacy Training (64%).

**Service Gaps**

Respondents that indicated a perceived service gap were totaled for each service. The number and percentage of respondents who reported a gap for the service are in parentheses followed by the number of responses by DRS office location. Some respondents identified more than one office.

**Educational Services**

The five most commonly reported gaps for educational services were:


- Literacy Instruction (21, 21%) -- Beckley-2, Charleston-1, Clarksburg-2, Fairmont-1, Huntington-2, Keyser-1, Lewisburg-1, Marshall-1, Martinsburg-1, Moorefield-1, Morgantown-3, Oak Hill-1, Point Pleasant-1, Princeton-1, Romney-1, Summersville-3, Teays Valley-1, and Weirton-2.


- Special Education (13, 13%) -- Beckley-1, Charleston-3, Fairmont-2, Huntington-1, Keyser-3, Logan-1, Point Pleasant-1, Romney-1, and Summersville-1.

**Training Services**

The five most commonly reported gaps for training services were:

- Drive Training/Licensing (41, 41%) -- Beckley-2, Charleston-2, Clarksburg-2, Elkins-3, Fairmont-2, Huntington-8, Keyser-4, Lewisburg-1, Logan-1, Marshall-1, Martinsburg-2,


Sign Language Training (29, 29%) -- Beckley-1, Charleston-2, Clarksburg-2, Elkins-2, Fairmont-2, Huntington-2, Keyser-1, Lewisburg-1, Logan-1, Martinsburg-1, Moorefield-1, Morgantown-2, Oak Hill-1, Point Pleasant-2, Princeton-2, Ripley-1, Romney-1, Spencer-1, Summersville-2, Teays Valley-5, and Weirton-3.

Health Services

The five most commonly reported gaps for health services were:


Dental Care (40, 40%) -- Beckley-2, Charleston-6, Clarksburg-4, Elkins-3, Fairmont-2, Huntington-6, Keyser-2, Lewisburg-1, Logan-1, Marshall-2, Martinsburg-1, Morgantown-1, Mullens-1, Oak Hill-1, Point Pleasant-1, Princeton-3, Summersville-3, Teays Valley-2, Weirton-3, Weston-1, and Wheeling-1.


Eye Care (18, 18%) -- Beckley-1, Charleston-2, Clarksburg-2, Elkins-3, Fairmont-2, Huntington-1, Keyser-1, Logan-1, Martinsburg-2, Morgantown-1, Point Pleasant-1, Romney-1, Teays Valley-1, Weirton-1, and Weston-1.

Hearing/Audiological Services (18, 18%) -- Beckley-1, Charleston-2, Clarksburg-1, Elkins-2, Fairmont-2, Huntington-1, Keyser-2, Martinsburg-2, Moorefield-1, Morgantown-2, Point Pleasant-1, Romney-2, Summersville-2, Teays Valley-3, Weirton-1, and Weston-1.

Employment/CRP Services

The five most commonly reported gaps for employment/CRP services were:


Support Services

The five most commonly reported gaps for support services were:


Pre-Employment Transition Services

The five most commonly reported gaps for Pre-ETS were:


Self-Advocacy Training (19, 19%) -- Charleston-4, Clarksburg-1, Elkins-2, Huntington-2, Keyser-2, Logan-1, Martinsburg-1, Moorefield-1, Point Pleasant-1, Princeton-1, Romney-2, Spencer-1, Summersville-2, Teays Valley-1, and Weston-1.

Job Exploration Counseling (13, 13%) -- Charleston-3, Clarksburg-1, Elkins-2, Huntington-2, Logan-1, Martinsburg-1, Point Pleasant-1, Spencer-1, Summersville-1, and Weston-1.

Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities (12, 12%) -- Charleston-3, Elkins-2, Huntington-2, Logan-1, Martinsburg-1, Moorefield-1, Ripley-1, Spencer-1, Summersville-1, and Weston-1.

Overall Service Needs for West Virginians with Disabilities

Respondents were asked to identify the top five overall service needs for different consumer groups with which they have experience with providing VR services. Respondents were asked to indicate if they did not have experience working with the consumer group. The number and percentage of respondents who indicated a gap for the service are in parentheses followed by the number of responses by DRS office location. Some respondents identified more than one office.

Note: New categories created to incorporate answers that were not specific to a pre-existing service category from the survey. For example, the “Overall Training” category was created to include a number of open-ended responses where the respondent indicated a need for training, but not a specific type; for example, “Training options” and “Training services.” The Miscellaneous category contains individual responses that were not clear in meaning or otherwise could not be grouped into a particular theme.

General Territories

The survey asked participants to “Please list the TOP FIVE services that our consumers with disabilities in DRS general territories need within your service area.” There were 82 respondents to this question. The most commonly reported service needs were:


Overall Training (28, 34.15%) -- Beckley-1, Charleston-3, Clarksburg-1, Elkins-1, Fairmont-3, Huntington-3, Keyser-2, Martinsburg-3, Moorefield-3, Morgantown-1, Mullens-1, Point Pleasant-2, Ripley-2, Romney-2, Spencer-3, Summersville-1, Teays Valley-2, Weirton-1, and Welch-1.

Job Placement (23, 28.05%) -- Beckley-1, Charleston-4, Clarksburg-3, Fairmont-3, Huntington-2, Keyser-1, Logan-1, Martinsburg-1, Moorefield-1, Morgantown-2, Point Pleasant-2, Ripley-1, Romney-1, Spencer-2, and Teays Valley-2.
Psychological/Psychiatric Services (17, 20.73%) -- Beckley-1, Charleston-5, Fairmont-1, Huntington-5, Lewisburg-1, Martinsburg-1, Oak Hill-1, Princeton-1, Ripley-1, Spencer-1, Summersville-1, Teays Valley-1, Weirton-1, and Wheeling-1.

Substance Abuse Treatment (14, 17.07%) -- Charleston-3, Elkins-1, Huntington-7, Logan-1, Point Pleasant-1, Princeton-1, and Weston-1.

Transitioning Youth

The survey asked, "From your experience with transitioning youth with disabilities, please list the TOP FIVE services that you feel these consumers need in your service area." There were 74 respondents to this question. The most commonly reported service needs were:


Work-Based Learning Experiences (23, 31.08%) -- Beckley-1, Charleston-1, Clarksburg-6, Fairmont-3, Huntington-1, Keyser-2, Lewisburg-1, Logan-1, Martinsburg-2, Moorefield-4, Oak Hill-1, Point Pleasant-3, Princeton-3, Romney-2, Summersville-2, Teays Valley-1, Weirton-1, and Welch-1.


Overall Training (15, 20.27%) -- Charleston-3, Elkins-2, Fairmont-2, Keyser-1, Mullens-1, Point Pleasant-1, Princeton-1, Ripley-1, Spencer-2, Summersville-1, Teays Valley-2, and Weston-1.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Respondents were asked, "From your experience with individuals who are deaf/hard of hearing with disabilities, please list the TOP FIVE services that you feel these consumers need in your service area." There were 32 respondents to this question. The most commonly reported service needs were:

Hearing/Audiological Services (19, 59.38%) -- Beckley-1, Charleston-1, Clarksburg-1, Elkins-3, Martinsburg-1, Morgantown-1, Point Pleasant-2, Princeton-1, Teays Valley-2, Weirton-4, Weston-2, and Wheeling-1.

Interpreter Services (12, 37.50%) -- Beckley-1, Clarksburg-1, Keyser-2, Martinsburg-3, Moorefield-4, Morgantown-1, Point Pleasant-1, Princeton-1, Romney-2, Teays Valley-4, Weirton-1, and Wheeling-1.

Assistive Technology (7, 21.88%) -- Charleston-1, Huntington-1, Moorefield-1, Morgantown-1, Ripley-1, Spencer-1, Teays Valley-1, and Wheeling-1.

Job Placement (6, 18.75%) -- Charleston-1, Clarksburg-1, Fairmont-1, Martinsburg-1, Morgantown-2, Point Pleasant-1, and Teays Valley-1.

Sign Language Training (5, 15.63%) -- Beckley-1, Clarksburg-2, Teays Valley-1, and Wheeling-1.
**Blind/Visually Impaired**

Respondents were asked, “From your experience with individuals who are blind/visually impaired with disabilities, please list the TOP FIVE services that you feel these consumers need in your service area.” There were 26 respondents to this question. The most commonly reported service needs were:

- **Assistive Technology (12, 46.15%)** -- Charleston-2, Clarksburg-2, Huntington-1, Keyser-2, Martinsburg-4, Moorefield-2, Morgantown-1, Romney-2, Teays Valley-1, and Wheeling-1.
- **Transportation (10, 38.46%)** -- Beckley-1, Charleston-2, Clarksburg-2, Huntington-1, Keyser-1, Lewisburg-1, Martinsburg-1, Moorefield-1, Oak Hill-1, Princeton-1, Romney-1, Summersville-1, Weirton-2, and Wheeling-1.
- **Orientation/Mobility Services (7, 26.92%)** -- Charleston-1, Clarksburg-2, Keyser-2, Martinsburg-3, Morgantown-3, and Romney-2.
- **Assessment (5, 19.23%)** -- Beckley-1, Charleston-2, Clarksburg-1, Fairmont-1, Huntington-1, Lewisburg-1, Martinsburg-1, Princeton-1, and Summersville-1.
- **Job Placement (4, 15.38%)** -- Charleston-2, Clarksburg-1, Fairmont-1, Keyser-1, Martinsburg-1, Moorefield-1, and Romney-1.

**Minority Individuals**

The survey asked, “From your experience with minority individuals with disabilities, please list the TOP FIVE services that you feel these consumers need in your service area.” There were 64 respondents to this question. The most commonly reported service needs were:

- **Job Placement (17, 26.56%)** -- Beckley-1, Charleston-2, Clarksburg-1, Fairmont-1, Huntington-4, Keyser-2, Marshall-1, Martinsburg-2, Moorefield-1, Morgantown-1, Point Pleasant-2, Romney-2, Teays Valley-3, and Welch-1.
- **Counseling and Guidance (11, 17.19%)** -- Charleston-4, Clarksburg-2, Farifont-1, Huntington-2, Keyser-1, Marshall-1, Martinsburg-1, Moorefield-1, Romney-1, Teays Valley-1, and Wheeling-1.
- **Self-Advocacy (10, 15.63%)** -- Clarksburg-3, Huntington-1, Martinsburg-1, Moorefield-1, Morgantown-1, Princeton-1, and Teays Valley-2.

**Barriers to Employment**

The top five most frequently indicated barriers were Transportation (92 responses), Slow Job Market (63), Lack of Family Support (63), DRS Budget Restrictions (57), and Employer Attitudinal Barriers (56).

**Integration with Core Partners**
DRS Field Staff members were asked three open-ended response questions regarding their familiarity, experience, and recommendations on integrating services with Workforce Development System Core Partners of WorkForce WV and WV Adult Education.

1. In the space below, please describe your familiarity with the services that WorkForce WV and WV Adult Education provide and the level of need that our consumers with significant disabilities have for those services.

There were 93 responses to this prompt. Responses were categorized on two dimensions: 1) Familiarity with services provided by WorkForce WV and WV Adult Education and 2) level of need for those services. For the familiarity dimension, responses were judged to express either high familiarity, some familiarity, or no familiarity. Twenty-three responses (24.7%) indicated high familiarity, 50 responses (53.8%) indicated some familiarity, and 20 responses (21.5%) indicated no familiarity. For the need dimension, responses were judged to express either high need, some need, or no indication. Seventeen responses (18.3%) indicated high need, 24 responses (25.8%) indicated some need, and 52 responses (55.9%) indicated no need.

* A large proportion of respondents expressed no indication of need, typically by not addressing the dimension of need in their response. This suggests that many respondents may have failed to recognize the two-part nature of the question or may have become so involved in discussing familiarity that they forgot to discuss need. Separating the item into two separate parts may remedy this in the future.

1. Please comment on your experiences with integrating service with WorkForce WV and WV Adult Education (e.g., using Labor Market Information, referrals to and from WorkForce WV, co-serving a client with Adult Education). In addition to your experiences, please discuss other activities that DRS could conduct with our core partners to further help our consumers with significant disabilities.

There were 89 responses to this prompt. Responses were categorized on two dimensions: 1) whether the field staff had experience with integrating services with WorkForce WV and WV Adult Education and 2) whether other activities that DRS could conduct with core partners were discussed. In categorizing experience with integrating services, mention of referral of individuals to a core partner was not regarded as service integration.

The responses of 17 field staff (19.1%) indicated experience with integrating services with core partners. Among the remaining responses, 19 field staff (21.35%) mentioned that they had referred consumers to partners or had received referrals from partners. Other field staff explicitly stated that they had limited or no experience with integrating services.

The responses of 19 field staff (21.35%) discussed activities that DRS could conduct with core partners. Among the remaining responses, five field staff (5.62%) discussed activities that core partners could conduct (e.g., forward labor market research information with a client’s referral) to make things easier. Several others gave no recommendations.

1. Please provide recommendations on how to better facilitate our partnerships with WorkForce WV and WV Adult Education (e.g., specific cross-trainings, co-location, etc.).

There were 82 responses to this prompt. Suggestions with similar themes were grouped and some respondents provided comments that spanned multiple themes. The most common recommendation theme involved training or cross-training (generally focusing on learning what other partners provide), with 45 (54.88%) responses. Having meetings between the partners was the next most common theme (15, 18.29%), followed by information access (11, 13.41%)
and communication (7, 8.54%). An additional 11 responses (13.41%) indicated no recommendation (e.g., "N/A" or "No comment").

Comments and Suggestions

There were 83 respondents that provided comments when asked for ways in which DRS could help them perform their job more effectively and efficiently. Suggestions with similar themes were grouped and some respondents provided comments that spanned several themes. The most common response themes were Training (23 respondents, 27.71%), Budget/Staffing (15, 18.07%), Policy Changes (11, 13.25%), Service Provision (11, 13.25%), and Communication (10, 12.05%).

Additional Comments on the Unmet Service Needs of Individuals with Disabilities

There were 38 respondents that provided additional comments which were grouped into major themes. Fourteen responses (36.84%) were related to service provision. The next most common responses were for Transportation (9 respondents, 23.68%), Policy changes (5, 13.16%), and Budget/staffing issues (3, 7.89%). An additional eight responses (21.05%) indicated no topic (e.g., "N/A" or "None").

Discussion

As part of the FY 2018 CSNA, DRS field staff members were surveyed on the VR service needs and gaps for West Virginians with significant disabilities. The responses will be used in conjunction with other CSNA activities to develop the PY 2020-2023 Unified State Plan, including agency goals and priorities, and related strategies. A total of 100 DRS field staff members provided detailed insight into the perceived service needs and gaps throughout the state. The current survey responses echo previous CSNA results, with many of the same service needs and gaps being reported. Overall, the most commonly reported service needs for the FY 2018 CSNA were for Transportation, Overall Training, Job Placement, Psychological/psychiatric services, and Substance Abuse Treatment. Transportation has consistently been the most often reported barrier for West Virginians with significant disabilities. DRS continues to implement and monitor various strategies to improve transportation availability.

Minority Populations

In compliance with the Rehabilitation Act, the survey asked respondents to identify the service needs of individuals from minority backgrounds. The most commonly reported service needs were Transportation, Job Placement, Overall Training, Counseling and Guidance, and Self-Advocacy; the first four services being identical to the top four service needs for minorities from the FY 2015 CSNA.

CRP Services

As required by the WIOA, the survey asked respondents to identify any need for CRP services, including SE. The top reported CRP service needs were Community Based Assessment, Work Skills Assessment, Direct Placement, Work Adjustment Training, and Life Skills Training. In recent years, DRS has adopted goals and priorities to improve access to CRP services. Through successful strategies, DRS now utilizes a statewide network of 80 CRP locations. These CRPs provide valuable services throughout the state, benefiting West Virginians with significant disabilities. Transitioning youth also benefit from CRP services through the provision of pre-employment transition services, including career exploration.

Transitioning Youth (TY)
Respondents were asked to provide the top service needs for TY with significant disabilities. The top five reported service needs for TY were Transportation, Job Exploration Counseling, Work-Based Learning Experiences, Workplace Readiness Training, and Overall Training. DRS will continue to partner with state and local school systems to ensure access to VR and other pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities. Through these partnerships and shared resources, TY will have increased opportunities to achieve competitive, integrated employment.

B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

In 2018, SPPE staff members, under guidance of the WVSRC–DRS Joint Committee on Needs Assessment, conducted a qualitative analysis of the reported service needs of 1,004 persons with significant disabilities of various age and disability groups statewide.

Of the statewide total of 1,004 persons with significant disabilities at the time of their DRS application, 90 persons were determined to be of minority status. The demographic profile of this subset of minority status individuals with significant disabilities consists of the following characteristics:

Gender: 55.1% male, 44.9% female;
Race: 3.3% American Indian, 2.2% Asian, 75.6% African American, 18.9% Hispanic;
Age: 52.2% under 20 years old, 21.1% 20–34 years, 6.7% 35–44 years, 17.8% 45–64 years, 2.2% 65 years or older; and

Primary Impairment: 6.7% Sensory/Communicative Impairments, 16.7% Physical Impairments, 76.7% Mental Impairments.

As part of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, DRS identified the following as the most frequently reported service needs in each of the categories of Education, Training, Health, Employment, and Support, based on the qualitative analysis of the reported service needs of 90 consumers with significant disabilities from minority backgrounds. The approximate percentage of consumers with significant disabilities from minority backgrounds reporting each service need is also listed below.

EDUCATION (21.1%): Other (63.2%); 2-yr or 4-yr College (42.1%); Graduate Degree Education (5.3%).

TRAINING (45.6%): Business/Vocational Training (75.6%); Drive Training/Licensing (14.6%); Job Search Training/Assistance (9.8%); Other Training (4.9%); Career Planning Training (4.9%).

HEALTH (7.7%): Other (57.1%); Psychological/Psychiatric (42.9%); Hearing/Audiological Services (14.3%).

EMPLOYMENT/CRP (77.8%): Job Placement (92.9%); Vocational Counseling and Guidance (7.1%); Other (5.7%); Supported Employment (1.4%); Job Coaching Other Than SE (1.1%).

SUPPORT (8.9%): Financial Assistance (75.0%); Assistive Technology Services (25.0%); Other (12.5%).

AS REPORTED BY DRS FIELD STAFF

Respondents to the DRS field staff survey were asked to identify the top five overall service needs for different consumer groups with which they have experience with providing VR
services. Respondents were asked to indicate if they did not have experience working with the consumer group. The number and percentage of respondents who indicated a gap for the service are in parentheses followed by the number of responses by DRS office location. Some respondents identified more than one office.

Note: New categories were created to incorporate answers that were not specific to a pre-existing service category from the survey. For example, the "Overall Training" category was created to include a number of open-ended responses where the respondent indicated a need for training, but not a specific type; for example, "Training options" and "Training services." The Miscellaneous category contains individual responses that were not clear in meaning or otherwise could not be grouped into a particular theme.

Minority Individuals

The survey asked, "From your experience with minority individuals with disabilities, please list the TOP FIVE services that you feel these consumers need in your service area." There were 64 respondents to this question. The most commonly reported service needs were:


Job Placement (17, 26.56%) -- Beckley-1, Charleston-2, Clarksburg-1, Fairmont-1, Huntington-4, Keyser-2, Marshall-1, Martinsburg-2, Moorefield-1, Morgantown-1, Point Pleasant-2, Romney-2, Teays Valley-3, and Welch-1.

Overall Training (16, 25%) -- Beckley-1, Charleston-2, Clarksburg-1, Elkins-1, Fairmont-1, Huntington-1, Keyser-3, Martinsburg-2, Moorefield-2, Morgantown-1, Mullens-1, Point Pleasant-1, Ripley-1, Romney-3, Spencer-1, Teays Valley-1, Weirton-1, Welch-1, and Weston-1.

Counseling and Guidance (11, 17.19%) -- Charleston-4, Clarksburg-2, Farimont-1, Huntington-2, Keyser-1, Marshall-1, Martinsburg-1, Moorefield-1, Romney-1, Teays Valley-1, and Wheeling-1.

Self-Advocacy (10, 15.63%) -- Clarksburg-3, Huntington-1, Martinsburg-1, Moorefield-1, Morgantown-1, Princeton-1, and Teays Valley-2.

C. WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;

IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY DRS

As has been the case for many years, DRS' direct client services units located at DRS' Nitro location will continue to be critical for DRS to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities who would otherwise be unserved and/or underserved, including individuals with disabilities who live in the rural part of the State, blind and visually impaired individuals, and the deaf and hard of hearing. The DRS Environmental Modifications Unit provides consumer services to assure they have the highest level of independence in and around their home and work by providing evaluations, technical assistance, and modifications.

According to the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates (which are the most recent estimates available as of October 1, 2019) there are approximately 122,252 racial minorities (including multi-racial) in West Virginia, making up 6.7% of the state’s total population. Since FY 2015, DRS has slightly exceeded this percentage in terms of minority
consumers served (8.4%, 8.1%, 8.3%, 8.8%, and 8.7% for FY 2015, FY 2016, FY 2017, FY 2018, and FY 2019, respectively), indicating overall equal access to services.

2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates data reveals that nine counties in West Virginia have minority populations that exceed 3,000: Berkeley (14,229, 12.7% of total county population); Cabell (8,680, 9.0%); Jefferson (6,947, 12.5%); Kanawha (21,557, 11.5%); Marion (3,452, 6.1%); Mercer (5,364, 8.8%); Monongalia (10,424, 10.1%); Raleigh (9,200, 11.9%); and Wood (3,110, 3.6%).

In each year since FY 2015, the DRS minority service percentage has exceeded the county minority population percentage for eight of the nine aforementioned counties: Berkeley, Cabell, Jefferson, Kanawha, Marion, Mercer, Raleigh, and Wood. The DRS minority service percentage was below the county minority population percentage in each year since FY 2015 for Monongalia county. Below is a list of each of these nine counties (with its respective minority population and percentage in parentheses), followed by the DRS minority service percentage for each county in FY 2015, FY 2016, FY 2017, FY 2018, and FY 2019.

Berkeley (14,229, 12.7%): FY 2015 – 18.1%; FY 2016 – 19.4%; FY 2017 – 18.9%; FY 2018 – 14.1%; FY 2019 – 15.0%
Jefferson (6,947, 12.5%): FY 2015 – 18.0%; FY 2016 – 13.4%; FY 2017 – 14.0%; FY 2018 – 15.6%; FY 2019 – 16.6%
Kanawha (21,557, 11.5%): FY 2015 – 18.5%; FY 2016 – 16.8%; FY 2017 – 15.6%; FY 2018 – 16.1%; FY 2019 – 15.9%
Marion (3,452, 6.1%): FY 2015 – 9.1%; FY 2016 – 8.1%; FY 2017 – 7.0%; FY 2018 – 10.2%; FY 2019 – 6.4%
Monongalia (10,424, 10.1%): FY 2015 – 7.9%; FY 2016 – 7.7%; FY 2017 – 9.5%; FY 2018 – 8.5%; FY 2019 – 7.4%
Wood (3,110, 3.6%): FY 2015 – 6.3%; FY 2016 – 4.9%; FY 2017 – 5.2%; FY 2018 – 5.0%; FY 2019 – 6.0%

In addition, the 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates data indicated five additional counties in West Virginia with a minority population under 3,000 and a county minority population percentage greater than the State’s minority population percentage of 6.7%: Gilmer (1,484; 17.9%), McDowell (2,132; 10.8%), Ohio (2,930; 6.8%), Preston (2,274; 6.7%), and Summers (968; 7.3%). Of these five counties, only Ohio County had a DRS minority service percentage (8.8% in FY 2015, 9.4% in FY 2016, 9.3% in FY 2017, 10.9% in FY 2018, and 12.6% in FY 2019) consistently higher than its county minority population percentage (6.8%). No minorities were served by DRS in FY 2015 and FY 2016 in Gilmer County. Below is a list of each of these five counties (with its respective minority population and percentage in parentheses), followed by the DRS minority service percentage for each county in FY 2015, FY 2016, FY 2017, FY 2018, and FY 2019.
Gilmer (1,484; 17.9%): FY 2015 – 0.0%; FY 2016 – 0.0%; FY 2017 – 6.3%; FY 2018 – 13.8%; FY 2019 – 14.3%

McDowell (2,132; 10.8%): FY 2015 – 11.4%; FY 2016 – 7.9%; FY 2017 – 6.7%; FY 2018 – 8.9%; FY 2019 – 10.7%

Ohio (2,930; 6.8%): FY 2015 – 8.8%; FY 2016 – 9.4%; FY 2017 – 9.3%; FY 2018 – 10.9%; FY 2019 – 12.6%

Preston (2,274; 6.7%): FY 2015 – 4.4%; FY 2016 – 5.6%; FY 2017 – 6.7%; FY 2018 – 6.5%; FY 2019 – 9.6%

Summers (968; 7.3%): FY 2015 – 3.4%; FY 2016 – 4.8%; FY 2017 – 7.1%; FY 2018 – 8.6%; FY 2019 – 6.5%

To determine potentially underserved areas, the DRS minority service percentage for the five-year period (FY 2015 – FY 2019) for each county was compared to that county's minority population percentage. Counties with mean DRS minority service percentages that are lower than the minority population percentage are considered to be potentially underserved. Of the 14 aforementioned counties, only 5 counties met this criterion: Gilmer, McDowell, Monongalia, Preston, and Summers counties.

DRS utilized geographic information systems (GIS) to pinpoint potential underserved zip codes in Gilmer, McDowell, Monongalia, Preston, and Summers counties. Zip codes that meet two criteria are identified as potential underserved areas: (1) the zip code has a minority population greater than or equal to 50 and (2) there are 10 or fewer minority consumers (as of October, 2019) reported in the agency's database over the last four fiscal years. Applying these criteria reveals 11 potentially underserved zip codes; 1 in Gilmer County (Sand Fork), 2 in McDowell County (Big Sandy and Maybeury), 2 in Monongalia County (Granville and Osage), 4 in Preston County (Albright, Bruceton Mills, Kingwood, and Terra Alta), and 2 in Summers County (Hinton and Pipestem). DRS will pursue outreach efforts in these zip codes to market and expand VR services to individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds.

D. WHO HAVE BEEN SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

FISCAL YEAR 2018 COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF THE WEST VIRGINIA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

Introduction

One requirement of the CSNA is an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce development system. In West Virginia, this system is overseen at the state level by the State Workforce Development Board (WDB) and the Interagency Collaborative Team (ICT) and locally by seven Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) that preside over localized workforce development system activities. The State and Local WDBs are comprised of representatives from business, labor, and public agencies. The ICT is comprised of eight state partner agencies that encompass the WV workforce development system. The purpose of the ICT is to foster cooperation and coordination of services among partner agencies.

American Job Centers are physical locations where consumers, including those with disabilities, can utilize services provided by partner agencies operating under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. WorkForce WV is the agency, within the WV Department of Commerce,
that operates American Job Centers across the seven workforce development regions across the state. DRS' involvement in the State WDB, ICT, and LWDBs in addition to its presence at American Job Centers ensures that people with disabilities are considered as employment training needs and services are identified.

**Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment**

To assess the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities in West Virginia, DRS utilizes a multifaceted, broad approach. This report only covers a single activity and targeted population within the overall comprehensive statewide needs assessment – the rehabilitation needs of individuals served through other components of the statewide workforce development system. This report provides a brief overview of service availability via physical American Job Center locations followed by the results of a survey provided to all members of the ICT, including the directors of all LWDBs.

**American Job Center Types and Locations**

As of October 2019, there are 35 American Job Center (AJC) locations including 13 comprehensive and 22 affiliate centers. Based on the federal regulations at 20 CFR §678.305 and §678.310, the two types of centers are defined based on the following criteria:

1. **Comprehensive AJC** – A comprehensive AJC is a physical location where job seeker and employer customers can access the programs, services, and activities of all required AJC partners. A comprehensive AJC must have at least one title I staff person physically present. The comprehensive AJC must provide career services, access to training services, access to employment and training activities carried out under sec. 134(d) of WIOA, access to programs and activities carried out by AJC partners listed in 678.400 through 678.410, including the Employment Service program authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, and workforce and labor market information.

2. **Affiliate Site** – An affiliated site is a site that makes available to job seeker and employer customers one or more of the AJC partners’ programs, services, and activities. An affiliated site does not need to provide access to every required AJC partner program. The frequency of program staff's physical presence in the affiliated site will be determined at the local level. Affiliated sites are access points in addition to the comprehensive one-stop center(s) in each local area. If used by local areas as a part of the service delivery strategy, affiliate sites must be implemented in a manner that supplements and enhances customer access to services.

Please note that there are seven workforce development regions in West Virginia, whereas DRS has six regions. The following provides the breakdown of American Job Centers by type and workforce development region:

- **Region One** consists of five comprehensive centers and four affiliate centers. The LWDB oversees service delivery in 11 counties of southeastern WV: Fayette, Greenbrier, McDowell, Mercer, Monroe, Nicholas, Pocahontas, Raleigh, Summers, Webster, and Wyoming. The region is mountainous and rural in nature. The coal industry continues to experience a large number of dislocations throughout the region as well as the closure of several chain retail stores. Training services are being utilized to assist many citizens in the local areas to retrain in new career pathways. Industry expected growth in the area includes, but is not limited, to: Administrative/Support Services, Construction, Health Care and Social Services, Wood Product Manufacturing, and Professional Services.
• Region Two consists of one comprehensive center located in Huntington and eight affiliate sites including four Community and Technical College (CTC) sites. The affiliate sites provide WIOA services and Temporary Assistance for Needy families (TANF) services in all locations. There are seven counties that make up the region: Putnam, Cabell, Mingo, Logan, Lincoln, Boone and Wayne.

• Region Three consists of one comprehensive center serving the citizens of Kanawha County including dislocated workers, adults, and youth. Staff arrange to go to other locations to provide services based upon need. Kanawha County is mostly urban but has a significant outlying rural population.

• Region Four is served by one comprehensive center and six affiliate centers. It consists of nine counties that comprises a region of rural and urban populations: Calhoun, Clay, Jackson, Mason, Pleasants, Ritchie, Roane, Wirt, and Wood. The region is supported by a variety of industries including Health Care, Plastics/Polymer, Professional Services, Warehousing, Transportation, Oil and Gas, and Construction. Government employment at the federal, state, and local levels also employ a considerable number of the region’s citizens.

• Region Five consists of two comprehensive centers and one affiliate center. Six counties comprise the area overseen by the LWDB: Brooke, Hancock, Marshall, Ohio, Tyler, and Wetzel. The region is bounded by the Ohio River on the north and west and the state of Pennsylvania on the east.

• Region Six consists of one comprehensive center and three affiliate centers that serve 13 counties in North Central WV: Barbour, Braxton, Doddridge, Gilmer, Harrison, Lewis, Marion, Monongalia, Preston, Randolph, Randolph, Taylor, Tucker, and Upshur. The region’s location along the I-79 corridor is advantageous.

• Region Seven consists of two comprehensive centers. Eight counties are served by the LWDB: Morgan, Berkeley, Jefferson, Grant, Hardy, Hampshire, Mineral, and Pendleton. The region offers a contrast of the rural in western counties and fast-paced suburban sprawl of the eastern counties, part of the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Statistical Area.

SURVEY OF ICT MEMBERS

In June 2018, DRS emailed a survey to all members of the ICT. At the time of the survey, in addition to the seven regional WDB directors, ICT membership included the following WV state agencies:

• Bureau of Senior Services
• State Unit on Aging
• Council for Community and Technical College
• Department of Education
• Adult Education and Literacy Activities
• Postsecondary Vocational Education
• Office of Institutional Programs
• Department of Commerce
Survey

The survey consisted of seven questions to collect information about the respondent, the agency they represent, and their perception of the rehabilitation service needs and gaps of the individuals with significant disabilities that they serve. The questions were as follows:

– Name
– Title
– Agency
– Approximately how many consumers with significant disabilities are served by your agency per year?
– Please identify the vocational rehabilitation services most often needed by consumers with significant disabilities served by your agency (up to five services).
– Please identify any vocational rehabilitation service gaps (i.e., services that are needed, but not available in sufficient quantities, if at all) for consumers with significant disabilities served by your agency (up to five services).
– How can DRS assist your agency to better serve your consumers with significant disabilities? Please add any additional comments you wish to provide.

Results

Six surveys were returned via email. Respondents represented WorkForce WV, the Bureau of Senior Services, WV Adult Education, and WDB Regions 2, 3, and 5.

Number of Individuals with Disabilities Served

The approximate number of consumers with disabilities served by each agency varied greatly, from 1 to over 26,000. One respondent was unable to provide this information.

Services Most Often Needed
Six respondents provided service need information. The most commonly reported service needs were transportation, education/training, soft skills training, assessment for accommodations, and job placement.

**Service Gaps**

Four respondents provided service gap information. The responses included access to services, assessment for learning disabilities, transportation, assistance with training and related costs, job coaching, youth services, and rehabilitation technology.

**DRS Assistance and Additional Comments**

Respondents indicated a desire for continued cross training and collaboration, more outreach to potentially eligible individuals, and making cross referrals.

E. WHO ARE YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING, AS APPROPRIATE, THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES OR OTHER TRANSITION SERVICES.

RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS OF THE REPORTED PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICE NEEDS OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

SPPE staff members in 2018, under guidance of the WV SRC–DRS Joint Committee on Needs Assessment, conducted a qualitative analysis of the reported service needs of 1,004 persons with significant disabilities of various age and disability groups statewide. These individuals represent a good sample of consumers with significant disabilities that will continue to seek assistance from agencies in coming years, *ceteris paribus*. All 55 counties in West Virginia were represented in the sample. SPPE staff members separately analyzed the needs comments of the 449 students with disabilities included in the sample. The needs comments were analyzed and grouped based on their indication or implication of need of one or more of five required Pre-ETS:

- Job exploration counseling;
- Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships), that is provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible;
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education;
- Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; and
- Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring.

The demographic profile of these 449 students with disabilities consists of the following characteristics:

- Gender: 50.6% male, 49.4% female;
- Race: 92.9% White, 6.9% Other (African American/Hispanic/American Indian/Native Hawaiian/Asian), 0.2% Unspecified;
- Age: 96.9% under 20 years old, 3.1% 20-34 years; and
- Primary Impairment: 4.9% Sensory/Communicative Impairments, 10.9% Physical Impairments, 84.2% Mental Impairments.
Of the 449 students with disabilities providing needs comments, 106 (23.6%) indicated or implied a need for one or more Pre-ETS.

As part of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, the following report presents the results of the qualitative analysis on the needs comments of these 106 students with disabilities who indicated or implied a need for one or more Pre-ETS.

Job Exploration Counseling (72, 67.9%); Counseling on Opportunities for Enrollment in Comprehensive Transition or Postsecondary Educational Programs (13, 12.3%); Work-Based Learning Experiences (6, 5.7%); Instruction in Self-Advocacy (2, 1.9%); and Workplace Readiness Training (1, 0.9%).

AS REPORTED BY DRS FIELD STAFF

WIOA requires that the comprehensive statewide needs assessment include an assessment of the vocational rehabilitation service needs of “youth with disabilities, and students with disabilities, including their need for pre-employment transition services.” DRS field staff that serve transitioning youth are one key resource in identifying the service needs of youth with disabilities in West Virginia. Therefore, needs assessment surveys completed by 100 DRS field staff were analyzed in order to identify students’ needs for Pre-ETS.

Respondents

There were 34 respondents, 34% of the 100, that indicated having a primary caseload of School/Transition. However, a number of field staff have a secondary caseload of School/Transition. In total, 77 field staff (77%) reported regarding needs for at least one Pre-ETS category. This number includes 37 field staff (37%) who also reported a service gap for at least one Pre-ETS category. The breakdown of these 77 respondents by position is as follows:

Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee, 12 respondents (15.6%)
Rehabilitation Counselor, 60 respondents (77.9%)
Senior Rehabilitation Counselor, 28 respondents (36.4%)
Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, 13 respondents (16.9%)
Branch Office Manager/Supervisor, 17 respondents (22.1%)
District Manager, 6 respondents (7.8%)
Rehabilitation Services Associate, 13 respondents (16.9%)

Note: Percentages do not total 100%, because staff were instructed to indicate previous positions as well as current positions.

Office Location

Respondents were from 25 branch office locations, with some respondents indicating more than one office (typically managers). The Parkersburg and New Martinsville offices were the only locations not represented by the Pre-ETS respondents. The total number of respondents by district and office location are as follows:

District 3 (6) — Parkersburg–0, New Martinsville–0, Weirton–5, Wheeling–1.
District 5 (10) — Huntington–7, Logan–1, Mullens–1, Welch–1.
District 6 (14) — Keyser–8, Martinsburg–6, Moorefield–7, Romney–6.

Pre-ETS Needs and Gaps

Within the survey, each service was accompanied by checkboxes in two columns: Need and Gap. Respondents were asked to “please indicate whether most of the consumers you serve in your area can benefit from the service” by placing an ‘X’ in the Need column for that service. Additionally, respondents were asked to “indicate whether you feel there is a service gap (i.e., services are needed, but not available in sufficient quantities) for each service by placing an ‘X’ in the Gap column.”

Service need/use for each Pre-ETS category was assessed to allow respondents to indicate which services their consumers need/use most often. This was done independently of the service gap assessment as some services may be highly needed/used but are readily available and therefore do not require an increase in availability.

Pre-ETS categories are listed below with the percentage of respondents indicating need in parentheses:

Job Exploration Counseling (72%)
Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities (72%)
Workplace Readiness Training (69%)
Work-Based Learning Experiences (66%)
Self-Advocacy Training (64%)

Respondents that indicated a perceived service gap were totaled for each service. The number and percentage of respondents who reported a gap for the service are in parentheses followed by the number of responses by DRS office location. Some respondents identified more than one office.


Self-Advocacy Training (19, 19%) -- Charleston-4, Clarksburg-1, Elkins-2, Huntington-2, Keyser-2, Logan-1, Martinsburg-1, Moorefield-1, Point Pleasant-1, Princeton-1, Romney-2, Spencer-1, Summersville-2, Teays Valley-1, and Weston-1.

Job Exploration Counseling (13, 13%) -- Charleston-3, Clarksburg-1, Elkins-2, Huntington-2, Logan-1, Martinsburg-1, Point Pleasant-1, Spencer-1, Summersville-1, and Weston-1.

Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities (12, 12%) -- Charleston-3, Elkins-2, Huntington-2, Logan-1, Martinsburg-1, Moorefield-1, Ripley-1, Spencer-1, Summersville-1, and Weston-1.
Overall Service Needs for West Virginians with Disabilities

Respondents were asked to identify the top five overall service needs for different consumer groups with which they have experience with providing VR services. Respondents were asked to indicate if they did not have experience working with the consumer group. The number and percentage of respondents who indicated a gap for the service are in parentheses followed by the number of responses by DRS office location. Some respondents identified more than one office.

Note: New categories created to incorporate answers that were not specific to a pre-existing service category from the survey. For example, the "Overall Training" category was created to include a number of open-ended responses where the respondent indicated a need for training, but not a specific type; for example, "Training options" and "Training services." The Miscellaneous category contains individual responses that were not clear in meaning or otherwise could not be grouped into a particular theme.

Transitioning Youth

The survey asked, "From your experience with transitioning youth with disabilities, please list the TOP FIVE services that you feel these consumers need in your service area." There were 74 respondents to this question. The most commonly reported service needs were:


Job Exploration Counseling (26, 35.1%) -- Charleston-4, Clarksburg-4, Elkins-3, Fairmont-2, Huntington-3, Keyser-1, Martinsburg-1, Moorefield-1, Point Pleasant-2, Romney-1, Summersville-1, Teays Valley-3, Weirton-1, and Weston-2.

Work-Based Learning Experiences (23, 31.1%) -- Beckley-1, Charleston-1, Clarksburg-6, Fairmont-3, Huntington-1, Keyser-2, Lewisburg-1, Logan-1, Martinsburg-2, Moorefield-4, Oak Hill-1, Point Pleasant-1, Princeton-3, Romney-2, Summersville-2, Teays Valley-1, Weirton-1, and Welch-1.


Overall Training (15, 20.3%) -- Charleston-3, Elkins-2, Fairmont-2, Keyser-1, Mullens-1, Point Pleasant-1, Princeton-1, Ripley-1, Spencer-2, Summersville-1, Teays Valley-2, and Weston-1.

RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS OF THE REPORTED PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES PROVISION BY WEST VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOLS TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

In November 2019, as part of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, DRS conducted an assessment of the need and availability of Pre-ETS for students with disabilities at high schools across the state. The five required Pre-ETS activities (as mandated by WIOA) for students with disabilities are:

1. Job exploration counseling
2. Work-based learning experiences
3. Counseling on opportunities for transitioning from school to work or into postsecondary training or education programs, including college, university (Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities)

4. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living skills

5. Instruction in self-advocacy

To assess the availability of Pre-ETS for students with disabilities at high schools, DRS counselors held formal meetings with school principals, vice principals, counselors, special education teachers, and other related staff. During these meetings, DRS counselors asked school staff, for each of the five required Pre-ETS activities, whether the service was currently available to the school’s students with disabilities and if so, how the service was provided.

The SPPE Unit rated each of the responses to the five Pre-ETS questions using a 1-3 Likert scale. A rating of 1 indicated that the school does not provide the service (or has a very limited capacity) to its students with disabilities. A rating of 2 indicated that the school was providing services to some students with disabilities but not all, or by providing a minimal level of service to all students with disabilities, suggesting remaining unmet need/demand. Finally, a rating of 3 indicates that the school was sufficiently providing the service to its students with disabilities.

Results

In total, 110 high schools from 54 of the 55 counties participated. No schools from Jefferson County participated, despite requests. All six DRS districts were represented.

Total scores for each school’s responses were calculated by adding the scores for each required Pre-ETS activity. A total score of 5 would indicate that none of the services were being provided by the school, while a total score of 15 would indicate that all five required activities of Pre-ETS were provided sufficiently by the school. One school had a total score of 5 (Morgantown) and no school had a total score of 15. Total scores ranged from 5 to 13, with a mean of 9.8 and a mode of 10.

For each service, statewide average scores were calculated, ranging from 1 (indicating no provision of service in high schools across the state) to 3 (indicating sufficient service provision by all high schools in the state). The most sufficiently provided Pre-ETS statewide was Counseling on Post-Secondary Opportunities (2.15), followed by Job Exploration Counseling (2.11), Work Based Learning Experiences (2.04), Workplace Readiness Training (1.88) and Instruction in Self-Advocacy (1.66). Across all five Pre-ETS categories, the statewide average score was 1.97.

Across all five required Pre-ETS activities statewide, a rating of 1 was scored for a total of 106 responses (Job Exploration Counseling – 16; Work Based Learning Experiences – 10; Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities – 19; Workplace Readiness Training – 20; and Instruction in Self Advocacy – 41), a rating of 2 was scored for a total of 356 responses (Job Exploration Counseling – 66; Work Based Learning Experiences – 86; Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities – 56; Workplace Readiness Training – 83; and Instruction in Self Advocacy – 65), and a rating of 3 was scored for a total of 88 responses (Job Exploration Counseling – 28; Work Based Learning Experiences – 14; Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities – 35; Workplace Readiness Training – 7; and Instruction in Self Advocacy – 4).

The results of the survey indicate that most high schools in West Virginia are providing some level of required Pre-ETS activity. However, there are locations within the state in which Pre-
ETS are not provided or are provided minimally by the school. To ensure that Pre-ETS are available to students with disabilities in high schools statewide, as well as eliminate duplication of services, DRS will prioritize and emphasize Pre-ETS provision in categories and high schools which were rated as 1, with secondary priority to those high schools and Pre-ETS categories which were rated as 2. Additionally, DRS will continue to explore and expand options for Pre-ETS provision and best practices statewide.

2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE; AND

As described above, DRS' direct client services units located at DRS' Nitro location will continue to be critical for DRS to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities identified under the unserved and underserved portion of this assessment, including individuals with disabilities who live in the rural part of the State, blind and visually impaired individuals, and the deaf and hard of hearing. The DRS Environmental Modifications Unit provides consumer services to assure they have the highest level of independence in and around their home and work by providing evaluations, technical assistance, and modifications. The continual maintenance and improvement of direct client services units located at DRS' Nitro location will be necessary to maintain its operation in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible.

RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY OF CRPS/CSPS

DRS conducted a survey of CRPs/community service providers (CSPs) with acknowledged vendor status to provide services (including supported-employment services) to DRS consumers across the state. The survey was conducted as a part of the statewide comprehensive needs assessment study of persons with significant disabilities in West Virginia.

DRS distributed the survey via email to 62 DRS–acknowledged CRPs/CSPs to collect input on their provision of services to West Virginians with significant disabilities, their level of communication with DRS, ways in which DRS could improve services or service delivery, and what the CRPs/CSPs urgently needed to better serve West Virginians with significant disabilities. Forty surveys were returned to DRS, for a response rate of 64.5 percent. Surveys were returned from CRPs/CSPs working with DRS offices across the state.

Service Provision

In each of the six DRS districts, all nine categories of services were reported as being provided. Services were also reported as being provided in all 55 counties in West Virginia, with the exception of Pendleton and Clay counties. All nine services were reported as being provided in 43 out of 55 counties (78.2%). Excluding the two unreported counties (i.e., Pendleton and Clay), the remaining counties were reported to be provided with between four and eight CRP services. Additionally, in several counties, various services were reported as provided by multiple CRPs. However, based on records in the DRS CRP directory, all nine categories of CRP services are provided in all 55 counties.

Communication and Liaison Contact

Thirty-nine out of 40 CRPs (97.5%) provided a rating of their communication with DRS. Options ranged from Excellent to Very Poor. One CRP gave a rating of Very Poor and 34 of the 39 CRPs (87.2%) gave a response of Good or better. When asked whether a DRS liaison counselor was in contact on a regular basis, 29 of 37 CRPs responded yes, while 8 CRPs responded no (78.4% and 21.6%, respectively). Three CRPs did not respond to this question.

DRS Improvement
Thirty-six of the 40 CRPs gave comments regarding specific things that DRS could do to improve services or service delivery. The most common theme found in the comments was that of outreach, including outreach to high schools and businesses. Another common theme involved improvements in communication, including frequency and quality of communication. The increased frequency of communication included recommendations of regular meetings and trainings with DRS staff (e.g., “...Regularly scheduled local meetings with DRS and the CRP would enable us to discuss clients, problems, solutions more in depth...”). Perhaps related to the theme of communication was a theme of consistency. Some CRPs expressed issue with the consistency in the way different counselors handle solutions (e.g., “...each DRS Counselor wants services done differently and documents completed and submitted differently making the process rather confusing.”).

**CRP/CSP Needs**

Thirty-four of the 40 CRPs gave comments on what the CRP urgently needed to better serve West Virginians with disabilities. Funding and referrals (which generate funding for CRPs) were, by far, the most reported needs. Funding need comments ranged from the convenient (e.g., “A consistent stream of referrals would make it possible for us to recruit and employ job coaches...”) to the necessary (e.g., “[CRP name] needs more referrals to continue providing quality VR services...”) As seen in these examples, the CRPs reasons for funding needs also ranged from general to specific.

Other, less commonly addressed themes that could be found in the comments included needs for more transportation help and better relationships with employers to facilitate placement. Other topics were mentioned as well, and some comments merely stated that there were no pressing needs at this time.

**Conclusions Based on the Survey of CRPs/CSPs**

No less than four services were reported, by CRPs, as being provided in each of West Virginia’s counties, with the exceptions of Pendleton and Clay counties. According to DRS’ records of CRP information, Pendleton County is served by four CRPs and Clay County is served by five CRPs. Only one of these CRPs responded to the survey but did not indicate serving either county in the survey, which is discrepant from DRS records. Despite this deficiency, all nine CRP services were reported as being provided in all six DRS districts and three-fourths of all West Virginia counties.

Over 85% of CRPs reported a Good or better rating of communication with DRS and only one CRP rated communication with DRS as being Very Poor. This is somewhat contradictory with the fact that only 78.4% of the CRPs claimed that a DRS liaison counselor was in contact on a regular basis. This raises the slightly counter-intuitive idea that communication does not have to be frequent, or even regularly occurring, in order to be good. Comments regarding communication (which were provided by nearly all of the respondents) reflected this at times, suggesting that communication was good when it occurred. At other times, comments indicated that the lack of regular communication was indeed a problem.

Comments on DRS improvement focused on outreach, improved communication, and consistency among DRS counselors’ requests. Comments on CRP needs generally emphasized funding and referrals, requesting that DRS continue to provide (or provide more of) each. This is only logical, as CRPs require these things to remain in existence. Some CRPs though, made it clear that funding from DRS specifically allows them to provide the services that they provide.

**CRP SERVICE RESPONSES FROM DRS FIELD STAFF SURVEY**
The five most commonly reported gaps for employment/CRP services were:


3. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS OF THE REPORTED PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICE NEEDS OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

SPPE staff members in 2018, under guidance of the WV SRC-DRS Joint Committee on Needs Assessment, conducted a qualitative analysis of the reported service needs of 1,004 persons with significant disabilities of various age and disability groups statewide. These individuals represent a good sample of consumers with significant disabilities that will continue to seek assistance from agencies in coming years, ceteris paribus. All 55 counties in West Virginia were represented in the sample. SPPE staff members separately analyzed the needs comments of the 449 students with disabilities included in the sample. The needs comments were analyzed and grouped based on their indication or implication of need of one or more of five required Pre-ETS:

- Job exploration counseling;
- Work-based learning experiences, which may include in–school or after school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships), that is provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible;
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education;
- Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; and
- Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring.
The demographic profile of these 449 students with disabilities consists of the following characteristics:

Gender: 50.6% male, 49.4% female;

Race: 92.9% White, 6.9% Other (African American/Hispanic/American Indian/Native Hawaiian/Asian), 0.2% Unspecified;

Age: 96.9% under 20 years old, 3.1% 20-34 years; and

Primary Impairment: 4.9% Sensory/Communicative Impairments, 10.9% Physical Impairments, 84.2% Mental Impairments.

Of the 449 students with disabilities providing needs comments, 106 (23.6%) indicated or implied a need for one or more Pre-ETS.

As part of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, the following report presents the results of the qualitative analysis on the needs comments of these 106 students with disabilities who indicated or implied a need for one or more Pre-ETS.

Job Exploration Counseling (72, 67.9%); Counseling on Opportunities for Enrollment in Comprehensive Transition or Postsecondary Educational Programs (13, 12.3); Work-Based Learning Experiences (6, 5.7%); Instruction in Self-Advocacy (2, 1.9%); and Workplace Readiness Training (1, 0.9%).

AS REPORTED BY DRS FIELD STAFF

WIOA requires that the comprehensive statewide needs assessment include an assessment of the vocational rehabilitation service needs of “youth with disabilities, and students with disabilities, including their need for pre-employment transition services.” DRS field staff that serve transitioning youth are one key resource in identifying the service needs of youth with disabilities in West Virginia. Therefore, needs assessment surveys completed by 100 DRS field staff were analyzed in order to identify students’ needs for Pre-ETS.

Respondents

There were 34 respondents, 34% of the 100, that indicated having a primary caseload of School/Transition. However, a number of field staff have a secondary caseload of School/Transition. In total, 77 field staff (77%) reported regarding needs for at least one Pre-ETS category. This number includes 37 field staff (37%) who also reported a service gap for at least one Pre-ETS category. The breakdown of these 77 respondents by position is as follows:

Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee, 12 respondents (15.6%)
Rehabilitation Counselor, 60 respondents (77.9%)
Senior Rehabilitation Counselor, 28 respondents (36.4%)
Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, 13 respondents (16.9%)
Branch Office Manager/Supervisor, 17 respondents (22.1%)
District Manager, 6 respondents (7.8%)
Rehabilitation Services Associate, 13 respondents (16.9%)

Note: Percentages do not total 100%, because staff were instructed to indicate previous positions as well as current positions.
Office Location

Respondents were from 25 branch office locations, with some respondents indicating more than one office (typically managers). The Parkersburg and New Martinsville offices were the only locations not represented by the Pre-ETS respondents. The total number of respondents by district and office location are as follows:


District 3 (6) — Parkersburg–0, New Martinsville–0, Weirton–5, Wheeling–1.


District 5 (10) — Huntington–7, Logan–1, Mullens–1, Welch–1.

District 6 (14) — Keyser–8, Martinsburg–6, Moorefield–7, Romney–6.

Pre-ETS Needs and Gaps

Within the survey, each service was accompanied by checkboxes in two columns: Need and Gap. Respondents were asked to “please indicate whether most of the consumers you serve in your area can benefit from the service” by placing an ‘X’ in the Need column for that service. Additionally, respondents were asked to “indicate whether you feel there is a service gap (i.e., services are needed, but not available in sufficient quantities) for each service by placing an ‘X’ in the Gap column.”

Service need/use for each Pre-ETS category was assessed to allow respondents to indicate which services their consumers need/use most often. This was done independently of the service gap assessment as some services may be highly needed/used but are readily available and therefore do not require an increase in availability.

Pre-ETS categories are listed below with the percentage of respondents indicating need in parentheses:

Job Exploration Counseling (72%)
Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities (72%)
Workplace Readiness Training (69%)
Work-Based Learning Experiences (66%)
Self-Advocacy Training (64%)

Respondents that indicated a perceived service gap were totaled for each service. The number and percentage of respondents who reported a gap for the service are in parentheses followed by the number of responses by DRS office location. Some respondents identified more than one office.


Self-Advocacy Training (19, 19%) -- Charleston-4, Clarksburg-1, Elkins-2, Huntington-2, Keyser-2, Logan-1, Martinsburg-1, Moorefield-1, Point Pleasant-1, Princeton-1, Romney-2, Spencer-1, Summersville-2, Teays Valley-1, and Weston-1.

Job Exploration Counseling (13, 13%) -- Charleston-3, Clarksburg-1, Elkins-2, Huntington-2, Logan-1, Martinsburg-1, Point Pleasant-1, Spencer-1, Summersville-1, and Weston-1.

Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities (12, 12%) -- Charleston-3, Elkins-2, Huntington-2, Logan-1, Martinsburg-1, Moorefield-1, Ripley-1, Spencer-1, Summersville-1, and Weston-1.

**Overall Service Needs for West Virginians with Disabilities**

Respondents were asked to identify the top five overall service needs for different consumer groups with which they have experience with providing VR services. Respondents were asked to indicate if they did not have experience working with the consumer group. The number and percentage of respondents who indicated a gap for the service are in parentheses followed by the number of responses by DRS office location. Some respondents identified more than one office.

Note: New categories created to incorporate answers that were not specific to a pre-existing service category from the survey. For example, the "Overall Training" category was created to include a number of open-ended responses where the respondent indicated a need for training, but not a specific type; for example, "Training options" and "Training services." The Miscellaneous category contains individual responses that were not clear in meaning or otherwise could not be grouped into a particular theme.

**Transitioning Youth**

The survey asked, "From your experience with transitioning youth with disabilities, please list the TOP FIVE services that you feel these consumers need in your service area." There were 74 respondents to this question. The most commonly reported service needs were:


Job Exploration Counseling (26, 35.1%) -- Charleston-4, Clarksburg-4, Elkins-3, Fairmont-2, Huntington-3, Keyser-1, Martinsburg-1, Moorefield-1, Point Pleasant-2, Romney-1, Summersville-1, Teays Valley-3, Weirton-1, and Weston-2.

Work-Based Learning Experiences (23, 31.1%) -- Beckley-1, Charleston-1, Clarksburg-6, Fairmont-3, Huntington-1, Keyser-2, Lewisburg-1, Logan-1, Martinsburg-2, Moorefield-4, Oak Hill-1, Point Pleasant-1, Princeton-3, Romney-2, Summersville-2, Teays Valley-1, Weirton-1, and Welch-1.

Results of the Analysis of the Reported Pre-Employment Transition Services Provision by West Virginia High Schools to Students with Disabilities

In November 2019, as part of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, DRS conducted an assessment of the need and availability of Pre-ETS for students with disabilities at high schools across the state. The five required Pre-ETS activities (as mandated by WIOA) for students with disabilities are:

1. Job exploration counseling
2. Work-based learning experiences
3. Counseling on opportunities for transitioning from school to work or into postsecondary training or education programs, including college, university (Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities)
4. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living skills
5. Instruction in self-advocacy

To assess the availability of Pre-ETS for students with disabilities at high schools, DRS counselors held formal meetings with school principals, vice principals, counselors, special education teachers, and other related staff. During these meetings, DRS counselors asked school staff, for each of the five required Pre-ETS activities, whether the service was currently available to the school’s students with disabilities and if so, how the service was provided.

The SPPE Unit rated each of the responses to the five Pre-ETS questions using a 1-3 Likert scale. A rating of 1 indicated that the school does not provide the service (or has a very limited capacity) to its students with disabilities. A rating of 2 indicated that the school was providing services to some students with disabilities but not all, or by providing a minimal level of service to all students with disabilities, suggesting remaining unmet need/demand. Finally, a rating of 3 indicates that the school was sufficiently providing the service to its students with disabilities.

Results

In total, 110 high schools from 54 of the 55 counties participated. No schools from Jefferson County participated, despite requests. All six DRS districts were represented.

Total scores for each school’s responses were calculated by adding the scores for each required Pre-ETS activity. A total score of 5 would indicate that none of the services were being provided by the school, while a total score of 15 would indicate that all five required activities of Pre-ETS were provided sufficiently by the school. One school had a total score of 5 (Morgantown) and no school had a total score of 15. Total scores ranged from 5 to 13, with a mean of 9.8 and a mode of 10.

For each service, statewide average scores were calculated, ranging from 1 (indicating no provision of service in high schools across the state) to 3 (indicating sufficient service provision by all high schools in the state). The most sufficiently provided Pre-ETS statewide was Counseling on Post-Secondary Opportunities (2.15), followed by Job Exploration Counseling (2.11), Work Based Learning Experiences (2.04), Workplace Readiness Training (1.88) and Instruction in Self-Advocacy (1.66). Across all five Pre-ETS categories, the statewide average score was 1.97.
Across all five required Pre-ETS activities statewide, a rating of 1 was scored for a total of 106 responses (Job Exploration Counseling – 16; Work Based Learning Experiences – 10; Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities – 19; Workplace Readiness Training – 20; and Instruction in Self Advocacy – 41), a rating of 2 was scored for a total of 356 responses (Job Exploration Counseling – 66; Work Based Learning Experiences – 86; Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities – 56; Workplace Readiness Training – 83; and Instruction in Self Advocacy – 65), and a rating of 3 was scored for a total of 88 responses (Job Exploration Counseling – 28; Work Based Learning Experiences – 14; Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities – 35; Workplace Readiness Training – 7; and Instruction in Self Advocacy – 4).

The results of the survey indicate that most high schools in West Virginia are providing some level of required Pre-ETS activity. However, there are locations within the state in which Pre-ETS are not provided or are provided minimally by the school. To ensure that Pre-ETS are available to students with disabilities in high schools statewide, as well as eliminate duplication of services, DRS will prioritize and emphasize Pre-ETS provision in categories and high schools which were rated as 1, with secondary priority to those high schools and Pre-ETS categories which were rated as 2. Additionally, DRS will continue to explore and expand options for Pre-ETS provision and best practices statewide.

K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

Describe:

1. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) calculated its estimate of individuals with disabilities who are eligible for services under this State Plan by applying the state incidence of disability rate for individuals ages 18–64 (17.4%) to the state general population figure for individuals who are ages 18–64 (1,118,913). Both statistics are from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2012–2016 American Community Survey five-year estimates.

Based on an estimate from the American Community Survey (as of January 2018), there are 194,175 people with a disability in WV between ages 18–64. If DRS authorizes a Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 average of $1,585 of services per consumer in a fiscal year, then over $307 million would be needed to purchase vocational rehabilitation (VR) services for these potentially eligible individuals to move them toward competitive employment outcomes.

2. THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER:

A. THE VR PROGRAM;

In FY 2021, the Division expects to serve 4,816 consumers with disabilities (excluding potentially eligible students with disabilities), obligating $9.1 million of Title I funds for purchasing services for consumers. This estimate is based on historical data and current trends in caseload levels, Order of Selection, the current and projected impact of COVID-19, and the availability of fiscal and personnel resources. While the agency has experienced a decrease in its number of consumers in recent years, the trend is expected to reverse, and the agency anticipates that the number of individuals in the VR system will increase in future years. The COVID-19 pandemic is having a negative impact on VR service delivery by creating barriers that reduce VR counselors’ ability to provide and the consumers’ ability to immediately receive face to face services. The COVID-19 pandemic also presents a challenge for potential VR consumers to obtain information about DRS services, especially for students with disabilities who may also find web-based, virtual learning, and information gathering a more challenging experience. These students with disabilities may be in need of additional supports from schools and DRS.
As the agency continues to implement the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, there will continue to be dynamic forces and multiple factors that contribute to the estimated number of consumers served by the agency. One factor is the agency continuing to experience a high level of turnover among its vocational rehabilitation counselors. This contributes to lower service levels due to the learning curve for new counselors. Another contributing factor to the estimates is the provision of pre-employment transition services. The agency has shifted fiscal and human resources to better serve students with disabilities.

B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

In FY 2021, the Division expects to serve 142 consumers with most significant disabilities (i.e., OS category 1) in supported employment, using Title VI-B (for youth and adults with most significant disabilities) funds and Title I funds, as needed. This estimate is based on historical data and current trends in caseload levels, Order of Selection, the current and projected impact of COVID-19 (e.g., face to face service provision and job coaching opportunities), and the availability of fiscal and personnel resources. Additionally, DRS is working with the WV Developmental Disabilities Council and the WV Department of Education, Office of Special Education, to identify and serve more students with the most significant disabilities. While the agency has experienced a decrease in its number of consumers in recent years, the trend is expected to reverse, and the agency anticipates that the number of individuals in the VR system will increase in future years.

DRS plans to continue using three prevalent models of supported employment services: individual placement, mobile work crews, and enclaves. Additionally, DRS will encourage and support development of affirmative industries that integrate workers with disabilities and workers without disabilities throughout the community rehabilitation program (CRP) network. DRS considers each placement on an individualized, case-by-case basis to ensure the placement setting meets the definition of an integrated employment setting. For consumers with the most significant disabilities in supported employment, DRS strives for each consumer to achieve a competitive, integrated employment outcome.

DRS policies defining competitive employment settings promote linking CRPs with federal and state work contracts that may exist within the community. Such links expand job opportunities for individuals receiving SE, particularly those who reside in rural locations. This approach also directs Title VI–B and Title I funds into placement–related services and activities.

As of December 2019, DRS has acknowledged vendor agreements with 72 CRPs with 80 service locations to provide services to DRS consumers, including individuals with the most significant disabilities in supported employment. In FY 2019, DRS authorized $160,311.95 in SE services for 73 adults with disabilities and $168,773.56 in SE services for 56 youth with disabilities.

As the agency continues to implement the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, there will continue to be dynamic forces and multiple factors that contribute to the estimated number of consumers served by the agency. One factor is the agency continuing to experience a high level of turnover among its vocational rehabilitation counselors. This contributes to lower service levels due to the learning curve for new counselors. Another contributing factor to the estimates is the provision of pre-employment transition services. The agency has shifted fiscal and human resources to better serve students with disabilities.

C. EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION.

In Fiscal Year 2021, it is estimated that:
2,414 individuals will be served in OS Category 1, using an estimated $4,103,800 of Title I funds (average of $1,700 per year). Additionally, out of the 2,414 individuals served in OS Category 1, DRS will serve 142 youth and adults with the most significant disabilities in supported employment utilizing $300,000 in Title VI-B funds, as appropriate.

1,667 individuals will be served in OS Category 2, using an estimated $2,833,900 of Title I funds (average of $1,700 per year).

735 individuals will be served in OS Category 3, using an estimated $2,205,000 of Title I funds (average of $3,000 per year).

3. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION; AND

All OS Categories will be open during Federal Fiscal Year 2021, as long as sufficient fiscal and personnel resources remain available to provide VR services to all eligible applicants.

4. THE COST OF SERVICES FOR THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS ESTIMATED TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES. IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION, IDENTIFY THE COST OF SERVICES FOR EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY.

In Fiscal Year 2021, it is estimated that:

- 2,414 individuals will be served in OS Category 1, using an estimated $4,103,800 of Title I funds (average of $1,700 per year). Additionally, out of the 2,414 individuals served in OS Category 1, DRS will serve 142 youth and adults with the most significant disabilities in supported employment utilizing $300,000 in Title VI-B funds, as appropriate.

- 1,667 individuals will be served in OS Category 2, using an estimated $2,833,900 of Title I funds (average of $1,700 per year).

- 735 individuals will be served in OS Category 3, using an estimated $2,205,000 of Title I funds (average of $3,000 per year).

L. STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

The designated State unit must:

1. IDENTIFY IF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES WERE JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO BY THE STATE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, IF THE STATE HAS A COUNCIL, AND JOINTLY AGREED TO ANY REVISIONS

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) employs many goals to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities, particularly those individuals with the most significant disabilities. Furthermore, DRS recognizes those services essential to needs identified in the comprehensive assessment, evaluation of the Designated State Unit’s performance on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) common performance measures to ensure quality services for individuals with significant disabilities, and services vital to the operation and effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program in West Virginia.

For the development of agency goals and priorities, DRS followed WIOA guidance in the development of the Unified State Plan. DRS worked closely with the WIOA core partners including WorkForce WV and the WV Adult Education. The DRS goals and priorities were developed to support the overall state goals and priorities in achieving a well-integrated workforce development system that provided customer-focused services to job seekers in West Virginia.
The West Virginia State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) maintained involvement throughout the development and assessment of agency goals and priorities in a variety of ways and provided DRS with valued input and recommendations. DRS executive managers, representatives of SRC, the West Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), and the Client Assistance Program (CAP) were invited to discuss DRS goals and priorities for carrying out the VR and supported employment programs. The Executive Directors of the SRC and SILC attend monthly DRS Executive Management Group (EMG) meetings to discuss various ongoing issues affecting the agency and are privy to the current goals, objectives, and strategies pertaining to specific agency issues. Additional involvement occurs through DRS staff members attending SRC and SILC meetings to share information regarding agency performance, needs assessment, and State Plan activities. The SRC was afforded electronic access to the Program Year (PY) 2020 State Plan for review. Additionally, the SRC formed a subcommittee on needs assessment and the State Plan. The SRC members discuss DRS activities at regularly scheduled meetings and provide input to DRS.

2. IDENTIFY THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

The workforce development system (WDS) of West Virginia believes that all of its successful activities positively contribute to the ongoing mission of increasing the labor force participation rate. To maximize its ability to achieve this mission, the WDS has identified the following goals for Program Years 2020–2023:

Goal 1: Maximize Efficiency of the WDS

For WIOA to continue to be successful the workforce development system must be seamless, comprehensive, and accessible. Partners in the workforce development system will work together in order to maximize benefits to our customers and improve WV’s labor force participation rate.

Goal 2: Strengthen Relationships with Employers

Collaborate with employers utilizing a variety of methods to develop solutions to their workforce needs.

Goal 3: Overcome Employment Barriers of Individuals

Identify employment barriers of individuals and develop solutions. The removal of barriers is a key component to improving WV’s labor force participation rate.

Goal 4: Promote Career Pathways

Emphasize career pathways to assist individuals entering and moving within the labor force and to educate employers on the advantages of career pathways.

Goal 5: Identify and Maximize Postsecondary and Employment Opportunities for Youth

Identify employment challenges faced by youth and provide access to postsecondary training/education and employment opportunities to improve WV’s labor force participation rate.

Goal 6: Align WV’s Labor Force Participation Rate with the National Labor Force Participation Rate

WV has the lowest Labor Force Participation Rate in the United States. Increasing labor force participation rates and reducing unemployment rate disparities for people with disabilities,
both younger and older workers, and people with lower educational attainment would lead to measurable increases in the size of the state’s available labor force. Helping minorities and other groups with barriers to employment is critical to ensuring that West Virginia’s employers are able to find workers and our economy is able to expand.

DRS is fully committed to coordinate its activities and services with core and community partners to ensure successful completion of the aforementioned goals. The following goals highlight specific focus areas for DRS that will also contribute to the overall goals of the West Virginia WDS:

DRS Goal 1 – Provide integrated vocational rehabilitation services to West Virginians with disabilities to promote attainment of a high school education or greater, in order to increase their ability to move through meaningful career pathways. Compared to the national average of 30.9%, West Virginia has a much lower percentage of individuals 25 years and older having attained a bachelor’s degree (19.9%; from https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/WV,US/PST045218). For individuals with disabilities, the percentage is much lower, at 5.8% (from the Annual Disability Statistics Compendium: 2018). While a majority (75.6%) of West Virginians with disabilities age 25 or over have a high school education or higher, nearly a fourth (24.4%) of this population does not, compared to only 8.6% of the State’s population of 25 or older without a disability (Annual Disability Statistics Compendium: 2018). Close relationships with the WV Adult Education Program (Adult Ed) and the WV Higher Education Policy Commission, as well as State and Local Education Agencies, will help to close this education gap.

DRS Goal 2 – Provide Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities. Pursuant to requirements of WIOA and findings from the 2018 CSNA, DRS will, in cooperation with State and Local Education Agencies, provide Pre-ETS to students with disabilities, focusing on students 21 years or younger while still in high school. The provision of Pre-ETS offers students with disabilities information about careers, career opportunities, education and training programs, and self-advocacy. This information and work-based experiences can lead to more well-informed career decision making and can empower students with disabilities to become more educated and skilled, moving toward a career that meets their needs.

DRS Goal 3 – Provide integrated vocational rehabilitation services to West Virginians with disabilities, committing to the use of the Employment First framework, to enable them to obtain competitive, integrated employment, especially in occupations and careers within emerging industries statewide. From a Bureau of Labor Statistics’ October 2019 report, West Virginia had the lowest workforce participation rate (all individuals, with and without disabilities) among all the states and the District of Columbia, with 55.3% compared to the national average of 63.3%. Individuals with barriers to employment, including those with disabilities, have lower employment/workforce participation rates. Labor force participation among persons with disabilities in West Virginia has been steadily declining in recent years. Since 2010, labor force participation among these individuals is estimated to have fallen from 31.7% (63,609) to 26.1% (49,199) in 2018. As of 2018, labor force participation for persons with disabilities in West Virginia was almost 11 percentage points below the national rate of 37.0%. West Virginia has a high poverty rate, with 17.8% of residents below the poverty level compared to 11.8% nationally (https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/IPE120218). The poverty rate is especially high for individuals with disabilities, with estimates that 34.5% of West Virginians with disabilities above the age of 18 (64,907 of 187,988) were living in poverty in 2017, the
highest rate in the nation, excluding Puerto Rico. Even among those employed, there are still significant numbers of West Virginians who earn below the poverty line.

Workforce WV expects the largest numeric change in employment growth (from 2016 to 2026) to occur in the industries of Health Care and Social Assistance (+19,026; 14.94%), Ambulatory Health Care Services (+9,675; 23.90%), Educational Services (+4,498; 7.52%), Government (+3,996; 5.40%), Construction (+3,701; 12.36%), and Social Assistance (+3,507; 19.67%).

Findings from the 2018 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) indicated the need to improve VR services in specific ways to warrant the creation of two additional DRS goals.

DRS Goal 4 – Improve access and availability of transportation options for DRS consumers who need transportation assistance to achieve or maintain competitive, integrated employment. FY 2018 CSNA findings from field staff surveys indicate a need for continued efforts to increase the availability of transportation throughout the state. Based on responses by stakeholders across the state, including observations and recommendations by the WV State Rehabilitation Council, transportation continues to be an issue and a perceived barrier to employment/training. DRS continues to focus on individualized transportation solutions (ITS) to help alleviate the transportation gap while taking into account the wide array of circumstances that West Virginians with disabilities experience. DRS counselors also encourage consumers’ family members to assist with reimbursable transportation. DRS will continue to make sure that consumers are aware of these options and continue to identify targeted solutions to the varied transportation issues for West Virginians with disabilities, focusing specifically on ITS.

DRS Goal 5 – Continue to build collaborative relationships with community providers [including community rehabilitation programs (CRPs), Independent Living, and other community providers] to enhance the availability of services to DRS consumers. VR consumers require specialized services provided by CRPs statewide to achieve an integrated, competitive employment outcome. Responses from the CSNA indicate there still is a need for DRS to continue to improve collaborative relationships with all community providers. Findings from the CSNA point to a need to focus efforts on specific geographic areas within the state where miscommunication between community providers and DRS counselors continues.

3. ENSURE THAT THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES ARE BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

A. THE MOST RECENT COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT, INCLUDING ANY UPDATES;

For the development of agency goals and priorities, DRS followed WIOA guidance in the development of the Unified State Plan. DRS worked closely with the WIOA core partners including WorkForce WV and WV Adult Education. The DRS goals and priorities were developed to support the overall state goals and priorities in achieving a well-integrated workforce development system that provided customer-focused services to job seekers in West Virginia.

The West Virginia SRC maintained involvement throughout the development and assessment of agency goals and priorities in a variety of ways and provided DRS with valued input and recommendations. DRS executive managers, representatives of SRC, the West Virginia SILC, and the CAP were invited to discuss DRS goals and priorities for carrying out the VR and supported employment programs. The Executive Directors of the SRC and SILC attend monthly DRS EMG meetings to discuss various ongoing issues affecting the agency and are privy to the current goals, objectives, and strategies pertaining to specific agency issues. Additional involvement occurs through DRS staff members attending SRC and SILC meetings to share information.
regarding agency performance, needs assessment, and State Plan activities. The SRC was afforded electronic access to the PY 2020 State Plan for review. Additionally, the SRC formed a subcommittee on needs assessment and the State Plan. The SRC members discuss DRS activities at regularly scheduled meetings and provide input to DRS.

Findings from the 2018 CSNA indicated the need to improve VR services in specific ways to warrant the creation of two additional DRS goals.

DRS Goal 4 – Improve access and availability of transportation options for DRS consumers who need transportation assistance to achieve or maintain competitive, integrated employment. FY 2018 CSNA findings from field staff surveys indicate a need for continued efforts to increase the availability of transportation throughout the state. Based on responses by stakeholders across the state, including observations and recommendations by the WV State Rehabilitation Council, transportation continues to be an issue and a perceived barrier to employment/training. DRS continues to focus on ITS to help alleviate the transportation gap while taking into account the wide array of circumstances that West Virginians with disabilities experience. DRS counselors also encourage consumers’ family members to assist with reimbursable transportation. DRS will continue to make sure that consumers are aware of these options and continue to identify targeted solutions to the varied transportation issues for West Virginians with disabilities, focusing specifically on ITS.

DRS Goal 5 – Continue to build collaborative relationships with community providers (including CRPs, Independent Living, and other community providers) to enhance the availability of services to DRS consumers. VR consumers require specialized services provided by CRPs statewide to achieve an integrated, competitive employment outcome. Responses from the CSNA indicate there still is a need for DRS to continue to improve collaborative relationships with all community providers. Findings from the CSNA point to a need to focus efforts on specific geographic areas within the state where miscommunication between community providers and DRS counselors continues.

B. THE STATE’S PERFORMANCE UNDER THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES OF SECTION 116 OF WIOA; AND

DRS acknowledges the legal requirement to report on the performance accountability indicators under Section 116 of WIOA. However, data collection on the performance accountability indicators is only beginning, making a full report of DRS performance impossible at this time. As DRS moves forward in its task to place individuals with disabilities into competitive, integrated employment in PY 2020, it will continue to collect and monitor participant data in order to generate reports on:

- The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;
- The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program;
- The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;
- The percentage of program participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within 1 year after exit from the program;
The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment; and

The indicators of effectiveness in serving employers.

For PY 2018, DRS achieved the following performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA:

- The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program – 61.8%
- The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program – $4,595.70
- The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment – 56.8%

C. OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON THE OPERATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VR PROGRAM, INCLUDING ANY REPORTS RECEIVED FROM THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL AND FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MONITORING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED UNDER SECTION 107.

For the development of agency goals and priorities, DRS followed WIOA guidance in the development of the Unified State Plan. DRS worked closely with the WIOA core partners including WorkForce WV and the WV Adult Education. The DRS goals and priorities were developed to support the overall state goals and priorities in achieving a well-integrated workforce development system that provided customer-focused services to job seekers in West Virginia.

The West Virginia SRC maintained involvement throughout the development and assessment of agency goals and priorities in a variety of ways and provided DRS with valued input and recommendations. DRS executive managers, representatives of SRC, the West Virginia SILC, and the CAP were invited to discuss DRS goals and priorities for carrying out the VR and supported employment programs. The Executive Directors of the SRC and SILC attend monthly DRS EMG meetings to discuss various ongoing issues affecting the agency and are privy to the current goals, objectives, and strategies pertaining to specific agency issues. Additional involvement occurs through DRS staff members attending SRC and SILC meetings to share information regarding agency performance, needs assessment, and State Plan activities. The SRC was afforded electronic access to the PY 2020 State Plan for review. Additionally, the SRC formed a subcommittee on needs assessment and the State Plan. The SRC members discuss DRS activities at regularly scheduled meetings and provide input to DRS.

M. ORDER OF SELECTION

Describe:

1. WHETHER THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL IMPLEMENT AND ORDER OF SELECTION. IF SO, DESCRIBE:

A. THE ORDER TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES
The Division's Director will determine whether resources will be available to provide vocational rehabilitation services to all eligible individuals throughout the program year. If not, consistent with state and federal laws and regulations, the Director will establish restrictions regarding priority categories for selecting the order in which otherwise eligible individuals may be served. Only the Director may establish an order of selection.

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) will be operating under an order of selection (OS) with all OS categories open, as long as sufficient fiscal and personnel resources remain available to provide services to all eligible consumers.

Description of Priority categories

Priority Categories

Following are the order of selection categories currently applicable to the Division's vocational rehabilitation program:

Category 1: Eligible applicants with the most significant disabilities.

Category 2: Eligible applicants with significant disabilities.

Category 3: Eligible applicants with non–significant disabilities.

The Counselor will determine the significance of an individual's disability after conducting a diagnostic study that allows for assessing the permanency of the disability, the number of functional capacities limited by the disability, the number of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services needed, and the time in service required to complete those services. These criteria are used when determining whether the individual's disability is non–significant, significant, or most significant.

Definitions

Individual with a Most Significant Disability (MSD).

An individual who:

1. Has a permanent physical or mental impairment which seriously limits three or more functional capacities (mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerances, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome; and

2. Will require multiple vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time.

Alternatively, any individual who will be receiving services under an individualized supported employment plan for employment will be determined to be MSD.

Individual with Significant Disability (SD).

An individual who:

1. Has a permanent physical or mental impairment which seriously limits one or more functional capacities (mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerances, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome; and

2. Will require multiple vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time.

Individual with Non–Significant Disability.

An individual with a non-significant disability is an individual who:

1. Has a permanent disability that results in a substantial impediment to employment; and
2. Will not require multiple vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time.

Time in Service

For the purpose of determining significance of disability, “time in service” is considered to begin upon implementation of the Individualized Plan for Employment and end upon entering Status 22 (in employment).

Automatic Classification as an Individual with Significant Disability

An individual who is a Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiary or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipient will be coded automatically as SD. However, if the individual meets MSD criteria, that designation will apply.

Recertification

An individual may be recertified from SD to MSD if all MSD criteria are met. In such instances, the Counselor will note appropriate circumstances in the Action Statement/Details section of the consumer’s case record.

DRS Responsibilities when Implementing an Order of Selection

An OS has no impact on the DRS obligation for case finding and referrals. DRS has a continuing responsibility to make the public and referral sources aware of the services it has to offer individuals with disabilities, especially those with the most significant disabilities. Furthermore, DRS shall ensure its funding arrangements for providing services, including third party arrangements and establishment projects, are consistent with the OS. Any funding arrangements that are inconsistent with the OS will be renegotiated.

Priority of categories to receive VR services under the order OS Administration Process

All OS Categories will be open during Federal Fiscal Year 2021, as long as sufficient fiscal and personnel resources remain available to provide VR services to all eligible applicants with most significant, significant, and non-significant disabilities.

Services necessary for determination of eligibility and assessment of rehabilitation needs are provided to all DRS applicants. Any individual notified by the Counselor of classification as a member of an open priority category shall continue to receive services should that category later be closed.

Plan for Implementing the Order of Selection

All OS Categories will be open during Federal Fiscal Year 2021, as long as sufficient fiscal and personnel resources remain available to provide VR services to all eligible applicants with most significant, significant, and non-significant disabilities.

DRS will strictly adhere to federal regulations in administering its OS. DRS will continue to: (1) implement the order on a statewide basis; (2) notify all eligible persons of their assignment to a particular priority category and their right to appeal this assignment; (3) assure continuity of services to all persons who were receiving services under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) prior to the effective date of the closure order; and (4) assure that funding arrangements are consistent with the OS [34 CFR 361.36(e)].

When the order of selection is implemented, DRS will continue to ensure that an eligible individual who is not assigned to an open OS category has access to services provided under the
information and referral system [Section 101(a)(5)(D) of the Act]. Information and referral services include: (1) providing VR information and guidance to assist the individual to achieve employment and (2) appropriately referring the individual to other federal and state programs, including other statewide workforce development programs, that are best suited to meet the individual’s specific employment needs [Section 101(a)(20)(A) of the Act].

When making a referral, DRS will provide the individual with:

- a notice of the referral;
- information about a specific point of contact within the program to which the individual is being referred; and
- information and advice about the most suitable service for assisting the individual to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment [Section 101(a)(20)(B)(ii) of the Act and 34 CFR 361.37(b)(2)].

DRS will continue to maintain the individual’s service record to include documentation on the nature and scope of the information and referral services it provides to the individual and documentation on the referral itself [34 CFR 361.47(a)(13)].

DRS will open and close priority categories as needed, so long as the order of the categories is maintained and continuity of services to all individuals selected for services is assured.

DRS will use the individual’s date of application to rank individuals within a priority category. This equitable and reasonable factor provides a method of selecting individuals from a waiting list when DRS has enough resources to serve some, but not all, individuals in that OS priority category.

B. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER

All OS Categories will be open during Federal Fiscal Year 2021, as long as sufficient fiscal and personnel resources remain available to provide VR services to all eligible applicants with most significant, significant, and non-significant disabilities. However, while DRS currently has the capacity to serve all eligible individuals with disabilities who apply for services, DRS will continue to implement an OS due to an expected influx of applicants and potentially eligible students with disabilities after the COVID-19 pandemic has subsided. This potential inundation of applicants and students may overwhelm the agency’s human resource capacity to serve all eligible individuals who apply for services. At that time, it would necessitate the need to close one or more OS Categories to ensure priority of services to individuals with the most significant disabilities. DRS will continue to monitor caseload size, vacancies, and other related measures to ensure proactive measures are taken, if needed.

In recent years, DRS has experienced difficulties in hiring new vocational rehabilitation counselors in specific geographical areas, as well as barriers resulting from the State’s hiring policies and procedures (e.g., non-competitive salary, processing times, etc.). DRS often has competition from bordering states, county school boards, and private employers that offer higher salaries to potential DRS employees. In the meantime, the agency continues to seek additional vocational rehabilitation counselors and works with the state hiring agency to increase the number of applicants to DRS job postings.

C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS
In FY 2021, the agency plans to serve 4,816 individuals with an expected outcome goal of 1,119 rehabilitants within a service time frame of 12 and 28 months and at a cost of $9.1 million for all priority categories.

D. TIME WITHIN WHICH THESE GOALS MAY BE ACHIEVED FOR INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY WITHIN THE ORDER; AND

In FY 2021, it is projected that:

- 2,414 individuals in OS Category 1 will be served. Approximately 434 individuals in this OS Category will exit with employment after receiving services. Approximately 651 individuals in this OS Category will exit without employment after receiving services. The time within which the goal of employment is to be achieved for individuals in this OS Category is estimated to be 28 months. The cost of services for all individuals in this OS Category is estimated to be $4,103,800 during FY 2021.

- 1,667 individuals in OS Category 2 will be served. Approximately 480 individuals in this OS Category will exit with employment after receiving services. Approximately 384 individuals in this OS Category will exit without employment after receiving services. The time within which the goal of employment is to be achieved for individuals in this OS Category is estimated to be 26 months. The cost of services for all individuals in this OS Category is estimated to be $2,833,900 during FY 2021.

- 735 individuals in OS Category 3 will be served. Approximately 205 individuals in this OS Category will exit with employment after receiving services. Approximately 105 individuals in this OS Category will exit without employment after receiving services. The time within which the goal of employment is to be achieved for individuals in this OS Category is estimated to be 14 months. The cost of services for all individuals in this OS Category is estimated to be $2,205,000 during FY 2021.

E. HOW INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

All OS Categories will be open during Federal Fiscal Year 2021, as long as sufficient fiscal and personnel resources remain available to provide VR services to all eligible applicants with most significant, significant, and non-significant disabilities.

DRS’ Client Services Manual clearly outlines OS Categories to ensure priority services for persons with MSD throughout the state. Priority is given to individuals with the most significant disabilities (OS 1), then to individuals with significant disabilities (OS 2), then to individuals with non-significant disabilities (OS 3). Furthermore, DRS has budgeted sufficient resources to serve all consumers with disabilities in all open OS Categories with priority given to persons with MSD. DRS utilizes data and caseload management reports to monitor and ensure services to OS Category 1, persons with MSD, are maintained through the FY.

DRS will open or close OS Categories as needed; these actions will be included in an amendment to the State Plan. DRS will assess the agency’s fiscal and personnel resources and ability to maintain continuous VR services prior to opening or closing each OS Category. DRS will ensure that individuals with MSD are being served, with no individuals with MSD on the waitlist prior to opening the next OS Category.

When a closed category is reopened for services, individuals in that category will be notified in writing by DRS that they can now receive services. DRS will ensure all individuals selected for services will continue to receive those services without interruption.
2. IF THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS, REGARDLESS OF ANY ESTABLISHED ORDER OF SELECTION, WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT

DRS has not elected to serve eligible individuals regardless of any established order of selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment.

N. GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS

1. SPECIFY THE STATE’S GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The methodology of the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) for distribution of Title VI–B funds is based exclusively on a fee–for–service authorization process with approved vendors of supported employment (SE) services. DRS uses no Title VI–B funds for administrative costs. Utilizing the DRS fee schedule for SE services, rehabilitation counselors utilize Title VI–B and Title I funds to provide needed SE services for eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities.

DRS established a statewide fee–for–service funding approach for job development services for SE–eligible individuals. This structure provides vendors an effective and efficient way of meeting the costs of this critical element of the job placement process. The process provides reimbursement for employment outcomes and brings increased energy and vendor resources to support job development activities.

In Program Year 2019, DRS authorized the full $300,000.00 of its Title VI–B funds to serve individuals with the most significant disabilities in its SE program through community rehabilitation program (CRP) services. When Title VI–B funds ($300,000 total per year with $150,000 available only for youth with disabilities) are exhausted, DRS defrays supported employment program service costs with Title I funds for individuals who require the services or who qualify and have not yet been served under the supported employment program. In Program Year 2018, DRS authorized $173,749 in SE services for 74 adults with disabilities and $174,258 in SE services for 58 youth with disabilities.

DRS plans to continue using three prevalent models of supported employment services: individual placement, mobile work crews, and enclaves. Additionally, DRS will encourage and support development of affirmative industries that integrate workers with disabilities and workers without disabilities throughout the CRP network. DRS considers each placement on an individualized, case-by-case basis to ensure the placement setting meets the definition of an integrated employment setting. For consumers with the most significant disabilities in supported employment, DRS strives for each consumer to achieve a competitive, integrated employment outcome.

DRS policies defining competitive employment settings promote linking CRPs with federal and state work contracts that may exist within the community. Such links expand job opportunities for individuals receiving SE, particularly those who reside in rural locations. This approach also directs Title VI–B and Title I funds into placement–related services and activities.

As appropriate, DRS will use the State funds allocated ($78,000) for ESES to expand employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities (MSD). DRS will continue to educate legislature regarding ESES for youth with MSD to ensure continued funding for ESES.
2. DESCRIBE THE ACTIVITIES TO BE CONDUCTED, WITH FUNDS RESERVED PURSUANT TO SECTION 603(D), FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING:

A. THE PROVISION OF EXTENDED SERVICES FOR A PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED 4 YEARS; AND

DRS continues to strongly promote and support training and support services for youth with disabilities, especially those with the most significant disabilities. DRS uses its fiscal and case management systems to continuously monitor resources (especially reserved funds to be used with youth with the most significant disabilities) being used for Extended Supported Employment Services (e.g., job coaching for supported employment).

B. HOW THE STATE WILL LEVERAGE OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDS TO INCREASE RESOURCES FOR EXTENDED SERVICES AND EXPANDED SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.

Through a combined effort with other disability organizations, $78,000 was appropriated by the West Virginia Legislature for supported employment follow-along services (extended supported employment services; ESES). DRS serves as the fiscal agent for these funds. DRS has created program guidelines governing the use of state-appropriated funds for extended services under the supported employment program created by state statute in 1993. The sole use of the state funds attached to this program is to provide extended services for individuals not eligible from any other funding source. All providers of supported employment services may access these funds for individuals who are eligible under the guidelines. During Program Year 2018, DRS sponsored 41 individuals in the extended supported employment program so they could maintain and retain their jobs within the community. This figure represents the cooperative efforts of 10 CRPs.

As appropriate, DRS will use the State funds allocated ($78,000) for ESES to expand employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities (MSD). DRS will continue to educate legislature regarding ESES for youth with MSD to ensure continued funding for ESES.

O. STATE’S STRATEGIES

Describe the required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the VR and the Supported Employment programs (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act and section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)):

1. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) Goal 1 – Provide integrated vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to West Virginians with disabilities to promote attainment of a high school education or greater, in order to increase their ability to move through meaningful career pathways.

DRS will continue to monitor the educational achievement of all of its consumers, especially those in the transition youth (TY) population. Youth have become a primary focus in vocational rehabilitation and DRS will work closely and diligently with State and Local Education Agencies to ensure that its TY population receives the services that it needs, including pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) for students with disabilities. Each high school in WV has a DRS counselor assigned to it to guarantee the service provision of students with disabilities. A
greater emphasis is now being placed for counselors to do outreach with these students and their parents/guardians during their freshman and sophomore years (rather than their junior year, as was formerly practiced) in order to maximize the counseling opportunities.

DRS counselors will continue to take part in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) development of students with disabilities when they are invited to do so. Counselors will also stay in contact with educators to discuss and resolve educational difficulties as they arise. DRS will also work closely with WV Adult Education, referring consumers as needed, to ensure that individuals with disabilities have an adequate opportunity to obtain a completed high school level education.

DRS Goal 2 – Provide Pre-ETS to students with disabilities.

The 2018 comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA) indicated that job exploration counseling was the most frequently reported pre-employment transition service need. In accordance with this, and per the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), DRS counselors in high schools will provide Pre-ETS to students with disabilities, especially job exploration counseling, in order to give students with disabilities and their parents/guardians a better understanding of labor market conditions, current and emerging career opportunities, and the necessary education and training requirements related to those opportunities.

DRS will continue to work closely with the WV Office of Special Education to ensure that special education teachers, parents, and students with disabilities are aware of the availability of Pre-ETS. This work will continue through joint-training conferences with special education staff from across the state. Additional, intensive training on the Pathways to the Future Pre-ETS website will also continue to be provided to special education teachers in upcoming years. As part of its outreach campaign, DRS will continue to place large banners in high schools and distribute Pre-ETS materials to students with disabilities across the state. Additional outreach using large posters will target eighth grade, career and technical education, and postsecondary students at locations across the state.

In addition to ongoing program activities, DRS will continue to sponsor the Career Exploration Opportunity (CEO) Summits, four-day summer workshops students with disabilities statewide. The CEO Summits will be held in multiple locations across the state to ensure statewide coverage. DRS will utilize the assistance of Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) to conduct the Summit activities. Class size for each of the Summits will be approximately 20 students. Students will earn a stipend for the time that they attend. DRS will also request WorkForce WV and WV Adult Education to participate in the Summits to provide additional information to the students.

Topics to be covered:
- Career planning
- Career preparation
- SSI/SSDI Information
- Understanding the importance of necessary personal documents (e.g., social security card, driver’s license, birth certificate, pay stubs).
- Communication
- Conflict Management
- Employer Expectations
- Attendance and Punctuality
- Timeliness of task completion
- Be able to work without supervision
- Positive work ethic
- Manage multiple tasks
- High-growth Jobs
- Personal Brand
- Job Hunting Tools – resumes, cover letters, interviews, and digital profiles

DRS Goal 3 – Provide integrated vocational rehabilitation services to West Virginians with disabilities, committing to the use of the Employment First framework, to enable them to obtain competitive employment, especially in occupations and careers within emerging industries statewide.

Collaboration with WorkForce WV

DRS will maintain regular communication with WorkForce WV to stay abreast of trends in employment, including changes in education and training requirements. This will be accomplished through regular meetings of the workforce development system (WDS), written communications, teleconferences, and other media, as appropriate. DRS, particularly through its employment specialists, will also stay informed of emerging careers and occupations via WorkForce WV’s Labor Market Information website. DRS employment specialists continuously collect employment information from their business contacts. This information, including job orders for open positions, is immediately input into the WorkForce WV’s online Mid Atlantic Career Consortium (MACC) system and shared within the WDS.

DRS will continue to serve on Business Service Teams (BSTs) with WorkForce WV, Adult Education, local workforce development boards, and other related entities. Through training and standardizing informational materials, when possible, these teams provide a full range of WDS information when making visits to employers. This will allow the WDS to maximize the impact of employer visits and ensure that businesses are aware of all resources available through the WDS.

Use of DRS Employment Specialists

DRS will continue to use its employment specialists to gather information regarding employers at the local level, including information regarding job placements for individuals with disabilities and regarding current and expected employer needs.

DRS has an in-house Employer Services Section that specializes in providing employers with disability-related information, services, and pre-screened job seekers. The DRS Employer Services Section has 9 employment specialists that cover all 55 counties in West Virginia. DRS’ team of employment specialists provide business owners and employers with critical business options and assistance in staffing, employee retention strategies, education on disability-related issues, job accommodations, and information about financial incentives for employers who hire individuals with disabilities.
Direct contact with employers is a key strategy to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities for VR consumers, including students with disabilities. Employment specialists therefore contact employers directly to identify current and future job openings. To facilitate this, DRS utilizes labor market information provided by WorkForce WV to identify the top employers in each county; contact is always made with the top ten employers in each county. When meeting with employers, employment specialists provide valuable information, including the DRS Employer Resource Guide and employment-related WorkForce WV information. The DRS Employer Resource Guide provides the following information:

- Staffing services
- Training programs and incentives for hiring people with disabilities
- Financial incentives
- Accessibility assessments
- Accommodating employees with disabilities
- Basic disability etiquette
- Attitudinal barriers
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Locating a DRS office
- Where to find additional resources

The Employer Services Section maintains a database of each DRS–employer interaction with VR employment specialists. The information collected includes the business name, contact person, and current job openings by occupation. If needed, a referral to the DRS Rehabilitation Technology Unit is made to address workplace accommodations. This list is distributed to field staff to potentially match a job–ready VR consumer with a current job opening. Through positive working relationships, 47 employers, including some of the largest in the state, now send job postings directly to DRS’ Employer Services Section.

The Employer Services Section also works with employers to better serve transitioning youth with disabilities, including providing career exploration opportunities for students with disabilities. In 2015, DRS debuted the Positive Outcomes within Education and Rehabilitation (POWER) program. POWER is a job shadowing program that offers transitioning students, who may be having a difficult time choosing a career path, the opportunity to experience an occupation by spending time with a professional working in the students’ vocational goal/career field of interest. The POWER program allows the student the opportunity to experience an occupation prior to committing to training. It guides the student to take a serious, realistic look at the occupation, allowing the student to make a more informed choice. As of November 2019, 85 employers have agreed to host job shadowing experiences with DRS’ POWER program.

Assistive Technology

DRS will continue to provide rehabilitation technology solutions to individuals with disabilities as needed so that those individuals can become employed or maintain employment. DRS has developed working relationships and agreements for the coordination of activities with the West Virginia Assistive Technology System (WVATS) of the West Virginia University Center for Excellence in Disabilities. The WVATS’ role is to provide access to and help with the acquisition.
of assistive technology (AT) devices and services for individuals with disabilities. WVATS also provides device demonstrations, device loans, training, AT information, and technical assistance.

DRS has a rehabilitation technology unit which provides AT consultations and solutions to eligible VR consumers with AT needs statewide. With the coordination of services between DRS and WVATS, assurances are made that needed AT solutions can be provided to individuals with disabilities.

DRS Goal 4 – Improve access and availability of transportation options for DRS consumers who need transportation assistance to achieve or maintain competitive, integrated employment.

Transportation is an ongoing issue for West Virginians with disabilities, due to the rural nature of the state. A large proportion of the State’s inhabitants live far away from jobs, agency offices, and other resources. DRS continues its commitment to reduce transportation barriers for consumers with disabilities and focuses on individual transportation solutions (ITS) to satisfy immediate transportation needs. To help reduce these barriers, DRS counselors will encourage planning for transportation needs early in the development of a consumer’s rehabilitation program. At application, counselors will identify transportation issues and focus on finding solutions to include in the consumer’s Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). This will ensure that the ability of consumers to reach their vocational goal is not impeded by preventable transportation barriers. Transportation issues also will be addressed by the standard instrument prescribed for routine use by supervisors and quality assurance staff in case reviews. Beyond ITS, DRS will continue to assign responsibility to a staff member in each branch office to maintain a list and working knowledge of local transportation options and will continue to participate in local and state initiatives to coordinate and expand transportation resources.

DRS Goal 5 – Continue to build collaborative relationships with community providers (including CRPs, Independent Living, and other community providers) to enhance the availability of services to DRS consumers. A large amount of the success that DRS has in its mission to enable and empower individuals with disabilities to work and to live independently hinges on its relationships with CRPs. In general, DRS has good working relationships with the various CRPs throughout the State. However, CSNA results suggest that improvements can be made, particularly in specific geographic areas. To facilitate this improvement, DRS has established a number of strategies to put into action:

- Continue to educate field staff, especially the new counselors, about CRPs and their services. Use of the new ‘CRP Locator’ tool (a web-based, user-friendly vendor guide) and counselor CRP site visits will increase awareness of available service options, which will help to maintain collaborative relationships with CRPs and enhance the availability of services to DRS consumers.

- Continue to maintain regular communications between DRS and community providers in each district and at the state level. Each DRS district will continue to host joint meetings with DRS district and branch office staff and CRPs in those districts to provide opportunities for CRP representatives and DRS personnel to discuss local service needs of DRS consumers. Subsequent to each meeting, the local DRS office will be required to send a brief report to the CRP Program Manager. This process will allow all parties involved in the expansion of community-based services to be kept informed of progress and issues. The Division will continue to examine the information and recommendations collected from various meetings between CRP and DRS staff members.
Progress on communication will continue to be made as the Division acquires more understanding of the issues and barriers facing the CRP and DRS staff members in their service provision to persons with significant disabilities in WV. Ongoing communication activities with CRPs also will include:

- An e-mail list–serv with all current vendors that will be updated periodically and utilized to send out training opportunities, policy changes, and general updates when needed.

- DRS counselors in each district will continue to be assigned as liaisons to each CRP and will continue to be required to complete a monthly update regarding the CRP. They will collect this information by visits and/or phone calls. Having CRP liaisons that regularly discuss service–related issues specific to the local service area(s) will aid in maintaining collaborative working relationships and enhancing the availability of services to consumers.

- Two rehabilitation specialists covering all districts in the state will provide technical assistance to CRPs and DRS staff. They will make site visits to CRP and DRS district and branch offices. During these visits, they will provide technical assistance and schedule training and other meetings that need to occur. They will serve as a communication link when issues arise and make themselves available to attend the communication meetings and transition team meetings.

- Conduct site visits to ensure that community providers continue to meet DRS standards and requirements.

- Increase the service provision of acknowledged vendors and work with community providers to expand their service areas to enhance the availability of community services within needed areas.

- Continue to conduct Transition Team meetings at the district level with DRS, WV Department of Education, and CRP staff members. The meetings will be held to promote interagency collaboration by allowing staff from each agency/CRP to become familiar with the different eligibility requirements and service definitions across agencies.

- Continue to conduct cross training and face–to–face meetings with community partners at the local level.

- Continue to assign liaison responsibilities to staff members and provide them guidance about the purpose of DRS participation in community events.

- Monitor the DRS counselors/supervisors/managers’ perception of the quality of CRP services through a survey instrument.

- Monitor and assess the impact of the Quality Assurance unit on the counselor’s case management practices by using data generated from the quality assurance specialists’ review of cases.

2. HOW A BROAD RANGE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES AND DEVICES WILL BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AT EACH STAGE OF THE REHABILITATION PROCESS AND ON A STATEWIDE BASIS

DRS will continue to provide rehabilitation technology solutions to individuals with disabilities as needed so that those individuals can become employed or maintain employment. DRS has developed working relationships and agreements for the coordination of activities with the WVATS of the West Virginia University Center for Excellence in Disabilities. The WVATS’ role is to provide access to and help with the acquisition of AT devices and services for individuals
with disabilities. WVATS also provides device demonstrations, device loans, training, AT information, and technical assistance.

DRS has a rehabilitation technology unit which provides AT consultations and solutions to eligible VR consumers with AT needs statewide. With the coordination of services between DRS and WVATS, assurances are made that needed AT solutions can be provided to individuals with disabilities.

3. THE OUTREACH PROCEDURES THAT WILL BE USED TO IDENTIFY AND SERVE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM

DRS has approximately 26 Branch office locations, providing statewide coverage. These offices are able to serve individuals with disabilities, including those individuals from minority backgrounds, in all areas of the state. Many cities within WV which have a relatively high proportion of minorities in the population (e.g., Charleston, Huntington, and Beckley) have a DRS branch office located within.

Additionally, DRS will continue to utilize tools and techniques which have allowed the agency to have success in its outreach to minority populations, such as:

- DRS will continue to use geographic information systems (GIS), as appropriate, to pinpoint geographic locations with potentially underserved minority populations in the State. This will allow for more effective and efficient outreach to those populations.

- DRS will continue to depend on local outreach efforts by branch office field staff to bring individuals with disabilities, including those individuals from minority backgrounds, into the VR system.

4. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND VR SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE COORDINATION OF SERVICES DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF SUCH STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY LIFE (INCLUDING THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES)

DRS Goal 1 – Provide integrated vocational rehabilitation services to West Virginians with disabilities to promote attainment of a high school education or greater, in order to increase their ability to move through meaningful career pathways.

DRS will continue to monitor the educational achievement of all of its consumers, especially those in the TY population. Youth have become a primary focus in vocational rehabilitation and DRS will work closely and diligently with State and Local Education Agencies to ensure that its TY population receives the services that it needs, including Pre-ETS for students with disabilities. Each high school in WV has a DRS counselor assigned to it to guarantee the service provision of students with disabilities. A greater emphasis is now being placed for counselors to do outreach with these students and their parents/guardians during their freshman and sophomore years (rather than their junior year, as was formerly practiced) in order to maximize the counseling opportunities.

DRS counselors will continue to take part in the IEP development of students with disabilities when they are invited to do so. Counselors will also stay in contact with educators to discuss and resolve educational difficulties as they arise. DRS will also work closely with WV Adult
Education, referring consumers as needed, to ensure that individuals with disabilities have an adequate opportunity to obtain a completed high school level education.

DRS Goal 2 – Provide Pre-ETS to students with disabilities.

The 2018 CSNA indicated that job exploration counseling was the most frequently reported Pre-ETS need. In accordance with this, and per the requirements of WIOA, DRS counselors in high schools will provide Pre-ETS to students with disabilities, especially job exploration counseling, in order to give students with disabilities and their parents/guardians a better understanding of labor market conditions, current and emerging career opportunities, and the necessary education and training requirements related to those opportunities.

DRS will continue to work closely with the WV Office of Special Education to ensure that special education teachers, parents, and students with disabilities are aware of the availability of Pre-ETS. This work will continue through joint-training conferences with special education staff from across the state. Additional, intensive training on the Pathways to the Future Pre-ETS website will also continue to be provided to special education teachers in upcoming years. As part of its outreach campaign, DRS will continue to place large banners in high schools and distribute Pre-ETS materials to students with disabilities across the state.

In addition to ongoing program activities, DRS will continue to sponsor the CEO Summits, four-day summer workshops students with disabilities statewide. The CEO Summits will be held in multiple locations across the state to ensure statewide coverage. DRS will utilize the assistance of CRPs to conduct the Summit activities. Class size for each of the Summits will be approximately 20 students. Students will earn a stipend for the time that they attend. DRS will also request WorkForce WV and WV Adult Education to participate in the Summits to provide additional information to the students.

Topics to be covered:
- Career planning
- Career preparation
- SSI/SSDI Information
- Understanding the importance of necessary personal documents (e.g., social security card, driver’s license, birth certificate, pay stubs).
- Communication
- Conflict Management
- Employer Expectations
- Attendance and Punctuality
- Timeliness of task completion
- Be able to work without supervision
- Positive work ethic
- Manage multiple tasks
- High-growth Jobs
- Personal Brand
5. IF APPLICABLE, PLANS FOR ESTABLISHING, DEVELOPING, OR IMPROVING COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE

As described in Description J, DRS' direct client services units located at DRS' Nitro location will continue to be critical for DRS to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities identified under the unserved and underserved portion of this assessment, including individuals with disabilities who live in the rural part of the State, blind and visually impaired individuals, and the deaf and hard of hearing. The DRS Environmental Modifications Unit provides consumer services to assure they have the highest level of independence in and around their home and work by providing evaluations, technical assistance, and modifications. The continual maintenance and improvement of direct client services units located at DRS’ Nitro location will be necessary to maintain its operation in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible.

A large amount of the success that DRS has in its mission to enable and empower individuals with disabilities to work and to live independently hinges on its relationships with CRPs. In recent years, DRS has worked closely with CRPs across the state to increase the availability of Pre-ETS, including CEO summits. Because of the positive working relationship, DRS and CRPs were able to conduct CEO summits in 60 locations across the state. Improvements in efficiency of service delivery has also resulted in reduced costs for services while also expanding availability across the state.

In general, DRS has good working relationships with the various CRPs throughout the State. However, CSNA results suggest that improvements can be made, particularly in specific geographic areas. To facilitate this improvement, DRS has established a number of strategies to put into action:

- Continue to educate field staff, especially the new counselors, about CRPs and their services. Use of the new ‘CRP Locator’ tool (a web–based, user–friendly, vendor guide) and counselor CRP site visits will increase awareness of available service options, which will help to maintain collaborative relationships with CRPs and enhance the availability of services to DRS consumers.

- Continue to maintain regular communications between DRS and community providers in each district and at the state level. Each DRS district will continue to host joint meetings with DRS district and branch office staff and CRPs in those districts to provide opportunities for CRP representatives and DRS personnel to discuss local service needs of DRS consumers. Subsequent to each meeting, the local DRS office will be required to send a brief report to the CRP Program Manager. This process will allow all parties involved in the expansion of community-based services to be kept informed of progress and issues. The Division will continue to examine the information and recommendations collected from various meetings between CRP and DRS staff members.

Progress on communication will continue to be made as the Division acquires more understanding of the issues and barriers facing the CRP and DRS staff members in their service provision to persons with significant disabilities in WV. Ongoing communication activities with CRPs also will include:

- An e–mail list–serv with all current vendors that will be updated periodically and utilized to send out training opportunities, policy changes, and general updates when needed.
- DRS counselors in each district will continue to be assigned as liaisons to each CRP and will continue to be required to complete a monthly update regarding the CRP. They will collect this information by visits and/or phone calls. Having CRP liaisons that regularly discuss service-related issues specific to the local service area(s) will aid in maintaining collaborative working relationships and enhancing the availability of services to consumers.

- Two rehabilitation specialists covering all districts in the state will provide technical assistance to CRPs and DRS staff. They will make site visits to CRP and DRS district and branch offices. During these visits, they will provide technical assistance and schedule training and other meetings that need to occur. They will serve as a communication link when issues arise and make themselves available to attend the communication meetings and transition team meetings.

- Conduct site visits to ensure that community providers continue to meet DRS standards and requirements.

- Increase the service provision of acknowledged vendors and work with community providers to expand their service areas to enhance the availability of community services within needed areas.

- Continue to conduct Transition Team meetings at the district level with DRS, WV Department of Education, and CRP staff members. The meetings will be held to promote interagency collaboration by allowing staff from each agency/CRP to become familiar with the different eligibility requirements and service definitions across agencies.

- Continue to conduct cross training and face-to-face meetings with community partners at the local level.

- Continue to assign liaison responsibilities to staff members and provide them guidance about the purpose of DRS participation in community events.

- Monitor the DRS counselors/supervisors/managers’ perception of the quality of CRP services through a survey instrument.

- Monitor and assess the impact of the Quality Assurance unit on the counselor’s case management practices by using data generated from the quality assurance specialists’ review of cases.

6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

DRS acknowledges the legal requirement to report on the performance accountability indicators under Section 116 of WIOA. However, data collection on the performance accountability indicators is only beginning, making a full report of DRS performance impossible at this time. As DRS moves forward in its task to place individuals with disabilities into competitive, integrated employment in program year (PY) 2020, it will continue to collect and monitor participant data in order to generate reports on:

- The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;

- The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program;
– The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;

– The percentage of program participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within 1 year after exit from the program;

– The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment; and

– The indicators of effectiveness in serving employers.

For PY 2018, DRS achieved the following performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA:

– The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program – 61.8%

– The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program – $4,595.70

– The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment – 56.8%

7. STRATEGIES FOR ASSISTING OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Jobs and Hope West Virginia

Jobs & Hope West Virginia is the State’s comprehensive response to the substance use disorder crisis. Established by Governor Jim Justice and the West Virginia Legislature, this program offers support through a statewide collaboration of agencies that provide West Virginians in recovery the opportunity to obtain career training and to ultimately secure meaningful employment. DRS is a proud Jobs and Hope partner agency and will continue to provide referrals, information, and services, as appropriate. As of December 2019, in addition to DRS, other Jobs and Hope West Virginia partner agencies include the:

- WV Department of Education;
- WV Department of Health and Human Resources;
- WorkForce WV;
- WV Community and Technical College System;
- WV National Guard;
- WV Higher Education Policy Commission;
- WV Department of Transportation;
- WV Office of Technology;
- WV Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety;
- WV Division of Motor Vehicles;
DRS will maintain regular communication with WorkForce WV to stay abreast of trends in employment, including changes in education and training requirements. This will be accomplished through regular meetings of the WDS, written communications, teleconferences, and other media, as appropriate. DRS, particularly through its employment specialists, will also stay informed of emerging careers and occupations via WorkForce WV’s Labor Market Information website. DRS employment specialists continuously collect employment information from their business contacts. This information, including job orders for open positions, is immediately input into the WorkForce WV’s online MACC system and shared within the WDS.

DRS will continue to serve on BSTs with WorkForce WV, Adult Education, local workforce development boards, and other related entities. Through training and standardizing informational materials, when possible, these teams provide a full range of WDS information when making visits to employers. This will allow the WDS to maximize the impact of employer visits and ensure that businesses are aware of all resources available through the WDS.

Use of DRS Employment Specialists

DRS will continue to use its employment specialists to gather information regarding employers at the local level, including information regarding job placements for individuals with disabilities and regarding current and expected employer needs.

DRS has an in–house Employer Services Section that specializes in providing employers with disability–related information, services, and pre–screened job seekers. The DRS Employer Services Section has 9 employment specialists that cover all 55 counties in West Virginia. DRS’ team of employment specialists provide business owners and employers with critical business options and assistance in staffing, employee retention strategies, education on disability–related issues, job accommodations, and information about financial incentives for employers who hire individuals with disabilities.

Direct contact with employers is a key strategy to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities for VR consumers, including students with disabilities. Employment specialists therefore contact employers directly to identify current and future job openings. To facilitate this, DRS utilizes labor market information provided by WorkForce WV to identify the top employers in each county; contact is always made with the top ten employers in each county. When meeting with employers, employment specialists provide valuable information, including the DRS Employer Resource Guide. The resource guide provides the following information:

- Staffing services
- Training programs and incentives for hiring people with disabilities
- Financial incentives
- Accessibility assessments
- Accommodating employees with disabilities
- Basic disability etiquette
- Attitudinal barriers
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Locating a DRS office
- Where to find additional resources

The Employer Services Section maintains a database of each DRS–employer interaction with VR employment specialists. The information collected includes the business name, contact person, and current job openings by occupation. If needed, a referral to the DRS Rehabilitation Technology Unit is made to address workplace accommodations. This list is distributed to field staff to potentially match a job–ready VR consumer with a current job opening. Through positive working relationships, 47 employers, including some of the largest in the state, now send job postings directly to DRS’ Employer Services Section.

The Employer Services Section also works with employers to better serve transitioning youth with disabilities, including providing career exploration opportunities for students with disabilities. In 2015, DRS debuted the POWER program. POWER is a job shadowing program that offers transitioning students, who may be having a difficult time choosing a career path, the opportunity to experience an occupation by spending time with a professional working in the students’ vocational goal/career field of interest. The POWER program allows the student the opportunity to experience an occupation prior to committing to training. It guides the student to take a serious, realistic look at the occupation, allowing the student to make a more informed choice. As of November 2019, 85 employers have agreed to host job shadowing experiences with DRS’ POWER program.

8. HOW THE AGENCY’S STRATEGIES WILL BE USED TO:

A. ACHIEVE GOALS AND PRIORITIES BY THE STATE, CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT;

DRS Goal 1 – Provide integrated vocational rehabilitation services to West Virginians with disabilities to promote attainment of a high school education or greater, in order to increase their ability to move through meaningful career pathways.

DRS will continue to monitor the educational achievement of all of its consumers, especially those in the TY population. Youth have become a primary focus in vocational rehabilitation and DRS will work closely and diligently with State and Local Education Agencies to ensure that its TY population receives the services that it needs, including Pre-ETS for students with disabilities. Each high school in WV has a DRS counselor assigned to it to guarantee the service provision of students with disabilities. A greater emphasis is now being placed for counselors to do outreach with these students and their parents/guardians during their freshman and sophomore years (rather than their junior year, as was formerly practiced) in order to maximize the counseling opportunities.

DRS counselors will continue to take part in IEP development of students with disabilities when they are invited to do so. Counselors will also stay in contact with educators to discuss and resolve educational difficulties as they arise. DRS will also work closely with WV Adult Education, referring consumers as needed, to ensure that individuals with disabilities have an adequate opportunity to obtain a completed high school level education.
DRS Goal 2 – Provide Pre-ETS to students with disabilities.

The 2018 CSNA indicated that job exploration counseling was the most frequently reported Pre-ETS need. In accordance with this, and per the requirements of WIOA, DRS counselors in high schools will provide Pre-ETS to students with disabilities, especially job exploration counseling, in order to give students with disabilities and their parents/guardians a better understanding of labor market conditions, current and emerging career opportunities, and the necessary education and training requirements related to those opportunities.

DRS will continue to work closely with the WV Office of Special Education to ensure that special education teachers, parents, and students with disabilities are aware of the availability of Pre-ETS. This work will continue through joint-training conferences with special education staff from across the state. Additional, intensive training on the Pathways to the Future Pre-ETS website will also continue to be provided to special education teachers in upcoming years. As part of its outreach campaign, DRS will continue to place large banners in high schools and distribute Pre-ETS materials to students with disabilities across the state.

In addition to ongoing program activities, DRS will continue to sponsor the CEO Summits, four-day summer workshops students with disabilities statewide. The CEO Summits will be held in multiple locations across the state to ensure statewide coverage. DRS will utilize the assistance of CRPs to conduct the Summit activities. Class size for each of the Summits will be approximately 20 students. Students will earn a stipend for the time that they attend. DRS will also request WorkForce WV and WV Adult Education to participate in the Summits to provide additional information to the students.

Topics to be covered:

- Career planning
- Career preparation
- SSI/SSDI Information
- Understanding the importance of necessary personal documents (e.g., social security card, driver’s license, birth certificate, pay stubs).
- Communication
- Conflict Management
- Employer Expectations
- Attendance and Punctuality
- Timeliness of task completion
- Be able to work without supervision
- Positive work ethic
- Manage multiple tasks
- High-growth Jobs
- Personal Brand
- Job Hunting Tools – resumes, cover letters, interviews, and digital profiles
DRS Goal 3 – Provide integrated vocational rehabilitation services to West Virginians with disabilities, committing to the use of the Employment First framework, to enable them to obtain competitive, integrated employment, especially in occupations and careers within emerging industries statewide.

Collaboration with WorkForce WV

DRS will maintain regular communication with WorkForce WV to stay abreast of trends in employment, including changes in education and training requirements. This will be accomplished through regular meetings of the WDS, written communications, teleconferences, and other media, as appropriate. DRS, particularly through its employment specialists, will also stay informed of emerging careers and occupations via WorkForce WV’s Labor Market Information website. DRS employment specialists continuously collect employment information from their business contacts. This information, including job orders for open positions, is immediately input into the WorkForce WV’s online MACC system and shared within the WDS.

DRS will continue to serve on BSTs with WorkForce WV, Adult Education, local workforce development boards, and other related entities. Through training and standardizing informational materials, when possible, these teams provide a full range of WDS information when making visits to employers. This will allow the WDS to maximize the impact of employer visits and ensure that businesses are aware of all resources available through the WDS.

Use of DRS Employment Specialists

DRS will continue to use its employment specialists to gather information regarding employers at the local level, including information regarding job placements for individuals with disabilities and regarding current and expected employer needs.

DRS has an in–house Employer Services Section that specializes in providing employers with disability–related information, services, and pre–screened job seekers. The DRS Employer Services Section has 9 employment specialists that cover all 55 counties in West Virginia. DRS’ team of employment specialists provide business owners and employers with critical business options and assistance in staffing, employee retention strategies, education on disability–related issues, job accommodations, and information about financial incentives for employers who hire individuals with disabilities.

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- Staffing services
- Training programs and incentives for hiring people with disabilities
- Financial incentives
- Accessibility assessments
- Accommodating employees with disabilities
The Employer Services Section maintains a database of each DRS–employer interaction with VR employment specialists. The information collected includes the business name, contact person, and current job openings by occupation. If needed, a referral to the DRS Rehabilitation Technology Unit is made to address workplace accommodations. This list is distributed to field staff to potentially match a job–ready VR consumer with a current job opening. Through positive working relationships, 47 employers, including some of the largest in the state, now send job postings directly to DRS’ Employer Services Section.

The Employer Services Section also works with employers to better serve transitioning youth with disabilities, including providing career exploration opportunities for students with disabilities. In 2015, DRS debuted the POWER program. POWER is a job shadowing program that offers transitioning students, who may be having a difficult time choosing a career path, the opportunity to experience an occupation by spending time with a professional working in the students’ vocational goal/career field of interest. The POWER program allows the student the opportunity to experience an occupation prior to committing to training. It guides the student to take a serious, realistic look at the occupation, allowing the student to make a more informed choice. As of November 2019, 85 employers have agreed to host job shadowing experiences with DRS’ POWER program.

Assistive Technology

DRS will continue to provide rehabilitation technology solutions to individuals with disabilities as needed so that those individuals can become employed or maintain employment. DRS has developed working relationships and agreements for the coordination of activities with the WVATS of the West Virginia University Center for Excellence in Disabilities. The WVATS’ role is to provide access to and help with the acquisition of AT devices and services for individuals with disabilities. WVATS also provides device demonstrations, device loans, training, AT information, and technical assistance.

DRS has a rehabilitation technology unit which provides AT consultations and solutions to eligible VR consumers with AT needs statewide. With the coordination of services between DRS and WVATS, assurances are made that needed AT solutions can be provided to individuals with disabilities.

DRS Goal 4 – Improve access and availability of transportation options for DRS consumers who need transportation assistance to achieve or maintain competitive, integrated employment.

Transportation is an ongoing issue for West Virginians with disabilities, due to the rural nature of the state. A large proportion of the State’s inhabitants live far away from jobs, agency offices, and other resources. DRS continues its commitment to reduce transportation barriers for consumers with disabilities and focuses on ITS to satisfy immediate transportation needs. To help reduce these barriers, DRS counselors will encourage planning for transportation needs early in the development of a consumer’s rehabilitation program. At application, counselors will identify transportation issues and focus on finding solutions to include in the consumer’s IPE.
This will ensure that the ability of consumers to reach their vocational goal is not impeded by preventable transportation barriers. Transportation issues also will be addressed by the standard instrument prescribed for routine use by supervisors and quality assurance staff in case reviews. Beyond ITS, DRS will continue to assign responsibility to a staff member in each branch office to maintain a list and working knowledge of local transportation options and will continue to participate in local and state initiatives to coordinate and expand transportation resources.

**DRS Goal 5 – Continue to build collaborative relationships with community providers [including CRPs, Independent Living, and other community providers] to enhance the availability of services to DRS consumers.** A large amount of the success that DRS has in its mission to enable and empower individuals with disabilities to work and to live independently hinges on its relationships with CRPs. In general, DRS has good working relationships with the various CRPs throughout the State. However, CSNA results suggest that improvements can be made, particularly in specific geographic areas. To facilitate this improvement, DRS has established a number of strategies to put into action:

- **Continue to educate field staff, especially the new counselors, about CRPs and their services.** Use of the new ‘CRP Locator’ tool (a web-based, user-friendly vendor guide) and counselor CRP site visits will increase awareness of available service options, which will help to maintain collaborative relationships with CRPs and enhance the availability of services to DRS consumers.

- **Continue to maintain regular communications between DRS and community providers in each district and at the state level.** Each DRS district will continue to host joint meetings with DRS district and branch office staff and CRPs in those districts to provide opportunities for CRP representatives and DRS personnel to discuss local service needs of DRS consumers. Subsequent to each meeting, the local DRS office will be required to send a brief report to the CRP Program Manager. This process will allow all parties involved in the expansion of community-based services to be kept informed of progress and issues. The Division will continue to examine the information and recommendations collected from various meetings between CRP and DRS staff members.

**Progress on communication will continue to be made as the Division acquires more understanding of the issues and barriers facing the CRP and DRS staff members in their service provision to persons with significant disabilities in WV. Ongoing communication activities with CRPs also will include:**

- **An e-mail list-serv with all current vendors that will be updated periodically and utilized to send out training opportunities, policy changes, and general updates when needed.**

- **DRS counselors in each district will continue to be assigned as liaisons to each CRP and will continue to be required to complete a monthly update regarding the CRP.** They will collect this information by visits and/or phone calls. Having CRP liaisons that regularly discuss service-related issues specific to the local service area(s) will aid in maintaining collaborative working relationships and enhancing the availability of services to consumers.

- **Two rehabilitation specialists covering all districts in the state will provide technical assistance to CRPs and DRS staff.** They will make site visits to CRP and DRS district and branch offices. During these visits, they will provide technical assistance and schedule
training and other meetings that need to occur. They will serve as a communication link when issues arise and make themselves available to attend the communication meetings and transition team meetings.

- Conduct site visits to ensure that community providers continue to meet DRS standards and requirements.

- Increase the service provision of acknowledged vendors and work with community providers to expand their service areas to enhance the availability of community services within needed areas.

- Continue to conduct Transition Team meetings at the district level with DRS, WV Department of Education, and CRP staff members. The meetings will be held to promote interagency collaboration by allowing staff from each agency/CRP to become familiar with the different eligibility requirements and service definitions across agencies.

- Continue to conduct cross training and face-to-face meetings with community partners at the local level.

- Continue to assign liaison responsibilities to staff members and provide them guidance about the purpose of DRS participation in community events.

- Monitor the DRS counselors/supervisors/managers’ perception of the quality of CRP services through a survey instrument.

- Monitor and assess the impact of the Quality Assurance unit on the counselor’s case management practices by using data generated from the quality assurance specialists’ review of cases.

B. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES; AND

To foster a customer-focused approach to VR services, DRS works with the WV State Rehabilitation Council and Statewide Independent Living Council and uses innovation and expansion (I&E) resources to support the activities of these groups. As appropriate, DRS will continue to use I&E funds to discover, generate, and improve upon service delivery processes to individuals with disabilities. Additionally, with the emphasis on Pre-ETS to students with disabilities now in place by WIOA, there are significant opportunities for discoveries that can be made using I&E resources.

C. OVERCOME IDENTIFIED BARRIERS RELATING TO EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM AND THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM.

DRS has approximately 26 Branch office locations, providing statewide coverage. These offices are able to serve individuals with disabilities, including those individuals from minority backgrounds, in all areas of the state. Many cities within WV which have a relatively high proportion of minorities in the population (e.g., Charleston, Huntington, and Beckley) have a DRS branch office located within.

DRS also has a significant presence in state colleges and high schools with significant minority populations in all 55 counties of WV.

Due to the rural nature of the state, support for transportation is very important for access to VR services by individuals with disabilities. DRS continues to recognize this barrier as a challenge to VR service delivery statewide. DRS is committed to continuing its pursuit of
individualized transportation solutions for its consumers, including those from minority backgrounds.

Additionally, DRS will continue to utilize tools and techniques which have allowed the agency to have success in its outreach to minority populations, such as:

- DRS will continue to use GIS, as appropriate, to pinpoint geographic locations with potentially underserved minority populations in the State. This will allow for more effective and efficient outreach to those populations.

- DRS will continue to depend on local outreach efforts by branch office field staff to bring individuals with disabilities, including those individuals from minority backgrounds, into the VR system.

P. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

Describe:

1. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE VR PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE APPROVED VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS

The following description includes progress in the achievement of the goals for the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS).

DRS Goal 1 – Provide integrated vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to West Virginians with disabilities to enable them to attain a high school education or greater.

Since the writing of the previous State Plan, the percentage of West Virginians with disabilities having high school diplomas appears to have increased. As of 2017 (most recent data; posted in 2018 Annual Disability Statistics Compendium), high school graduates include 75.6% of individuals with disabilities aged 25 years and older, compared to 69.4% four years earlier.

DRS has worked hard to strengthen its relationship with State and Local Education Agencies and has sought to increase its service capacity to students with disabilities statewide. This includes formal agreements and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), the provision of Pre-employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) in and outside of school settings, the continuation of DRS’ Student Transition to Employment Program (STEP), and coordinated training with Special Education teachers statewide.

DRS monitored the educational achievement of all of its consumers, especially those in the transition youth (TY) population. DRS worked closely and diligently with State and Local Education Agencies to ensure that its TY population receives the services that it needs, including pre-employment transition services for high school students with disabilities. DRS assigned a counselor to each high school in WV to enhance the service provision of students with disabilities. A greater emphasis is now being placed for counselors to do outreach with these students and their parents/guardians during their sophomore year (rather than their junior year, as was formerly practiced) in order to maximize the counseling opportunities.

DRS counselors took part in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) development of students with disabilities when invited to do so. Counselors stayed in contact with educators to discuss and resolve educational difficulties as needed. DRS also worked closely with WV Adult Education, referring consumers as needed, to ensure that individuals with disabilities have an
adequate opportunity to obtain a completed high school level education. DRS will continue to conduct these activities as part of its progress toward achievement of this goal.

DRS Goal 2 – Provide Pre-ETS to students with disabilities.

DRS has demonstrated considerable commitment to providing Pre-ETS to students with disabilities statewide since the implementation of WIOA. In collaboration with Community Access, Incorporated (CAI) and Terzetto Creative, LLC, DRS established the Pathways to the Future website (www.pathwayswv.org), designed to operate as a self-service one-stop for students, parents, and educators in the provision of Pre-ETS that can be accessed at any time. The site provides extensive information and resources regarding career planning, education planning, independent living skills, self-determination, and work-based learning.

Beyond this self-service portal, DRS has been active, both within and outside of school settings to ensure that students with disabilities statewide receive the Pre-ETS needed to promote a more well-informed student base regarding employment, career pathways, independent living and soft skills, and self-advocacy. Numerous initiatives and activities, provided by DRS staff, Education staff, and Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs), have been delivered to thousands of students across the state in all 55 counties. In doing so, DRS has consistently been able to successfully reserve and spend the WIOA-mandated 15% earmark of federal funds on Pre-ETS. Some of the activities conducted by the agency include:

- **Career Exploration Opportunity (CEO) Summits** – DRS, in conjunction with CRPs, hosts several Summits each year, during the summer, serving hundreds of high school students from across the state. The four-day summits provide tools and information to support students in obtaining long-term career success. The curriculum includes career planning and preparation, self-assessments, completing job applications, interviewing skills, how to dress for employment, work ethic, cell phone and internet safety, and self-advocacy.

- **Positive Outcomes Within Education and Rehabilitation (POWER) program** – DRS’ job shadowing program. POWER offers DRS transition students who are interested in professional careers an opportunity to spend a few hours or a day with a skilled worker in the student's vocational field of interest, allowing the student to explore a specific career of interest by observing an employee perform his or her work duties at his or her place of employment. The experience should provide realistic career information that will aid the student in making career choices.

- **Work-Based Learning Experiences** – Provided in conjunction with CRPs to pair students with disabilities with local employers willing to provide a short-term employment opportunity. These experiences provide the student with real-world work experience, in an integrated job site. Students work up to 80 work hours, over 2 – 4 weeks, earning no less than minimum wage. The CRPs are paid to arrange and monitor the experience, as well as pay the students.

The 2018 comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA) indicated that job exploration counseling was the most frequently reported pre-employment transition service need. DRS counselors provided Pre-ETS to students with disabilities, especially job exploration counseling, in order to give students with disabilities and their parents/guardians a better understanding of labor market conditions, current and emerging career opportunities, and the necessary education and training requirements related to those opportunities. In program year (PY) 2018, DRS provided Pre-ETS to over 1,000 students with disabilities in WV.
In addition to ongoing program activities, DRS hosted summer workshops (CEO Summits) for transition students entering into their senior year of high school. In 2018, the CEO Summits were held in 11 areas across the state; in 2019, the Summits were held in 60 areas. In 2019, DRS worked with CRPs around the state to provide the Summits in as many local areas as possible. Attendance for the CEO Summits in the summer of 2019 was approximately 1,000 students, covering all six DRS districts. Students earned a stipend for the time that they attended. A concerted effort was made to introduce Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM) to students in the CEO Summits.

Topics covered included career planning, career preparation, SSI/SSDI Information, understanding the importance of necessary personal documents, communication, conflict management, employer expectations, attendance and punctuality, timeliness of task completion, being able to work without supervision, positive work ethic, managing multiple tasks, high-growth jobs, personal brand, and job hunting tools such as resumes, cover letters, interviews, and digital profiles.

In collaboration with CRPs, the Statewide independent Living Council (SILC) and the WV Centers for Independent Living (CILs), DRS established programs in the summer of 2019 which provided Instruction in Self-Advocacy at 25 locations across the state, serving 294 students with disabilities. These programs provide students with disabilities with the skills necessary to be confident and self-directed self-advocates. Students participating in the programs learned about their legal rights and responsibilities, the history of the disability movement, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), IEPs, and participated in activities to develop their confidence and communication skills, as well as the ability to evaluate their future needs and plans.

In an effort to promote Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields, DRS sponsored a "Build It, Keep It, Share It" – BIKISI – program in the summer of 2019. In the program, through a one-week training, students receive the knowledge, tools, and components they need to build a computer. At the end of the training, they take the knowledge – and the computer – home with them. The program is designed to develop student interest in the sciences through computers, to subsequently promote interest in high-paying jobs within in-demand job sectors. In 2019, the program was held in 12 locations and served 363 students with disabilities.

Throughout the academic year, DRS Employment Specialists also provided Pre-ETS at the local high schools. The Employment Specialists conducted mock interviewing, career exploration, and other employment related topics. The POWER program provides students that ability to job shadow careers that they are interested in. The Employment Specialists have worked to identify a vast array of employers located throughout the State. There are currently 85 employers involved in the POWER Program.

In 2016 and 2017, DRS partnered with CAI to implement a program, entitled “Pathways to the Future,” to support the design and implementation of programming and outreach while addressing the new direction mandated by WIOA. Specifically, the program addressed the five required Pre-ETS for high school students with disabilities through an expansion of the STEP. The program assisted school districts by offering training and technical assistance in setting up community-based work experience programs for students with disabilities. The project helped level the playing field between resource-rich metropolitan areas and isolated rural settings that often have few services available. In addition, a strong statewide outreach to teachers, parents, students, and other VR stakeholders was a component of the project. The project had the following goals:
1. To assist school districts in setting up community-based Work Exploration programs.

2. To develop statewide parent training network utilizing the Parent Community Resource Centers.

3. To develop a network of specialists to work with DRS, WorkForce WV, and WV Department of Education (WVDE) staff.

4. To develop a statewide cross-sector outreach program with a strong emphasis on traditionally underserved populations.

DRS enlisted the services of Terzetto Creative to create/maintain a “Pathways to the Future” website (www.pathwayswv.org), which serves as a self-service resource for students with disabilities statewide to receive Pre-ETS. The website provides valuable information and tools regarding career planning, education planning, independent living, self-determination, and work-based learning. The website was bolstered by banners that were placed in high schools in all 55 counties of the state. Additionally, several pages of the College Foundation of West Virginia’s website (www.cfwv.com) have links to the Pathways website. These banners and links directed students with disabilities to the website and its resources.

DRS Goal 3 – Provide integrated vocational rehabilitation services to West Virginians with disabilities to enable them to obtain competitive employment, especially in occupations and careers within emerging industries statewide.

With the passage of WIOA, DRS has made several adjustments to its service provision model, including a greater emphasis toward youth and students with disabilities. Due to the legislative mandate of reserving and spending at least 15% of federal funds on the provision of Pre-ETS to students with disabilities, DRS has found it necessary to place VR-eligible individuals who do not have the most significant disabilities on a waitlist. However, if sufficient resources become available, individuals will be removed from the waitlist. Despite this difficulty, DRS has found success in its long-standing mission of empowering and enabling individuals with disabilities to work and to live independently. In Program Year (PY) 2018, DRS served 7,016 participants, including 5,469 youth with disabilities, while enabling 930 job seekers with disabilities to obtain or retain employment.

Collaboration with WorkForce WV and Local Workforce Development Boards

DRS has maintained regular communication with WorkForce WV to stay abreast of trends in employment, including changes in education and training requirements. This has been accomplished through regular meetings of the workforce development system (WDS), written communications, teleconferences, and other media. DRS, particularly through its Employment Specialists, stayed informed of emerging careers and occupations via WorkForce WV’s Labor Market Information website. DRS Employment Specialists have also continuously collected employment information from their business contacts. This information is shared within the WDS. DRS registers its job-ready consumers with WorkForce WV in order to better serve employers by providing them with a base of potential employees.

DRS maintained and continues to maintain a presence with each of West Virginia’s seven Local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs): Region 1 WDB; Region 2 – South Western WV WDB, Inc.; Region 3 – WDB of Kanawha County, Inc.; Region 4 Mid-Ohio Valley WDB; Region 5 – Northern Panhandle WDB; Region 6 WDB, and Region 7 WDB. DRS has signed MOUs and Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs) with each board. Each Local WDB has a DRS representative who is active in the Board’s activities and decision-making process.

Use of DRS Employment Specialists
DRS used its Employment Specialists to gather information regarding employers at the local level, including information regarding job placements for individuals with disabilities and regarding current and expected employer needs.

DRS has an in-house Employer Services Section that specializes in providing employers with disability-related information, services, and pre-screened job seekers. The DRS Employer Services Section has nine Employment Specialists that cover all 55 counties in West Virginia. Each Employment Specialist has a unique understanding of local labor market information (LMI) including what jobs are available, what jobs are in demand or decline, and employer networks.

DRS’ team of Employment Specialists provided business owners and employers with critical business options and assistance in staffing, employee retention strategies, education on disability-related issues, job accommodations, and information about financial incentives for employers who hire individuals with disabilities.

Direct contact with employers is a key strategy to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities for VR consumers, including students with disabilities. Employment Specialists therefore contact employers directly to identify current and future job openings. To facilitate this, DRS utilizes labor market information provided by WorkForce WV to identify the top employers in each county; contact is always made with the top ten employers in each county. When meeting with employers, Employment Specialists provide valuable information, including the DRS Employer Resource Guide. The resource guide provides information regarding staffing services, training programs and incentives for hiring people with disabilities, financial incentives, accessibility assessments, accommodating employees with disabilities, basic disability etiquette, attitudinal barriers, the Americans with Disabilities Act, locating a DRS office, and where to find additional resources. DRS Employment Specialists conducted over 800 employer visits with more than 500 employers in Program Year 2018.

The Employer Services Section maintains a database of each DRS-employer interaction with VR employment specialists. The information collected includes the business name, contact person, and current job openings by occupation. If needed, a referral to the DRS Rehabilitation Technology Unit is made to address workplace accommodations. This list is distributed to Counselors to potentially match a job-ready VR consumer with a current job opening. Through positive working relationships, 47 employers, including some of the largest in the state, now send job postings directly to DRS’ Employer Services Section.

The Employer Services Section also worked with employers to better serve transitioning youth with disabilities, including providing career exploration opportunities for students with disabilities through the POWER program. POWER is a job shadowing program that offers transitioning students, who may be having a difficult time choosing a career path, the opportunity to experience an occupation by spending time with a professional working in the students’ vocational goal/career field of interest. The POWER program allows the student the opportunity to experience an occupation prior to committing to training. It guides the student to take a serious, realistic look at the occupation, allowing the student to make a more informed choice. Currently, there are 85 employers statewide that participate in the POWER program.

**Assistive Technology**

DRS provided rehabilitation technology solutions to individuals with disabilities as needed so that those individuals could become employed or maintain employment. DRS has developed working relationships and agreements for the coordination of activities with the West Virginia Assistive Technology System (WVATS) of the West Virginia University Center for Excellence in
Disabilities. The WVATS’ role is to provide access to and help with the acquisition of assistive technology (AT) devices and services for individuals with disabilities. WVATS also provides device demonstrations, device loans, training, AT information, and technical assistance.

DRS has a rehabilitation technology unit which provided AT consultations and solutions to eligible VR consumers with AT needs statewide. With the coordination of services between DRS and WVATS, assurances are made that needed AT solutions can be provided to individuals with disabilities.

DRS Goal 4 – Improve access and availability of transportation options at the community level for DRS consumers who need transportation assistance to achieve or maintain competitive, integrated employment.

DRS continues to work toward finding individualized transportation solutions for West Virginians with disabilities as needed for their employment goals. In Program Year (PY) 2017, DRS expended $122,115 on transportation services for 891 consumers and in PY 2018, DRS authorized $93,540 in transportation services for 746 consumers.

Transportation is an ongoing issue for West Virginians with disabilities, due to the rural nature of the state. A large proportion of the State’s inhabitants live far away from jobs, agency offices, and other resources. DRS continued its commitment to reduce transportation barriers for consumers with disabilities and focused on individual transportation solutions (ITS) to satisfy immediate transportation needs. To help reduce these barriers, DRS counselors encouraged planning for transportation needs early in the development of a consumer’s rehabilitation program. At application, counselors identified transportation issues and focused on finding solutions to include in the consumer’s Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). This ensured that the ability of consumers to reach their vocational goal was not impeded by preventable transportation barriers. Transportation issues were also addressed by the standard instrument prescribed for routine use by supervisors and quality assurance staff in case reviews. Beyond ITS, DRS continued to assign responsibility to a staff member in each branch office to maintain a list and working knowledge of local transportation options and continued to participate in local and state initiatives to coordinate and expand transportation resources. These activities will be ongoing as DRS strives to accomplish transportation access for all of its consumers in need.

DRS Goal 5 – Continue to build collaborative relationships with community providers (including CRPs, Independent Living, and other community providers) to enhance the availability of services to DRS consumers.

A comparison of findings from the 2015 CSNA and the 2018 CSNA indicates that there is still a need to continue to improve collaborative relationships with community providers. While a greater percentage of CRP survey respondents acknowledged that a DRS liaison counselor was in contact on a regular basis (i.e., 68.1% in 2015 vs. 78.4% in 2018), a lower percentage of CRP survey respondents rated their communication with DRS to be Good or better (91.5% in 2015 vs. 87.2% in 2018).

2015 – Forty-seven out of 47 CRPs/community service providers (CSPs) provided a rating of their communication with DRS. Rating options included Excellent, Very Good, Good, Poor, and Very Poor. No CRPs/CSPs gave a rating of Very Poor and 43 of the 47 CRPs/CSPs (91.5%) gave a response of Good or better. Additionally, CRPs/CSPs were asked whether a DRS liaison counselor was in contact on a regular basis. Thirty–two (32) CRPs/CSPs responded yes, while 15 CRPs/CSPs responded no (68.1% and 31.9%, respectively).
2018 - Thirty-nine out of 40 CRPs provided a rating of their communication with DRS. Options ranged from Excellent to Very Poor. One CRP gave a rating of Very Poor and 3 of the 39 CRPs (87.2%) gave a response of Good or better. When asked whether a DRS liaison counselor was in contact on a regular basis, 29 of 37 CRPs responded yes, while 8 CRPs responded no (78.4% and 21.6%, respectively). Three CRPs did not respond to this question.

DRS continues to utilize CRPs to provide services to its consumers. In PY 2017, DRS authorized $3,017,766 in CRP services to 1,417 consumers. In PY 2018, DRS authorized $2,582,420 in CRP services to 1,043 consumers. DRS continued to educate field staff, especially new counselors, about CRPs and their services. Use of the new ‘CRP Locator’ tool (a web-based, user-friendly, vendor guide) and counselor CRP site visits increased awareness of available service options, which helped to maintain collaborative relationships with CRPs and enhance the availability of services to DRS consumers. DRS continued to maintain regular communications with community providers in each district and at the state level. Progress on communication will continue to be made as the Division acquires more understanding of the issues and barriers facing the CRP and DRS staff members in their service provision to persons with significant disabilities in WV.

Ongoing communication activities with CRPs also includes:

1. An e-mail list-serv with all current vendors that is updated periodically and utilized to send out training opportunities, policy changes, and general updates when needed.

2. DRS counselors in each district continue to be assigned as liaisons to each CRP and continue to be required to complete a monthly update regarding the CRP. They collect this information by visits and/or phone calls. Having CRP liaisons that regularly discuss service-related issues specific to the local service area(s) aids in maintaining collaborative working relationships and enhancing the availability of services to consumers.

3. Two Rehabilitation Specialists covering all districts in the state provide technical assistance to CRPs and DRS staff. They make site visits to CRP and DRS district and branch offices to ensure that community providers continue to meet DRS standards and requirements. During these visits, they provide technical assistance and schedule training and other meetings that need to occur. They serve as a communication link when issues arise and make themselves available to attend the communication meetings and transition team meetings.

Additionally, the agency works to:

- Increase the service provision of acknowledged vendors and work with community providers to expand their service areas to enhance the availability of community services within needed areas;

- Conduct Transition Team meetings at the district level with DRS, WV Department of Education, and CRP staff members. The meetings are held to promote interagency collaboration by allowing staff from each agency/CRP to become familiar with the different eligibility requirements and service definitions across agencies;

- Conduct cross training and face-to-face meetings with community partners at the local level;

- Assign liaison responsibilities to staff members and provide guidance about the purpose of DRS participation in community events;
• Monitor the DRS counselors/supervisors/managers’ perception of the quality of CRP services through a survey instrument; and

• Monitor and assess the impact of the Quality Assurance unit on the counselor's case management practices by using data generated from the quality assurance specialists’ review of cases.

B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

DRS continued to be successful in achieving the agency’s goals and priorities. However, a high turnover rate of DRS staff, including VR counselors, presents a barrier to the full achievement of all goals and priorities. Because of this barrier, DRS will continue to maintain its goals and priorities relating to CRPs, transportation, and serving youth with disabilities until the desired outcomes are achieved.

The main impact of high turnover is the need to continually train and educate new staff members. Newly hired staff do not have a full understanding of available resources in their local area, including transportation and CRP services. This knowledge gap effects many areas of DRS activities and may unfortunately lead to lower levels of CRP utilization, local transportation options, and consumer satisfaction, especially among youth. However, DRS has worked and will continue working to mitigate these impediments to achieving its goals and priorities.

The high turnover rate, not just among DRS staff, but CRP staff as well, can negatively impact CRP service delivery and capacity across the state. For these reasons, DRS has maintained goals and priorities associated with improving the working relationships between DRS and CRP staff in addition to increasing the availability of CRP services within the community.

To combat transportation issues, DRS has continued its commitment to reduce transportation barriers for consumers with disabilities and its focus on ITS to satisfy immediate transportation needs. DRS also encouraged planning for transportation needs early in the development of the consumer’s rehabilitation program. At application, DRS counselors identified transportation issues and focused on finding solutions to include in the consumer’s IPE. This ensured that the ability of consumers to reach their vocational goal was not impeded by preventable transportation barriers. Transportation issues were also addressed by the standard instrument prescribed for routine use by supervisors and quality assurance staff in case reviews.

DRS is successfully moving forward, despite the barriers faced by the agency, and will continue to work toward successfully achieving all goals and priorities.

2. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SUPPLEMENT FOR THE MOST RECENT PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

The total authorized dollars for CRP supported employment (SE) services in Program Year (PY) 2018 was $194,460 for 95 consumers with most significant disabilities. This is an increase from PY 2017, when 85 consumers were served and $190,265 were authorized for CRP SE services.

As previously addressed in the discussion of DRS Goal 5, DRS continued to build collaborative relationships with community providers (including CRPs, Independent Living, and other community providers) to enhance the availability of services to DRS consumers. A comparison
of findings from the 2015 CSNA and the 2018 CSNA indicates that there is still a need to continue to improve collaborative relationships with community providers. While a greater percentage of CRP survey respondents acknowledged that a DRS liaison counselor was in contact on a regular basis (i.e., 68.1% in 2015 vs. 78.4% in 2018), a lower percentage of CRP survey respondents rated their communication with DRS to be Good or better (91.5% in 2015 vs. 87.2% in 2018).

B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

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3. THE VR PROGRAM’S PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

DRS acknowledges the legal requirement to report on the performance accountability indicators under Section 116 of WIOA. However, data collection on the performance accountability indicators is only beginning, making a full report of DRS performance impossible at this time. As DRS moves forward in its task to place individuals with disabilities into competitive, integrated employment in PY 2020, it will continue to collect and monitor participant data in order to generate reports on:

- The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;
- The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program;
- The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;
- The percentage of program participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within 1 year after exit from the program;
- The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment; and
- The indicators of effectiveness in serving employers.
For PY 2018, DRS achieved the following performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA:

- The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program – 61.8%
- The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program – $4,595.70
- The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment – 56.8%

4. HOW THE FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION (I&E) ACTIVITIES WERE UTILIZED

UTILIZATION OF TITLE I FUNDS FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES

I&E FUNDS FOR THE WEST VIRGINIA STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL AND WEST VIRGINIA STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL

DRS fully embraces the Congressional intent that individuals with disabilities and their advocates are full partners in the state rehabilitation program. Therefore, DRS has established a goal to improve its service delivery system through involvement of consumers and their advocates to increase the ease of access to, timeliness of, and quality of rehabilitation services and ultimately to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The Division's concentration of I&E efforts on consumer partnerships demonstrates its commitment to enhanced consumer involvement.

Success in working with consumers and their advocates is fundamentally important in developing and using innovative approaches to achieve long-term success in expanding and improving rehabilitation services, including supported employment. DRS pursues that work primarily through partnership initiatives with the West Virginia State Rehabilitation Council (WV SRC) and the West Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC).

DRS believes that the activities of these councils provide a promising foundation for the kind of partnership envisioned by the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. If that partnership is to achieve its full potential, however, it must receive the necessary support.

Therefore, DRS annually allocates I&E funds to support general operations of the WV SRC and the SILC.

Program Year (PY) 2018 highlights for each appear below.

WEST VIRGINIA STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

I&E funds support operations and activities undertaken by members of the WV SRC, as mandated by WIOA. DRS allocated $52,168 for WV SRC in PY 2019.

As required by the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, WV SRC assists DRS by conducting a survey of consumer satisfaction for DRS consumers whose VR cases have been closed. Surveys were mailed to approximately 3,800 individuals in PY 2019. WV SRC uses I&E funds to share costs of contracting an independent consultant to compile a report of survey results.

I&E funding assists WV SRC to prepare, publish, and distribute its annual report.
WV SRC also participates in development and establishment of DRS goals and priorities outlined in this state plan. I&E funds are used for travel costs as necessary.

WEST VIRGINIA STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL

In combination with Title VII money, I&E funds help support operations and activities undertaken by the SILC. DRS allocated $228,900 for the SILC in PY 2019.

The SILC, in partnership with DRS, jointly develops and submits the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL), as appropriate. The SILC continues to monitor and evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the SPIL. In conjunction with DRS, the SILC prepares and submits the 704 Report for West Virginia.

SILC members and/or employees collaborate with and/or participate in activities of the WV Centers for Independent Living (WVCIL), WV Developmental Disabilities Council, WV SRC, WV Olmstead Council, WV Mental Health Consumers Association, WV American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), Medley Hartley Advocacy Project Advisory Council, WV Transportation Alliance, and the Fair Shake Network. Training for service providers on sexual victimization of individuals with disabilities has been scheduled.

The SILC conducts a survey of consumer satisfaction for consumers who received independent living services. The SILC uses I&E funds to share costs with DRS and WVCIL for distribution of the survey and contracting an independent consultant to compile survey results and prepare an annual report of findings.

The SILC ensures that all meetings are open to the public and provides notice through the WV Secretary of State’s Office as well as through statewide media at least two weeks prior to the meetings.

Q. QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Include the following:

1. THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) vendor acknowledgment process includes an in–service training session for prospective new vendors and training updates as requested. During the training session, participants receive a Service Provider Guide and an introduction to the DRS process for providing supported employment (SE) services. DRS also loans SE training books and materials at no cost.

The quality of SE services is directly tied to the competency of the personnel performing job development and community-based training services. DRS encourages and supports the provision of a broad range of in–service training programs for personnel directly involved in SE service delivery.

DRS is committed to ensuring the availability of SE services throughout West Virginia as reflected in progress toward DRS Goal 5, which is to continue to build collaborative relationships with community providers including community rehabilitation programs (CRPs), Independent Living, and other community providers to enhance the availability of services to DRS consumers. There are currently 35 DRS–acknowledged SE vendors from all districts across the state. These vendors make SE services available to an increasing number of individuals with the most significant disabilities.
In accordance with federal regulations, the SE services that may be provided to individuals and youth with disabilities placed in SE include:

1. Evaluation of rehabilitation potential for SE to supplement the comprehensive assessment conducted under the Title I program;
2. Job development;
3. Job placement;
4. Intensive on-the-job training provided by skilled job coaches/employment specialists;
5. Case management services;
6. Job monitoring, whether performed on-site or off-site, that includes regular contact with employees, employers, parents, guardians, and other professionals to reinforce and maintain the job placement;
7. Rehabilitation technology assessment and services as appropriate; and
8. Post-employment services (following transition to extended SE services) that are available from the extended service provider and that are needed to maintain the SE job placement.

As appropriate, youth with disabilities placed in SE may receive transition services. Youth who meet the definition of a student with a disability may also receive pre-employment transition services that include:

1. Job exploration counseling;
2. Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships), that is provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible;
3. Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education;
4. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; and
5. Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring.

The demand and need for SE services continues to be significant, particularly in rural areas, as well as for those individuals who are transitioning from school to the workforce. DRS continues its commitment to expanding the statewide capacity for SE services.

DRS will continue to provide SE services to its consumers and will acknowledge additional SE service providers where needed. The Division will continue to consider non-traditional approaches to SE service delivery and will increasingly emphasize the development of natural supports wherever possible. DRS anticipates that more individuals will receive services with the increased number of approved SE providers.

DRS authorized SE services to 95 individuals in Program Year 2018.

While SE services may be expected to vary in scope and duration from individual to individual, core services that may be provided to individuals and youth with disabilities placed in SE can include:
1. Assessment of the individual’s environmental circumstances;

2. Job analysis and job development;

3. Rehabilitation technology assessment;

4. Job placement following appropriate match of job/consumer characteristics identified in during assessment, job analysis, and job development (services 1 and 2 above);

5. Intensive, one-on-one, on-the-job training;

6. Job stabilization, job coach fading as much as possible; and

7. Extended Supported Employment Services (ESES), optimally including natural supports.

2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES

DRS receives state funds earmarked to provide ESES for SE clients closed as successfully rehabilitated who, after an assessment of their progress and continuing needs for services, are found to require ongoing job coaching to maintain employment and are not eligible for services through other funding sources. The consumer’s Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) includes an estimate of the time needed for transition to extended services. Provision of ESES (job coaching) to all eligible SE clients, including youth with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with an approved IPE will not exceed 4 years, as required by federal regulations. Consumers in SE placement are eligible to receive any services traditionally available through the DRS Title I program.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL) CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE,) IS AUTHORIZED TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (REHABILITATION ACT), AS AMENDED BY WIOA[14], AND ITS SUPPLEMENT UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT[15];

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE

West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services


ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY

West Virginia Department of Commerce
3. As a condition for the receipt of federal funds under Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated state agency agrees to operate and administer the state supported employment services program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the unified or combined state plan, the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations, policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under Title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the unified or combined state plan;

4. The designated state agency and/or the designated state unit has the authority under state law to perform the functions of the state regarding the VR services portion of the unified or combined state plan and its supplement;

5. The state legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the unified or combined state plan and its supplement.

6. All provisions of the VR services portion of the unified or combined state plan and its supplement are consistent with state law.

7. The (enter the name of authorized representative below) has the authority under state law to receive, hold, and disburse federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the unified or combined state plan and its supplement;

Enter the name of authorized representative below

Marijane K. Waldron

8. The (enter the title of authorized representative below) has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the unified or combined state plan and the supplement for supported employment services;

Enter the title of authorized representative below

Director, West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services

9. The agency that submits the VR services portion of the unified or combined state plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.

Footnotes

[16] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.
[17] No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.
[18] Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR
part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations.

[19] No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[20] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 6.

CERTIFICATION SIGNATURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signatory information</th>
<th>Enter Signatory information in this column</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Signatory</td>
<td>Marijane K. Waldron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title of Signatory</td>
<td>Director, West Virginia Division of Rehabilitatation Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Signed</td>
<td>7-6-2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ASSURANCES

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances: The State Plan must provide assurances that:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The State Plan must include</th>
<th>Include</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.a. The establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.b. The establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The State Plan must include

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Include</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (A or B must be selected):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.b.(A) &quot;is an independent State commission&quot; (Yes/No)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.b.(B) &quot;has established a State Rehabilitation Council&quot; (Yes/No)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.c. Consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.d. The financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.e. The local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds (Yes/No)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.f. The shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs (Yes/No)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.g. Statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? (Yes/No) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.h. The descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.i. All required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.j. The requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.k. The compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.l. The reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.m. The submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The State Plan must include designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:

4.a. Comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act

4.b. Impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual’s eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act

4.c. Provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (Yes/No) No

4.d. Determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act

4.e. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act

4.f. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act

4.g. Provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act

4.h. Comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act

4.i. Meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs

4.j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State, 4.j.i. Has developed and will implement, 4.j.i.I. Strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and

4.j.ii. Has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(25))

5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:
The State Plan must include

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.c. The designated state unit will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program:

| 6.a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State’s allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act |
| 6.b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act |

7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:

| 7.a. The Designated State Agency Assures That it Will Provide Supported Employment Services as Defined in Section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act |
| 7.b. The designated State agency assures that: |
| 7.b.i. The comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act |
| 7.b.ii. An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act |

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:
• Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
• Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
• Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
• Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Indicators</th>
<th>PY 2020 Expected Level</th>
<th>PY 2020 Negotiated Level</th>
<th>PY 2021 Expected Level</th>
<th>PY 2021 Negotiated Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)</td>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>Baseline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)</td>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>Baseline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)</td>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>Baseline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credential Attainment Rate</td>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>Baseline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurable Skill Gains</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness in Serving Employers</td>
<td>Not Applicable ¹</td>
<td>Not Applicable ¹</td>
<td>Not Applicable ¹</td>
<td>Not Applicable ¹</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹
VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS

States choosing to submit a Combined State Plan must provide information concerning the six core programs—the Adult program, Dislocated Worker program, Youth program, Wagner-Peyser Act program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation program—and also submit relevant information for any of the eleven partner programs it elects to include in its Combined State Plan. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program. If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the “common planning elements” in Sections II-IV of this document, where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program.

[24] States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) under a Combined State Plan would submit all other required elements of a complete CSBG State Plan directly to the Federal agency that administers the program. Similarly, States that elect to include employment and training activities carried by the Department of Housing and Urban Development would submit all other required elements of a complete State Plan for those programs directly to the Federal agency that administers the program.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR APPENDIX

ALL WIOA CORE PROGRAMS

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Indicators</th>
<th>PY 2020 Expected Level</th>
<th>PY 2020 Negotiated Level</th>
<th>PY 2021 Expected Level</th>
<th>PY 2021 Negotiated Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness in Serving Employers</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 “Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

ADDITIONAL INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each
of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

OTHER APPENDICES