

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION
348(8) (c), HAWAII REVISED STATUTES, THE ANNUAL
REPORT OF THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

February 2015

Section 348(8)(c), Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), requires the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to submit an annual report to the Governor on the status of vocational rehabilitation programs within the State and make the report available to the public.

The legislature, per section 348-8, HRS, established the SRC within the Department of Human Services (DHS). The SRC is comprised of 21 members appointed by the Governor. The Council consults with the State Workforce Development Council and advises the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) of the DHS on a variety of services that potentially affect the ability of individuals with disabilities in achieving employment outcomes.

The SRC meets quarterly in partnership with the DVR to discuss and advise the DVR on the effectiveness of services administered by the DVR. The DVR's mission is to work as a team so participants can achieve their hopes and aspirations for meaningful employment through timely and individualized services. The DVR administers the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and the Services for the Blind Program named Ho'opono.

(1) VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM (VR)

VR provides vocational rehabilitation services to assist persons with disabilities to prepare for, obtain and maintain, or regain employment. The economic benefits of VR are significant. They include increased earnings and purchasing power, increased taxes paid, and a decreased dependency on public assistance.

VR is a cost-effective program that benefits the participant and rewards society. National statistics predict that within the first two (2) years of employment, the average rehabilitated individual will have paid income tax on their earned income that would approach the full cost for their vocational rehabilitation services. This means going forward, the rehabilitated individual will positively contribute to the State's economy.

In July 2014, President Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) which replaced the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998. This new law supports innovative strategies to keep pace with changing economic conditions and seeks to improve coordination between the federal programs that support employment services, workforce development, adult education and vocational rehabilitation activities.

FY 2014 VR Program Achievements

- VR served 5,368 individuals with disabilities.
- VR received 1,047 new referrals.
- 319 individuals achieved successful employment outcomes, an increase of 16% from the previous year.

- 100% of individuals placed were persons with significant disabilities.
- The average annual earnings per individual before receiving VR services are \$4,490.20. After receiving VR services the average annual earnings per rehabilitated individual increased 314% to \$18,603.52.
- On October 28, 2014, the Comprehensive Service Center (CSC) for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind Persons, opened its doors to offer the first of four (4) sessions of literacy classes to enhance career pathways, improve life skills, support family and community integration.

(2) SERVICES FOR THE BLIND PROGRAM (HO`OPONO)

At Ho`opono, the Services for the Blind Program's goal is to enable blind and visually impaired teens and adults from Hawaii and the Pacific Rim to attain maximum vocational and functional independence. Ho'opono's team of skilled professionals provides a variety of services to meet participants' individual needs.

FY 2014 Ho`opono Program Highlights/Achievements

- Ho'opono started a new Braille reading program to private pre-school classes in Liliha. New Vision students and graduates go to two (2) pre-schools for three (3) hours once a month and read numerous braille children's books to the eager students. The teachers and students experience blindness skills and hear a story at the same time.
- The Counseling Section processed 93 new vocational rehabilitation applicants, an 11% increase from our 2014 projections.
- Twenty-one consumers obtained and maintained competitive employment with an average earning of \$750.57 per week.
- Ho'opono received 246 new referrals for the Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) program. Recipients of the program are successful in achieving personal independence and integration into their community.
- The Low Vision Clinic received 285 new referrals. The Low Vision Clinic provides assistance to children and adults to maximize their use of residual vision for daily independent living skills and receive counseling/referral services for their families.

Adjustment to Blindness (New Visions) Program's FY 2014 Achievements

- The New Visions Program retains its prestigious certification by the National Blindness Professional Certification Board as a Structured Discovery training program. The DVR is one (1) of only three (3) state agencies to hold this certification.
- Ho`opono's Rehabilitation Teachers provided adjustment to blindness services to forty-one (41) residents throughout the State and the Pacific Rim. This 12-month program equips blind persons with daily independent living skills, vocational, personal, leisure, and home management activities, as well as the confidence to enable them to live independently and return to work.
- Seven (7) students earned a graduation certificate from the New Visions Program. They participated in numerous field classes which allowed them to practice the skills they learn in the center outside in everyday life. They continued the tradition of Turn-around Day where the students become the instructor, as well as fine dining experience where the students dress up to learn the skills of fine dining in a restaurant setting with delicious food.
- The New Visions students were active participants in Camp Ho'opono. An annual event, held at Camp Erdman in Mokuleia, students hiked, completed a challenging high ropes course, learned archery, participated in team building exercises, experienced a wilderness survival activity, and did other activities that built confidence.

Hawaii's Business Enterprise (BEP) Program's FY 2014 Achievements

- Hawaii's Business Enterprise Program (BEP) continues as one of the nation's leaders in terms of benefits paid out, average net earnings and number of vendors per capita. Hawaii blind vendors experienced a 21% increase in average annual income, and a 5% increase in the median annual income. Average annual income is \$98,820. Median annual income is \$38,227.
- BEP operators hired a total of approximately 272 employees; 42 of these individuals have a disability, including blindness and other visual impairment, as well as a variety of other disabilities.

SRC's Goals and Priorities

The Hawaii SRC approves and is committed to the goals and objectives of Hawaii's DVR Program as written in the FY 2015 State Plan. The following priorities and goals of the FY 2015 State Plan were developed based upon SRC reports, monitoring activities, results of needs assessments, performance on standards and indicators, as well as other available information.

- Priority 1: To assist eligible individuals in reaching their full potential by providing quality VR services
- Goal 1.1 To increase the number of employment outcomes by 1 or more
 - Goal 1.2 To increase the average hourly wage for rehabilitants
 - Goal 1.3 To increase the number of hours worked per week
 - Goal 1.4 To increase the number of clients participating in work experiences
- Priority 2: To increase quality of services for Transition Aged Youths (TAYs)
- Goal 2.1 To increase the number of employment outcomes of TAYs by 1 or more.
 - Goal 2.2 To increase the average hourly wage for rehabilitees TAYs.
 - Goal 2.3 To increase the number of hours worked per week by TAYs.
 - Goal 2.4 To increase the number of TAYs participating in work experiences.
- Priority 3: To develop work plans to establish and operate a Comprehensive Service Center (CSC), formerly known as the Comprehensive Deaf Center.
- Goal 3.1 Engage community organizations and interested individuals in planning and designing the delivery of services to be described in the business and implementation plan.
 - Goal 3.2 Complete the development of a business and implementation plan to establish and operate the CSC.
 - Goal 3.3 Obtain technical assistance to ensure that DVR funds will be expended in accordance with Federal Regulations as stipulated in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended.
 - Goal 3.4 Define and issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the CSC.
- Priority 4: To develop and implement a strategic plan to increase the job readiness, job placement and job retention resources for VR clients.
- Goal 4.1: Increase the number of SSI and SSD consumers receiving benefits counseling.
 - Goal 4.2: Increase the number of clients receiving job readiness services.
 - Goal 4.3: Increase the number of clients receiving job retention services.

In addition, the SRC has the following four (4) recommendations in FY 2015 to complement the DVR's goals and priorities.

- I. Bridging efforts in the service of transitional youth programs between DVR and the Department of Education (DOE) special education program. The SRC continues to promote and develop partnerships with parents, committees, schools and the DOE to ensure the services needed for transition age youth are recognized, incorporated and utilized. DVR agrees that development of partnerships plays an integral role in the development of communication between DVR and DOE which will assist in increasing quality of services for TAY's.
- II. The SRC has determined the need for a full-time staff person to enable the SRC members to fully complete the work of the Council and ensure compliance with the regulations, according to the WIOA of 2014. In FY 2014, the Council voted to have the Administrative subcommittee work with the DVR to hire a full-time SRC staff person. DVR agrees that the SRC needs a full-time staff person and has funding for the position. The DVR is currently negotiating the contract for the position.
- III. In FY 2013, the SRC developed By-Laws for the Council. The SRC members developed the By-Laws to further its ability to successfully comply with the WIOA and the Council's responsibilities therein. In FY 2014, with the assistance of the DVR's attorney general, the SRC unanimously approved the By-Laws which went into effect on January 17, 2014.
- IV. The SRC actively supports the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department of Health, Developmental Disability Division and the DVR. The purposes of the MOU are: (1) to improve the transition and collaboration of DDD and DVR services for their mutual clients, and (2) to increase the opportunities for developmentally disabled clients to engage in competitive employment. The draft of the MOU is currently being reviewed by the attorney general's office.