

**Department of Education**  
**REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH**

**Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Request**

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<http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/statetables/index.html#update>.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

For carrying out, to the extent not otherwise provided, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, and the Helen Keller National Center Act, [\$3,680,497,000] \$3,683,335,000, of which [~~\$3,302,053,000~~]\$3,335,074,000 shall be for grants for vocational rehabilitation services under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act:<sup>1</sup> *Provided*, That the Secretary of Education may allocate to States, in accordance with a formula determined by the Secretary, up to \$33,021,000 of the amount provided for the vocational rehabilitation program:<sup>2</sup> *Provided further*, That section 302(g)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act shall not apply to funds provided under section 302 of such Act:<sup>3</sup> *Provided further*, That the Secretary may use amounts provided in this Act that remain available subsequent to the reallocation of funds to States pursuant to section 110(b) of the Rehabilitation Act for innovative activities aimed at improving the outcomes of individuals with disabilities as defined in section 7(20)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act, including activities aimed at improving the education, and post-school outcomes of children receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and their families that may result in long-term improvement in the SSI child recipient's economic status and self-sufficiency:<sup>4</sup> [*Provided further*, That from the remaining available amounts that are not used to carry out activities aimed at improving the education and post-school outcomes of children receiving SSI and their families authorized in the previous proviso, up to \$20,000,000 may be used for other innovative activities aimed at improving the outcomes of individuals with disabilities as defined in section 7(20)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act:]<sup>5</sup> *Provided further*, That States may award subgrants for a portion of the funds to other public and private, non-profit entities:<sup>6</sup> *Provided further*, That any funds made available subsequent to reallocation for innovative activities aimed at improving the outcomes of individuals with disabilities shall remain available until September 30, [2015]2016:<sup>7</sup> [*Provided further*, That, \$2,000,000 shall be for competitive grants to support alternative financing programs that provide for the purchase of assistive technology devices, such as a low-interest

loan fund; an interest buy-down program; a revolving loan fund; a loan guarantee; or insurance program: *Provided further*, That applicants shall provide an assurance that, and information describing the manner in which, the alternative financing program will expand and emphasize consumer choice and control: *Provided further*, That State agencies and community-based disability organizations that are directed by and operated for individuals with disabilities shall be eligible to compete].<sup>8</sup> (*Department of Education Appropriations Act, 2014*)

#### NOTE

Each language provision that is followed by a footnote reference is explained in the Analysis of Language Provisions and Changes document which follows the appropriation language.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Analysis of Language Provisions and Changes

Language Provision	Explanation
<p><sup>1</sup> ...of which [\$3,302,053,000] \$3,335,074,000 shall be for grants for vocational rehabilitation services under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act;</p>	<p>This language earmarks funds provided for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) State Grants program.</p>
<p><sup>2</sup> <u>Provided, That the Secretary of Education may allocate to States, in accordance with a formula determined by the Secretary, up to \$33,021,000 of the amount provided for the vocational rehabilitation services program</u></p>	<p>This language would give the Secretary flexibility in distributing the increase in funds for the VR program in a manner that would lessen the potential impact of the Administration's proposal to eliminate separate funding authorities for the smaller VR-related programs under the Rehabilitation Act whose activities can be carried out under the VR program.</p>
<p><sup>3</sup> <u>Provided further, That section 302(g)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act shall not apply to funds provided under section 302 of such Act:</u></p>	<p>This language overrides the requirement that 15 percent of the Training program must be spent for in-service training of agency personnel. VR State agencies may use VR State grant funds for this purpose.</p>
<p><sup>4</sup> <u>Provided further, That the Secretary may use amounts provided in this Act that remain available subsequent to the reallocation of funds to States pursuant to section 110(b) of the Rehabilitation Act for innovative activities aimed at improving the outcomes of individuals with disabilities as defined in section 7(20)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act, including activities aimed at improving the education and post-school outcomes of children receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and their families that may result in long-term improvement in the SSI child recipient's economic status and self-sufficiency:</u></p>	<p>This language would allow the Secretary to use amounts that remain available subsequent to the reallocation of funds to States under the VR State Grants program for innovative activities designed to improve the outcomes of individuals with disabilities, including, if needed, activities to improve the outcomes of children receiving SSI and their families under the PROMISE pilot program.</p>

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Analysis of Language Provisions and Changes

Language Provision	Explanation
<p><sup>5</sup> <i>Provided further</i>, That from the remaining available amounts that are not used to carry out activities aimed at improving the education and post-school outcomes of children receiving SSI and their families authorized in the previous proviso, up to \$20,000,000 may be used for other innovative activities aimed at improving the outcomes of individuals with disabilities as defined in section 7(20)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act:]</p>	<p>This language limits the amount of remaining available VR funds that can be used for conducting other innovative activities aimed at improving the outcomes of individuals with disabilities, other than for carrying out the PROMISE program. The deletion of this language would ensure that all unused funds would remain available to improve the outcomes of individuals with disabilities, instead of being returned to the Treasury.</p>
<p><sup>6</sup> <i>Provided further</i>, That States may award subgrants for a portion of the funds to other public and private, non-profit entities:</p>	<p>This language would permit States to use a portion of their project funds to make subgrants to other public and private, non-profit entities for carrying out innovative activities aimed at improving the outcomes of individuals with disabilities.</p>
<p><sup>7</sup> <i>Provided further</i>, That any funds made available subsequent to reallotment for innovative activities aimed at improving the outcomes of individuals with disabilities shall remain available until September 30, [2015]2016:</p>	<p>This language would permit the funds made available subsequent to reallotment of VR State Grant funds for activities aimed at improving the outcomes of individuals with disabilities to remain available for 2 years.</p>
<p><sup>8</sup> <i>Provided further</i>, That, \$2,000,000 shall be for competitive grants to support alternative financing programs that provide for the purchase of assistive technology devices, such as a low-interest loan fund; an interest buy-down program; a revolving loan fund; a loan guarantee; or insurance program: <i>Provided further</i>, That applicants shall provide an assurance that, and information describing the manner in which, the alternative financing program will expand and emphasize consumer choice and control: <i>Provided further</i>, That State agencies and community-based disability organizations that are directed by and operated for individuals with disabilities shall be eligible to compete].</p>	<p>This language, which earmarks funds to support alternative financing programs, is deleted because the request does not include funds for this program in fiscal year 2015.</p>

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Appropriation, Adjustments and Transfers (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation/Adjustments/Transfers	2013	2014	2015
<b>Discretionary:</b>			
Appropriation .....	\$389,569	\$378,444	\$348,261
Across-the-board reduction (P.L. 113-6) .....	<u>-779</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Total, discretionary appropriation.....	388,790	378,444	348,261
Sequester (P.L. 112-25).....	<u>-19,597</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Total, adjusted discretionary appropriation..	369,193	378,444	348,261
<b>Mandatory:</b>			
Appropriation .....	3,230,972	3,302,053	3,335,074
Sequester (P.L. 112-25).....	<u>-164,780</u>	<u>-237,748</u>	<u>0</u>
Total, adjusted mandatory appropriation .....	3,066,192	3,064,305	3,335,074
 Total, adjusted discretionary and mandatory appropriation	 3,435,385	 3,442,749	 3,683,335

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Summary of Changes (dollars in thousands)

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2014.....	\$3,680,497 <sup>1</sup>
2015.....	<u>3,683,335</u>
Net change.....	+2,838

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<sup>1</sup> Excludes 7.2 percent sequester reduction of mandatory VR State Grant funds pursuant to the Budget Control Act (P.L. 112-25)

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<b>Increases:</b>	<u>2014 base</u>	<u>Change from base</u>
<u>Program:</u>		
Increase in funding for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) State grants.	\$3,302,053	+\$33,021
Increase in funding for NIDRR to support research activities focusing on employment.	103,970	<u>+4,030</u>
Subtotal, increases		37,051
<b>Decreases:</b>	<u>2014 base</u>	<u>Change from base</u>
<u>Program:</u>		
Eliminates funding for the Supported Employment State grants program consistent with the Administration's proposal to reduce duplication of effort and administrative costs and improve efficiency and accountability.	27,548	-27,548
Eliminates funding for the Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers program consistent with the Administration's proposal to reduce duplication of effort and administrative costs.	1,196	-1,196
Decrease in funding for the Training program consistent with the Administration's proposal to reduce administrative costs, streamline program administration, and improve efficiency and accountability.	33,657	-3,469
Decrease reflects the elimination of funding for a separate alternative financing program, authorized through appropriations language in fiscal year 2014.	33,000	<u>-2,000</u>
Subtotal, decreases		-34,213
Net change		+ 2,838

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Authorizing Legislation

(dollars in thousands)

Activity	2014 Authorized	2014 Estimate	2015 Authorized	2015 Request
Vocational rehabilitation (VR) State grants:				
Grants to States (RA-I A, B-110 and 111)	0 <sup>1,2</sup>	\$3,027,104	0 <sup>1,3</sup>	\$3,294,586
Grants for Indians (RA-I-C)	--- <sup>2,4</sup>	37,201	--- <sup>3,4</sup>	40,488
Client assistance State grants (RA-I-112)	0 <sup>1</sup>	12,000	0 <sup>1</sup>	12,000
Supported employment State grants (RA-VI-B)	0 <sup>5</sup>	27,548	0 <sup>5</sup>	0
Migrant and seasonal farmworkers (RA-III-304)	0 <sup>5</sup>	1,196	0 <sup>5</sup>	0
Training (RA-III-302(a)-(g)(2),(h)-(i))	0 <sup>1</sup>	33,657	0 <sup>1</sup>	30,188
Demonstration and training programs (RA-III-303)	0 <sup>1</sup>	5,796	0 <sup>1</sup>	5,796
Independent living (IL):				
State grants (RA-VII-1-B)	0 <sup>1</sup>	22,878	0 <sup>1</sup>	22,878
Centers (RA-VII-1-C)	0 <sup>1</sup>	78,305	0 <sup>1</sup>	78,305
Services for older blind individuals (RA-VII-2)	0 <sup>1</sup>	33,317	0 <sup>1</sup>	33,317
Protection and advocacy of individual rights (RA-V-509)	0 <sup>1</sup>	17,650	0 <sup>1</sup>	17,650
National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (RA-II)	0 <sup>1</sup>	103,970	0 <sup>1</sup>	108,000
Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults (HKNCA)	0 <sup>1</sup>	9,127	0 <sup>1</sup>	9,127
Assistive technology (ATA):				
Assistive technology programs (ATA-4,5, and 6)	0 <sup>6</sup>	31,000	0 <sup>6</sup>	31,000
Alternative financing programs	<u>0<sup>7</sup></u>	<u>2,000<sup>7</sup></u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Total definite authorization	0		0	
Total discretionary appropriation		378,444		348,261

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## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Authorizing Legislation—continued (dollars in thousands)

Total mandatory appropriation	\$3,302,053	\$3,335,074
Total appropriation	3,680,497	3,683,335
Portion of request not authorized		3,683,335
Total appropriation including mandatory decrease	3,442,749	

<sup>1</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2004; the program is authorized in FY 2014 through appropriations language. Continued funding is proposed for this program in FY 2015 under appropriations language.

<sup>2</sup> The authorizing legislation specifies that the amount to be appropriated for VR State grants for a fiscal year be at least at the level of the prior fiscal year increased by the 12-month percentage change from October to October in the Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers (CPIU). In FY 2014, this amount was \$3,302,053 thousand.

<sup>3</sup> The authorizing legislation specifies that the amount to be appropriated for a fiscal year be at least the level of the prior fiscal year increased by the 12-month percentage change from October to October in the CPIU. In FY 2015, this amount is \$3,335,074 thousand.

<sup>4</sup> The Rehabilitation Act requires that 1.0 percent to 1.5 percent of the appropriation for Vocational Rehabilitation State grants be set aside for Grants for Indians.

<sup>5</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2004. The Administration is not proposing to authorize this program through appropriations language for FY 2015.

<sup>6</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2011; this program is proposed for authorization in FY 2015 through appropriations language. Up to \$1,235 thousand may be used for National Activities, unless the amount available for AT State grants exceeds \$20,953,534, in which case up to \$1,900 thousand may be used for National Activities.

<sup>7</sup> The FY 2014 appropriation authorized funds to support a separate competitive alternative financing program.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Appropriations History (dollars in thousands)

Year	Budget Estimate to Congress	House Allowance	Senate Allowance	Appropriation
2006	\$3,059,298	\$3,128,638	\$3,133,638	\$3,125,544
2007	3,180,414	N/A <sup>1</sup>	N/A <sup>1</sup>	3,242,512
2008	3,184,263	3,279,743	3,286,942	3,276,768
2009	3,218,264	3,387,443 <sup>2</sup>	3,379,109 <sup>2</sup>	3,387,762
Recovery Act Supplemental (PL 111-5)	0	700,000	610,000	680,000
2010	3,500,735	3,504,305	3,507,322 <sup>3</sup>	3,506,861
2011	3,565,326	3,501,766 <sup>4</sup>	3,542,510 <sup>3</sup>	3,474,718 <sup>5</sup>
2012	3,541,111	3,522,686 <sup>6</sup>	3,511,735 <sup>6</sup>	3,511,281
2013	3,517,710	3,511,281 <sup>7</sup>	3,626,380 <sup>7</sup>	3,622,925
2014	3,655,577	N/A <sup>8</sup>	3,698,174 <sup>3</sup>	3,680,497
2015	3,683,335			

<sup>1</sup> This account operated under a full-year continuing resolution (P.L. 110-5). House and Senate Allowance amounts are shown as N/A (Not Available) because neither body passed a separate appropriations bill.

<sup>2</sup> The levels for the House and Senate allowances reflect action on the regular annual 2009 appropriations bill, which proceeded in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress only through the House Subcommittee and the Senate Committee.

<sup>3</sup> The levels for the Senate allowance reflects Committee action only.

<sup>4</sup> The levels for the House allowance reflects the House-passed full-year continuing resolution.

<sup>5</sup> The level for appropriation reflects the Department of Defense and Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011 (P.L. 112-10).

<sup>6</sup> The level for the House allowance reflects an introduced bill and the level for the Senate allowance reflects Senate Committee action only.

<sup>7</sup> The level for the House and Senate allowances reflect action on the regular annual 2013 appropriations bill, which proceeded in the 112th Congress only through the House Subcommittee and the Senate Committee.

<sup>8</sup> The House allowance is shown as N/A because there was no Subcommittee action.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Significant Items in FY 2014 Appropriations Reports

#### Vocational Rehabilitation State Grants - PROMISE

Senate: Report 113-71. After covering the costs of PROMISE, the Administration requests and the Committee recommends new authority through the DIF [Disability Innovation Fund] to provide \$5,000,000 to support a new cross-agency initiative aimed at improving the educational and employment outcomes for disconnected youth with disabilities and providing targeted technical assistance to support performance partnership pilots. The Committee expects the initiative to serve youth with disabilities between the ages of 14 and 24 who are homeless, in foster care, involved in the justice system, or are neither employed nor enrolled in an educational institution.

The amount of unused VR State Grant funding will not be determined until the end of fiscal year 2014. If an excess amount of funds are available after supporting PROMISE and the disconnected youth and SSA-ED initiatives, the Committee expects the DIF to support the development of effective, evidence-based strategies to improve the long-term outcomes for people with disabilities. The Committee should be notified in advance of announcements related to any additional activities.

Response: The Department will notify the Committee of its plans for using unobligated fiscal year 2014 funds that remain available after covering the costs of the PROMISE program.

#### Demonstration and Training Programs

Senate: Report 113-71. The Committee recommendation also includes \$750,000 to support a new competition for parent information and training centers, which provide information and training on transition planning, the adult service system, and strategies that prepare youth for successful employment, postsecondary education, and independent living outcomes. The Committee expects RSA to coordinate with OSEP in carrying out this activity.

Response: The funds provided under the Demonstration and Training programs for parent information and training centers (§303(c) of the Rehabilitation Act) will allow the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to conduct a competition for this program in fiscal year 2014. RSA last funded the parent information and training program in fiscal year 2011 and intends to fund the same number of awards, with a slightly larger grant award size, in fiscal year 2014.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FISCAL YEAR 2015 PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

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(in thousands of dollars)						
Account, Program and Activity	Category Code	2013 Appropriation	2014 Appropriation	2015 President's Budget	2015 President's Budget Compared to 2014 Appropriation	
					Amount	Percent
<b>Rehabilitation Services and Disability Research</b>						
1. Vocational rehabilitation State grants:						
(a) Grants to States (RA Title I-A, sections 110 and 111)	M	3,028,969	3,027,104	3,294,586	267,482	8.836%
(b) Grants to Indians (RA Title I-C)	M	37,224	37,201	40,488	3,287	8.836%
Subtotal		3,066,192	3,064,305	3,335,074	270,769	8.836%
Mandatory Baseline	M	3,066,192	3,302,053	3,335,074	33,021	1.000%
2. Client assistance State grants (RA section 112)	D	11,600	12,000	12,000	0	0.000%
3. Training (RA section 302)	D	33,657	33,657	30,188	(3,469)	-10.307%
4. Demonstration and training programs (RA Section 303)	D	5,046	5,796	5,796	0	0.000%
5. Migrant and seasonal farmworkers (RA section 304)	D	1,196	1,196	0	(1,196)	-100.000%
6. Protection and advocacy of individual rights (RA section 509)	D	17,088	17,650	17,650	0	0.000%
7. Supported employment State grants (RA VI-B)	D	27,548	27,548	0	(27,548)	-100.000%
8. Independent living (RA VII):						
(a) State grants (Chapter 1, Part B)	D	22,137	22,878	22,878	0	0.000%
(b) Centers (Chapter 1, Part C)	D	75,772	78,305	78,305	0	0.000%
(c) Services for older blind individuals (Chapter 2)	D	32,239	33,317	33,317	0	0.000%
9. Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults (HKNCA)	D	8,667	9,127	9,127	0	0.000%
10. National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (RA II)	D	103,125	103,970	108,000	4,030	3.876%
11. Assistive technology programs (ATA, sections 4, 5, and 6)	D	31,118	33,000	31,000	(2,000)	-6.061%
Subtotal		369,193	378,444	348,261	(30,183)	-7.976%
Total		3,435,385	3,442,749	3,683,335	240,586	6.988%
Discretionary	D	369,193	378,444	348,261	(30,183)	-7.976%
Mandatory	M	3,066,192	3,064,305	3,335,074	270,769	8.836%

NOTES: D = discretionary program; M= mandatory program; FY= fiscal year

For mandatory programs, the levels shown in the 2014 Appropriation column reflects the 7.2 percent sequester that went into effect October 1, 2013, pursuant to the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25); the 2015 President's Budget column does not reflect a sequester in 2015.

Detail may not add to totals due to rounding.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Summary of Request

People with disabilities represent a vital and integral part of our society. As a Nation, our goals include independence, equal opportunity, and productivity for Americans with disabilities, many of whom require a range of services and supports in order to learn, work productively and live in the community. Numerous pieces of Federal legislation establish policies to meet these requirements. We recognize that once these supports and services are provided, people with disabilities contribute to the fabric of our country just like everyone else.

The Rehabilitation Services and Disability Research account supports grants to States for vocational rehabilitation (VR) and independent living services and a variety of smaller research, demonstration, and service programs authorized under the Rehabilitation Act, as well programs authorized under the Helen Keller National Center Act and the Assistive Technology Act of 1998 (the AT Act). The Administration's 2015 request for this account provides \$3.7 billion to support comprehensive and coordinated vocational rehabilitation and independent living services for individuals with disabilities through research, training, demonstration, technical assistance, evaluation, and direct service programs.

The \$3.3 billion request for the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) State Grants program includes an increase of \$33 million more than the fiscal year 2014 mandatory level, to assist States and tribal governments to increase the participation of individuals with disabilities in the workforce. The request includes the CPIU adjustment specified in the authorizing statute, which would offset the reduction in funds (\$32 million) resulting from the Administration's proposal to eliminate separate funding authorities for the smaller VR-related programs under the Rehabilitation Act. Direct service programs proposed for elimination include Supported Employment (SE) State Grants and Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers programs. The services provided through these programs can be provided by the larger VR State Grants program. The Administration is also proposing appropriations language that would override the requirement to set aside the portion of the Training program funds for grants to State VR agencies to support in-service training for agency personnel since in-service training can be provided through the VR State Grants program.

The Administration believes that the proposed eliminations would reduce duplication of effort and administrative costs, streamline program administration at the Federal and State levels, and improve accountability. To lessen the potential impact of this proposal, the Administration is proposing language that would give the Department flexibility to allocate up to \$33 million of the funds provided for the Vocational Rehabilitation State Grants program to States in accordance with a formula determined by the Secretary.

The 2015 request also includes language that would allow the Department to use amounts under the VR State Grants program that would otherwise lapse to support innovative activities aimed at improving outcomes for individuals with disabilities, including activities under the Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income (PROMISE) program, and that would provide authority for these funds to remain available for Federal obligation until September 30, 2016. After paying continuation costs of the PROMISE program, the Administration proposes to use funds that remain available at the end of fiscal year 2015 for a new Transition Model System initiative that would support the development and testing of a

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Summary of Request

coordinated model system of transition planning, services, and supports in order to improve postsecondary results for youth with disabilities.

The \$108 million request for the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research includes an increase of \$4 million more than the 2014 level for research activities in the employment domain under a new regulatory framework that NIDRR intends to have in place by 2015.

The Administration's request of \$30.2 million for the Training program includes a reduction of \$3.5 million from the 2014 level, reflecting the elimination of the funding reservation for the In-Service Training program.

The \$31 million request for Assistive Technology (AT) programs includes \$25.6 million for the AT State grant program, \$4.3 million for the Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology program, and \$1.0 million for technical assistance required under the AT Act's National Activities authority. The proposed decrease of \$2 million from the 2014 level reflects the elimination of funding for a separate alternative financing program that was authorized in the 2014 appropriations language.

All other programs in the Rehabilitation Services and Disability Research account would be maintained at the 2014 level. The Administration believes that this level will provide sufficient funds for the activities in these programs.

The Administration continues to look for ways to better coordinate services and improve outcomes for people with disabilities. Since 2012, the Departments of Education and Labor have instituted a formal process to review current investments, plan future ones, and share information about common goals and grantees. These efforts have led to joint dialogues and briefings, the sharing of spending plans for the purposes of eliminating program duplication, and identifying areas in which previous investments might be coordinated. In addition, the fiscal year 2015 request continues to seek to reestablish demonstration authority for the Social Security Disability Insurance program. Staff from the Social Security Administration, Health and Human Services (HHS), Education, and Labor have participated in this effort and have developed proposals for a range of early-intervention demonstration projects which would leverage programs in HHS, Education, and Labor.

The Rehabilitation Act requires that 1 percent of the aggregate funds appropriated for programs authorized in Titles II, III, VI, and VII be used for minority outreach activities. In fiscal year 2015, this amount would total \$2.78 million, and to the extent possible, the requirement will be implemented by reserving 1 percent of the funds provided for each of the specified programs.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

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### Vocational rehabilitation State grants

(Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title I, Parts A, B (Sections 110 and 111), and C)

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2015 Authorization: 0 <sup>1, 2</sup>

Budget Authority:

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>Change</u>
State grants	\$3,261.966	\$3,294,586	+\$32,620
Indian set-aside	<u>40,087</u>	<u>40,488</u>	<u>+401</u>
Total	3,302,053 <sup>3</sup>	3,335,074	+33,021

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<sup>1</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2004. The Administration proposes to continue funding this program in FY 2015 through appropriations language.

<sup>2</sup> The authorizing statute specifies that the amount to be appropriated for a fiscal year be at least the level of the prior fiscal year increased by the 12-month percentage change from October to October in the Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers (CPIU). In FY 2015, this amount is \$3,335,074 thousand. The authorizing statute also requires that not less than 1.0 percent and not more than 1.5 percent of the appropriation for each fiscal year for Vocational Rehabilitation State Grants be set aside for Grants for American Indians.

<sup>3</sup> The amount shown in the 2014 column is the mandatory amount that was appropriated for the VR State Grants program in the 2014 Omnibus Act and does not include the 7.2 percent sequester reduction for mandatory programs pursuant to the Budget Control Act of 2011.

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## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) State Grants program supports VR services through formula grants to State VR agencies. These agencies provide a wide range of services designed to help persons with disabilities prepare for and engage in gainful employment to the extent of their capabilities. Individuals with a physical or mental impairment that results in a substantial impediment to employment who can benefit in terms of an employment outcome and require VR services are eligible for assistance. The VR State Grants program is a required partner in the one-stop service delivery systems under section 121 of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

Program services are tailored to the specific needs of the individual through an individualized plan for employment (IPE). An eligible individual, or as appropriate, the individual's representative, may develop all or part of the IPE with or without assistance from a qualified rehabilitation counselor, or with technical assistance from other outside resources. The IPE must be agreed to by the individual and approved and signed by a qualified rehabilitation counselor employed by the State VR agency. The program may provide a variety of services, such as vocational evaluation, counseling, mental and physical restoration, education, vocational training, job placement, rehabilitation technology, and supported employment services. Priority is given to serving individuals with the most significant disabilities.

This is a current-funded formula grant program that provides financial assistance to States to cover the cost of direct services and program administration. The authorizing legislation requires

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the program to be funded at least at the prior year level, and increased by the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index for Urban Consumers (CPIU) over the past year. If a State has met all matching requirements for the fiscal year in which funds were appropriated, the State may carry over unobligated Federal funds for an additional year.

An allotment formula that takes into account population and per capita income is used to distribute funds among the States. The fiscal year 2013 State distributions were based on the July 1, 2011 estimates published in December 2011. The fiscal year 2014 State distributions are based on the July 1, 2012 estimates published on December 20, 2012. The fiscal year 2015 State distributions will be based on the July 1, 2013 estimates published on December 30, 2013. Per capita income averages for fiscal year 2013 were based on Bureau of Economic Analysis revised estimates for calendar years 2007, 2008, and 2009 as reported by the Department of Commerce as September 22, 2011. Per capita income averages for fiscal years 2014 and 2015 are based on Bureau of Economic Analysis revised estimates for calendar years 2009, 2010, and 2011 as reported by the Department of Commerce on September 25, 2012.

Grant funds are administered by VR agencies designated by each State. There are currently a total of 80 State VR agencies. Thirty-two (32) States operate a “combined” agency serving all disability categories. Twenty-four (24) States operate a separate agency for individuals who are blind or visually impaired and a “general” agency for all other disability categories. The State matching requirement is 21.3 percent, except the State share is 50 percent for the cost of construction of a facility for community rehabilitation program purposes. States are required to maintain the level of State expenditures made under the State plan from non-Federal sources at least at the level spent during the fiscal year 2 years earlier. Each State is also required to reserve and use a portion of the Federal funds received under the VR State Grants program for innovation and expansion activities authorized in section 101(a)(18).

Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act (the Act) requires the establishment of evaluation standards and performance indicators for the VR program that include outcome and related measures of program performance. Each State VR agency must report program performance data 60 days after the end of each fiscal year. The performance data are used to determine if the State is in compliance with the evaluation standards and performance indicators. A State agency failing to meet the standards must develop a program improvement plan outlining specific actions to be taken to improve program performance. The Department provides technical assistance to those State agencies that perform below the established evaluation standards to assist them to improve their performance.

The Act requires that not less than 1.0 percent or more than 1.5 percent of the funds appropriated for the VR State grants program be set aside for grants under the American Indian VR Services program (section 121 of the Act). Service grants for up to 5 years are awarded to Indian tribes on a competitive basis to help tribes develop the capacity to provide VR services to American Indians with disabilities living on or near reservations.

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Funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years were as follows:

	(dollars in thousands)
2010 .....	\$3,084,696
2011 .....	3,084,696
2012 .....	3,121,712
2013 .....	3,066,192
2014 .....	3,302,053 <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The amount shown for 2014 is the mandatory amount that was appropriated for the VR State Grants program in the 2014 Omnibus Act and does not include the 7.2 percent sequester reduction for mandatory programs pursuant to the Budget Control Act of 2011.

### FY 2015 BUDGET REQUEST

The Administration requests \$3.3 billion, an increase of \$33.0 million over the fiscal year 2014 mandatory level to assist States and Tribal governments to increase the participation of individuals with disabilities in the workforce. Of the amount requested, \$40.5 million would be set aside to support grants under the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS) program. The request includes the CPIU adjustment specified in the authorizing statute (1.0 percent for 2015), which would offset the reduction in funds (\$32.2 million) resulting from the Administration's proposal to eliminate separate funding authorities for the smaller VR-related programs under the Rehabilitation Act.

The Administration believes that the proposed changes would reduce duplication of effort and administrative costs, streamline program administration at the Federal and State level, and improve efficiency and accountability. Direct service programs proposed for elimination include the Supported Employment State Grants and Migrants and Seasonal Farmworkers programs. In addition, the Administration is proposing language that would override the requirement in section 302(g)(3) to set-aside 15 percent of the funds appropriated for the Training program to support the training of existing State VR agency personnel. State VR agencies are able to use VR State Grant funds for training State agency personnel, consistent with the agency's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development plan under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act. The proposal would eliminate the administrative costs involved in making small grants each year to State VR agencies under the Training program and improve the efficiency of training delivered under the Rehabilitation Act.

To lessen the potential impact of this proposal, the Administration is proposing appropriations language that would give the Department flexibility to allocate up to \$33.0 million of the funds provided for the Vocational Rehabilitation State Grants program (the amount of the CPIU adjustment) to States in accordance with a formula determined by the Secretary. For fiscal year 2015, the Department is considering distributing these funds in a manner similar to the allocation formula currently used for the Supported Employment State Grants. Under this scenario a State would receive one award equal to the sum of their allocation under this formula and their allocation under the VR program consistent with section 110(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

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The direct service programs proposed for elimination have the primary purpose of assisting individuals with disabilities who are eligible to receive services under the VR State Grants program to obtain employment. Individuals who receive services from funds provided under the Supported Employment program also receive services under the VR State grants program, including supported employment services. Individuals receiving services under the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers program are eligible to receive VR services and most of these individuals are currently receiving these VR services. The four current grantees under the Migrants and Seasonal Farmworkers program will receive their fifth and final year of funding in fiscal year 2014. All States that have significant numbers of migrant and seasonal farmworkers would be encouraged to use their VR funds to carry out the strategies and practices that have been found to be effective in reaching out to this population. The Administration believes that the benefits of this elimination outweigh the costs of any short term disruption that may be encountered as a result of this proposal.

Although many people with disabilities are obtaining jobs and remaining employed, the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is still unacceptably high. For example, in its “Persons with a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics” report (2012), the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics released results from the American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau) indicating that of those aged 16-64 (U.S. working age population), people with sensory, physical, mental, and/or self-care disabilities are much less likely to be employed (either full-time or part-time) than people without such disabilities (27.0 percent versus 70.4 percent respectively) and that only 19.1 percent of working-age individuals with disabilities were usually working full-time. Source: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/disabl.toc.htm>.

The VR State Grants program is the primary Federal vehicle for assisting individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, to prepare for, obtain, or retain employment. Nationally, there are about 1 million individuals with disabilities in various phases of the vocational rehabilitation process within the VR system, about 93 percent of whom are individuals with significant disabilities. If a State VR agency cannot serve all eligible persons, it must serve first those individuals with the most significant disabilities under an “order of selection.” For fiscal year 2013, the State Plans of 37 of the 80 State VR agencies documented that the agency had established an order of selection, one more agency than in fiscal year 2012. This total includes 62.5 percent of the general and combined State VR agencies and 8 percent of the State VR agencies serving blind individuals.

Performance among State VR agencies varies considerably in both good and bad economic periods. In fiscal year 2009, there was a large decrease in the total number of individuals who obtained an employment outcome and the number continued to decline in fiscal year 2010 to a low of about 172,000; although the overall drop in employment outcomes was smaller from 2009 to 2010. The decrease in employment outcomes can, at least in part, be attributed to the decline in available employment opportunities. Many VR agencies in States experiencing high rates of unemployment for the general population have had a difficult time assisting individuals with disabilities to obtain employment. However, there were a number of VR agencies in States with high rates of unemployment that did not experience a decrease in employment. On a national level the decline ended after 2010 with a 3.7 percent increase in employment outcomes in fiscal 2011 and smaller increases in years 2012 and 2013 of about 1 percent. Preliminary 2013 data show continued progress with about 182,715 individuals with disabilities obtaining an

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employment outcome. The performance of many State agencies continues to vary, particularly in terms of the number and percentage of employment outcomes (see further discussion under performance measures section). For example, in fiscal year 2012, 57 of the 80 agencies experienced an increase or no change in the number of employment outcomes, while 23 agencies had a decrease in employment outcomes.

The resources of the VR program are critical to assisting individuals with significant disabilities, for whom the economic recession has had a disproportionate impact, to obtain employment. The Department recognizes the need to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with significant disabilities and transition-age youth with disabilities. In order to improve the effectiveness of the VR program, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) is moving forward on a number of fronts. For example, RSA is revising its accountability framework to shift the emphasis of its monitoring and technical assistance efforts from compliance to performance and will focus on employment and transition outcomes, as well as how State VR agencies use their funds to improve performance and results of the VR program. At the same time, RSA will continue to ensure an appropriate level of accountability in meeting program requirements. In addition, RSA is changing the way it supports the preparation of VR counselors by focusing on evidence-based practices and the competency-based skills necessary to meet the demands of employers and promote employment of individuals with disabilities.

Approximately 35 percent of current VR consumers are youth with disabilities aged 14-24 and the percentage continues to rise. Accordingly, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) is also implementing a number of strategies to improve outcomes for youth with disabilities and help to ensure they have the education and skills necessary to be successful in postsecondary education and the workforce. OSERS is working to build stronger collaboration with its partners and create opportunities to leverage resources across the Department, including general and special education, postsecondary education, adult and career and technical education. OSERS is also working to create stronger linkages across systems, including the American Job Centers, long term support systems, transportation, housing, and Medicaid. OSERS is working with partner Agencies (Labor, Social Security, and Health and Human Services) to identify data sharing opportunities and compatible outcome goals for transition service programs both internally and across Agencies.

In addition, OSERS is developing guidance for the many partners that play a role in the success of a student with a disability's transition from high school to postsecondary education and careers, including State educational agencies, local educational agencies, State vocational rehabilitation agencies, local transition coordinators, and students with disabilities (and their families). Through this guidance, OSERS hopes to encourage collaborative transition practices that will enable youth with disabilities to participate in competitive, integrated employment.

Data reveal that VR agencies have better outcomes when they work in partnership with independent living (IL) centers. To meet the goals of working and living independently in the community, RSA is working to identify promising practices of collaboration, as well as to incentivize IL programs to work closely with VR, while simultaneously providing IL services to VR consumers.

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#### Disability Innovation Fund (DIF)

Section 110(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act requires the RSA Commissioner to make available for reallocation any funds that were allotted but not utilized by a State to carry out the VR program. These funds are reallocated to States that will be able to use such additional amounts during the current or subsequent fiscal year, provided they are able to pay the non-Federal share of the cost in the fiscal year for which the funds are appropriated. VR funds become available for reallocation when a State is unable to provide the required non-Federal share (21.3 percent) for the total amount of funds allotted to the State under the formula distribution or when a State is unable to maintain its level of State expenditures, maintenance of effort (MOE), (and did not request or receive a full or partial waiver of its MOE requirement).

The fiscal year 2012 and 2013 appropriations acts included language that allows the Department to use amounts that remain available subsequent to the reallocation of funds to States under the VR State Grants program to improve the education and employment outcomes of children receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and their families. The language also provided authority for the funds to remain available for Federal obligation for an additional 12 month period. Absent authority provided in appropriations language, these annual funds would lapse and no longer be available for Federal obligation.

In fiscal year 2013, such funds remaining from the 2012 appropriation, were used to award 5 -year grants to 5 States and a consortium of States for model demonstration projects (MDPs) under the Promoting Readiness of Minors in Social Security Income (PROMISE) program. PROMISE is a joint initiative with the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Departments of Health and Human Services and Labor. Under the PROMISE program, States are developing partnerships that will implement interventions designed to improve the provision and coordination of services and supports for children who receive SSI and their families and achieve outcomes that lead to increased economic self-sufficiency and a reduction in their dependence on SSI payments. A rigorously designed national evaluation of PROMISE will be conducted under a contract with SSA, in collaboration with the Department of Education. The evaluation will guide implementation, gather evidence, and validate project outcomes.

In fiscal year 2014, the Department will use the approximately \$81 million in unobligated VR funds that became available from the fiscal year 2013 appropriation for the VR State Grants program to cover third and fourth year continuation costs of the MDPs as well as continuation costs of the PROMISE technical assistance grant to be awarded later this year.

The fiscal year 2014 appropriation also includes language that allows the Department to use funds that remain available subsequent to the reallocation of funds to State VR agencies to support activities under the PROMISE program and up to an additional \$20 million of such funds for innovative activities aimed at improving outcomes for individuals with disabilities (DIF). The language also provides authority for the funds to remain available for Federal obligation until September 30, 2015. Initiatives under DIF support innovative cross-agency projects to improve educational, employment and other key outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The Administration is considering options for the use of these 2014 funds including support for disconnected youth with disabilities under the Administration's Disconnected Youth Initiative and SSDI/SSI pilot demonstration projects targeted at early intervention efforts to preserve the wellbeing and work ability of the non-beneficiaries most at risk of becoming severely impaired.

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For fiscal year 2015 request, the Administration is requesting similar language, including authority for the funds to remain available for Federal obligation until September 30, 2016. Funds that become available subsequent to the reallocation of fiscal year 2015 VR funds would first be used to pay any remaining continuation costs of the PROMISE program. The Administration proposes to use any additional VR funds that remain available at the end of fiscal year 2015 for a new Transition Model System (TMS) initiative under the DIF that would support the development and testing of a coordinated model system of transition planning, services, and supports in order to improve postsecondary results for youth with disabilities.

The transition of youth with disabilities from school to adult life is complex. Youth with disabilities have different levels and types of disability and may be eligible for different programs serving subsets of the target population. In addition, these youth come from a variety of situations, such as rural and urban settings; families living in poverty or affluence; families where English is not spoken in the home; and families that can build on generations of social capital in their communities. Further complexity comes from the mix of resources, programs, educational experiences, accommodations, and protections that children with disabilities and their families may need as they plan to leave school and the entitlement to services provided under the IDEA. States, schools, postsecondary institutions, employers, and families continue to seek ways to blend these programs and resources in the right way for the right student so that any young person with disabilities can find a path to success. While the literature includes a good deal of information about transition practices, the array of options can be confusing to families, youth, educators, and public and private providers.

To address these challenges, the Administration is proposing a new demonstration initiative that would develop and test a coordinated model system of transition planning, services, and supports. This initiative would build on current knowledge from a variety of investments that OSERS and others have made in this area, including early knowledge gained from the PROMISE grants. Under the proposed Transition Model System (TMS), services and supports would be delivered through a comprehensive coordinated system designed to improve career preparation, postsecondary education, and competitive employment and include a consortium of key system representatives such as vocational rehabilitation, secondary and postsecondary education, community rehabilitation providers; disability support service providers, business and employers, and families. TMS projects would identify, implement, and test core components of a transition system service delivery model that would be validated through a rigorous evaluation of the model system. The target population would be broader than under the PROMISE program which is limited to children who receive SSI and would include youth with disabilities ages 14-24 who are receiving services under the IDEA or accommodations pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, as well as youth with disabilities who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out of high school.

The Department estimates that at least \$15 million would be needed to support the cost of the proposed 5-year TMS projects. If sufficient funds become available to support the TMS demonstration, the proposed demonstration grant(s) to be awarded under the Demonstration and Training authority under section 303 of the Rehabilitation Act would be integrated as a component of this more comprehensive system model.

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#### American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services

In fiscal year 2015, the Department would set aside \$40.5 million for grants under the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS) program. The request would enable the Department to provide support for about 89 tribal VR projects, including 32 new awards and 57 continuation awards. These funds assist tribal governments to provide a program of VR services, in a culturally relevant manner, to American Indians with disabilities residing on or near reservations.

#### PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

#### Vocational rehabilitation State grants

<u>Measures</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Individuals receiving services <sup>1</sup>	1,003,000	1,003,000	1,005,000
Individuals with significant disabilities as a percent of all individuals receiving services	93%	93%	93%
Total number of cases closed	490,000	489,500	489,000
Individuals whose cases were closed and received VR services	340,500	340,000	339,500
Individuals achieving an employment outcome <sup>2</sup>	182,715	183,300	184,000
Individuals with significant disabilities as a percent of all individuals achieving an employment outcome	91.5%	91.5%	91.5%

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Note: Data for fiscal years 2013 - 2015 are projections based on actual data for fiscal years 2011 and 2012 and preliminary data for fiscal year 2013 from the RSA Quarterly Cumulative Caseload Report (RSA-113).

<sup>1</sup> Includes all eligible individuals who received VR services during the fiscal year.

<sup>2</sup> Number of individuals who exited the program after receiving services and achieved an employment outcome.

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#### American Indian vocational rehabilitation services

<u>Program funding</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Project funding:			
New project funding	0 <sup>1</sup>	\$21,195	\$15,380
Continuation funding	\$37,224 <sup>2,3</sup>	\$15,997 <sup>2,3</sup>	\$25,100 <sup>3</sup>
Peer review of new award	0	\$9	\$8
Number of projects:			
New projects	0	48	32
Continuation	<u>85</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>57</u>
Total projects	<u>85</u>	<u>85</u>	<u>89</u>

<sup>1</sup> In order to implement the recommendation from a GAO report (GAO12-348) that the Department review its practices with respect to eligibility requirements of the AIVRS program and take appropriate action with respect to grants made to tribes that do not have Federal or State reservations, the Department cancelled the program's FY 2012 and FY 2013 competitions and published a notice to extend the 8 projects that would have ended in FY 2012 for a second year and the 24 projects that would have ended in FY 2013 for an additional year. The Department conducted much of that review and is continuing the process of tribal consultation. In the meantime, the Department determined that it is in the best interest of the program to hold a competition for FY 2014 while it proceeds with the process of regulating on the eligibility requirements of the AIVRS program.

<sup>2</sup> The total amount of continuation funding shown in the table does not include 3 projects for which the FY 2011-2014 continuation costs were paid in FY 2010. These costs were paid from unobligated funds that became available as a result of the reallocation of funds under the VR State Grants program carried out pursuant to section 110(b)(2).

<sup>3</sup> The total amount of continuation funding shown in the table does not include 2 projects for which the FY 2012-2015 continuation costs were paid in FY 2011. These costs were paid from unobligated funds that became available as a result of the reallocation of funds under the VR State Grants program carried out pursuant to section 110(b)(2).

## PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

### Performance Measures

This section presents selected program performance information, including, for example, GPRA goals, objectives, measures, and performance targets and data, and an assessment of the progress made toward achieving program results. Achievement of program results is based on the cumulative effect of the resources provided in previous years and those requested in fiscal year 2015 and future years, as well as the resources and efforts invested by those served by this program. Fiscal year 2013 data for the VR State Grants and the American Indian VR Services programs will be available in May of 2014.

### VR State Grants

**Goal: Individuals with disabilities served by the Vocational Rehabilitation State Grant program will achieve high quality employment.**

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**Objective:** *Ensure that individuals with disabilities who are served by the Vocational Rehabilitation State Grant program achieve employment consistent with their particular strengths, resources, abilities, capabilities, and interests.*

**Measure:** Percentage of general and combined State VR agencies that assist at least 55.8 percent of individuals receiving services to achieve employment.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	80%	48%
2011	70	54
2012	55	57
2013	57	
2014	59	
2015	60	

**Measure:** Percentage of State VR agencies for the Blind that assist at least 68.9 percent of individuals receiving services to achieve employment.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	67%	54%
2011	60	62
2012	60	67
2013	62	
2014	62	
2015	64	

**Additional information:** This measure assesses the performance of State VR agencies in meeting program performance indicator 1.2 established in program regulations pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act. Indicator 1.2 measures the percentage of individuals who the State VR agency determines to have achieved an employment outcome out of all the individuals who exit the VR program after receiving services. In order to pass indicator 1.2, a general or combined agency must achieve an employment outcome rate of 55.8 percent, while an agency for the blind must achieve a rate of 68.9 percent.

In fiscal year 2012, the target set for the group of general and combined State VR agencies was exceeded and performance on this measure improved as compared to fiscal year 2011, with two additional agencies meeting the 55.8 percent performance criteria. The group of State VR agencies serving individuals who are blind also met their fiscal year 2012 target for this measure. As compared to fiscal year 2011, one additional State VR agency for individuals who are blind met the 68.9 percent performance criteria in fiscal year 2012.

In fiscal year 2009, there was a large decrease in the total number of individuals who obtained an employment outcome (12 percent). While the number of individuals who achieved an employment outcome continued to decline in fiscal year 2010, the overall drop in employment outcomes was smaller (4.8 percent). The overall decline in employment outcomes ended in

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fiscal year 2011 when the number of individuals who achieved an employment outcome increased by 3.7 percent. Fiscal year 2012 data show continued progress, with a 1.1 percent increase in employment outcomes. However, performance among States still continues to vary.

**Measure:** Percentage of general and combined State VR agencies that assist at least 85 percent of individuals with employment outcomes to achieve competitive employment.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	97%	95%
2011	97	93
2012	95	96
2013	95	
2014	95	
2015	96	

**Measure:** Percentage of State VR agencies for the Blind that assist at least 65 percent of individuals with employment outcomes to achieve competitive employment.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	80%	83%
2011	80	92
2012	85	92
2013	90	
2014	92	
2015	92	

**Additional information:** This measure is derived from Section 106 performance indicator 1.3, which measures the percentage of individuals who achieve competitive employment of all individuals who achieve employment. Competitive employment is defined under the State VR program as work in the competitive labor market that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis in an integrated setting, and for which an individual is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled. In order to pass indicator 1.3, a general or combined agency must achieve a rate of 72.6 percent, while an agency for the blind must achieve a rate of 35.4 percent.

The GPRA measure is more ambitious and has a higher performance criterion than the State VR agency performance indicator 1.3 because in fiscal year 2006 nearly all of the VR agencies passed indicator 1.3. Under the GPRA measure, general and combined agencies must assist at least 85 percent of individuals with employment outcomes to achieve competitive employment, and agencies for the blind must assist at least 65 percent of individuals with employment outcomes to achieve competitive employment. Despite the decline in the number of employment outcomes, States have been fairly successful in sustaining the percentage of competitive employment outcomes. In fiscal year 2012, the performance of the general and combined agencies on this measure increased from the prior year and the target was exceeded. In fiscal

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year 2012, only 2 of the 56 general and combined agencies did not meet the performance criterion. In 2012, performance for the group of agencies for the blind remained the same as in the previous year and continued to exceed the target with only two agencies not performing at the 65 percent criterion.

**Measure:** Percentage of general and combined State VR agencies for which at least 80 percent of the individuals achieving competitive employment have significant disabilities.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	89%	89%
2011	89	93
2012	90	89
2013	91	
2014	92	
2015	92	

**Measure:** Percentage of State VR agencies for the Blind for which at least 90 percent of the individuals achieving competitive employment have significant disabilities.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	100%	96%
2011	100	96
2012	100	96
2013	100	
2014	100	
2015	100	

**Additional information:** This measure is derived from the Section 106 performance indicator 1.4, which measures the percentage of individuals achieving competitive employment who have significant disabilities. In order for a general or combined agency to pass this indicator, at least 62 percent of individuals achieving competitive employment must have a significant disability. The GPRA measure for general and combined agencies is more ambitious and has a higher performance criterion than performance indicator 1.4. Under this measure, at least 80 percent of individuals achieving competitive employment must have a significant disability. In fiscal year 2012, the performance of general and combined agencies on this measure fell back to the 2010 level (89 percent) and the 90 percent GPRA target was not met.

For an agency for the blind to pass indicator 1.4, at least 89 percent of individuals achieving competitive employment must have a significant disability. The performance criterion for agencies for the blind on the GPRA measure is only slightly higher, 90 percent compared to 89 percent. All but one of the agencies for the blind met the 90 percent performance criterion and the 100 percent GPRA target was not met.

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#### Efficiency Measures

**Objective:** *Ensure that State VR agencies demonstrate effective fiscal management.*

The Department established efficiency measures to ensure that State VR agencies demonstrate effective fiscal management. These include the cost per participant and a consumer expenditure rate.

**Measure:** Percentage of general and combined State VR agencies that demonstrate an average cost per participant between \$1,200 and \$3,300.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	70%	70%
2011	70	68
2012	70	68
2013	70	
2014	70	
2015	70	

**Measure:** Percentage of State VR agencies for the Blind that demonstrate an average cost per participant of no more than \$8,000.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	70%	58%
2011	70	63
2012	63	63
2013	63	
2014	65	
2015	65	

**Additional information:** A common efficiency measure for job training programs is the cost per participant. At the national aggregate level, the cost per participant is calculated by dividing the total appropriation (minus the set-aside for Grants to Indians) by the total number of eligible individuals who received VR services. The sources of data for this measure are State agency data from the RSA-113 Caseload Report and RSA final State agency allocation tables. For fiscal year 2012, the average annual cost per participant for general and combined State vocational rehabilitation agencies was \$2,711 with a range (excluding the outlying areas) of \$1,302 to \$5,788. For agencies for the blind, the average annual cost per participant was \$7,355 with a range from \$3,819 to \$16,266. In comparison, the fiscal year 2011 average annual cost per participant for general and combined State vocational rehabilitation agencies was \$2,811, while for agencies for the blind it was \$7,109. Only the agencies for the blind met the fiscal year 2012 performance target. In fiscal year 2012, 38 of the 56 (68 percent) general and combined State VR agencies demonstrated an average cost per participant within the established performance range (between \$1,200 and \$3,300), the same as in fiscal year 2011. Of the 24 agencies for the blind, 15 (63 percent) had an average cost per participant of no more than \$8,000 – the same

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number as in 2011. The targets for fiscal year 2012 and subsequent years for agencies for the blind were revised in fiscal year 2011 to reflect a more realist target based on performance in recent fiscal years.

**Measure:** Percentage of general and combined State VR agencies that demonstrate an average annual consumer expenditure rate of at least 83 percent.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	74%	73%
2011	74	70
2012	74	69
2013	74	
2014	74	
2015	74	

**Measure:** Percentage of State VR agencies for the Blind that demonstrate an average annual consumer expenditure rate of at least 70 percent.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	65%	71%
2011	65	67
2012	66	58
2013	68	
2014	68	
2015	68	

**Additional information:** This efficiency measure examines the percentage of State VR agencies whose consumer service expenditure rate is at or above a specified level. Under this measure, the consumer service expenditure rate is calculated by dividing the agency's consumer service expenditures by the agency's total VR program expenditures. The sources of data for this measure are State agency data from the RSA-2 report and RSA final State agency allocation tables. In fiscal year 2012, 37 of the 54 general and combined VR agencies reporting data for this measure (69 percent) demonstrated an average annual consumer expenditure rate of at least 83 percent and the target was not met (the American Samoa and Kentucky General agencies did not report data). The average annual consumer service expenditure rate for all general and combined State vocational rehabilitation agencies was 86 percent with a range (excluding the outlying areas) of 43 percent to nearly 100 percent. In 2012, 14 of the 24 agencies for the blind (58 percent) had an average annual consumer expenditure rate of at least 70 percent, a decrease of 2 agencies and 9 percent from the prior year. The target was not met; however, the average consumer expenditure rate for all agencies only decreased by 1 percent, from 73 percent in 2011 to 72 percent in 2012. The average annual consumer service expenditure rate for all agencies for the blind ranged from 47 percent to 87 percent.

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### Vocational rehabilitation State grants

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#### American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services

##### Performance Measures

**Goal:** To improve employment outcomes of American Indians with disabilities who live on or near reservations by providing effective tribal vocational rehabilitation services.

**Objective:** Ensure that eligible American Indians with disabilities receive vocational rehabilitation services and achieve employment outcomes consistent with their particular strengths, resources, abilities, capabilities, and interests.

**Measure:** The percentage of individuals who leave the program with employment outcomes, after receiving services under an individualized plan for employment.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	66%	62%
2011	66	63
2012	64	62
2013	65	
2014	65	
2015	65	

**Additional information:** The numbers of American Indians with disabilities achieving an employment outcome continue to increase in fiscal year 2012. annually along with the number of projects funded under the program. In fiscal year 2012, the 85 projects operating in that fiscal year (projects funded with fiscal year 2011 appropriations) assisted a total of 1,856 American Indians with disabilities to achieve an employment outcome. Data for fiscal year 2012 show that 62.3 percent of the 2,977 individuals with disabilities who exited the program after receiving services achieved an employment outcome. There was a very slight decrease in overall performance as compared to the previous year (62.6 percent in 2011) and the target for this measure was not met. However, there is a wide variation in the percentage of individuals who achieved an employment outcome reported by AIVRS projects. Fiscal year 2013 data will be available in May 2014.

There are several factors that may have accounted for lower performance on this measure in past three fiscal years. Probably the most significant factor was the poor economic conditions. American Indian tribes already experience some of the worst economic conditions in the country with limited labor markets and very few job opportunities. When those same economic conditions affect communities outside the reservation, it compounds the difficulty in achieving employment outcomes.

##### Efficiency Measures

**Objective:** Ensure that AIVRS projects demonstrate effective fiscal management.

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The Department has established two efficiency measures to ensure that AIVRS projects demonstrate effective fiscal management. These include cost per employment outcome and cost per participant.

**Measure:** The percentage of AIVRS projects that demonstrate an average annual cost per employment outcome of no more than \$35,000.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	70%	71%
2011	72	72
2012	72	76
2013	72	
2014	72	
2015	74	

**Additional information:** This AIVRS program efficiency measure examines the percentage of AIVRS projects having a cost per employment outcome within a specified range. The source of data for this measure is the AIVRS Annual Reporting Form. At the national level, the average cost per employment outcome for this program is calculated by dividing the amount of the set-aside, excluding peer review costs, by the total number of individuals who achieved an employment outcome. Using this method for the AIVRS program in fiscal year 2012, 76 percent of the projects demonstrated an average annual cost per employment outcome of no more than \$35,000 and the target for this measure was exceeded. The overall average cost per employment outcome for the 85 projects reporting data was approximately \$21,171. However, the cost per employment outcome varied significantly across projects.

**Measure:** The percentage of AIVRS projects that demonstrate an average annual cost per participant of no more than \$10,000.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	78%	86%
2011	78	85
2012	84	88
2013	85	
2014	86	
2015	86	

**Additional information:** At the national level, the average annual cost per participant for this program is calculated by dividing the amount of the set-aside, excluding peer review costs, by the total number of individuals who received services under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). In fiscal year 2012, 85 AIVRS projects reported serving a total of 8,044 American Indians with disabilities. For fiscal year 2012, 88 percent of the projects demonstrated an average annual cost per participant of no more than \$10,000. The overall average annual cost per participant for the 81 projects reporting data was approximately \$4,804.

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### **Vocational rehabilitation State grants**

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Targets for fiscal years 2007 – 2010 were established based on the number of individuals served in the reporting period whose IPE was developed during the current 5-year grant cycle. These targets did not take into account individuals served in the reporting period whose IPE was developed in the previous 5-year grant cycle because data collected on these individuals were not reliable. However, RSA has since made improvements in its reporting system and provided guidance that makes these data more reliable. Beginning with fiscal year 2008, grantees report all individuals receiving services with current grant funds, including individuals whose IPE was developed in the previous 5-year grant cycle. The targets for fiscal years 2011 through 2015 are higher than previous targets to reflect the fact that the including both groups of individuals in the calculation of performance on this measure lowers the cost per participant and increases the percentage of projects that have a cost per participant of no more than \$10,000.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

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### Client assistance State grants

(Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title I, Section 112)

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2015 Authorization: 0 <sup>1</sup>

Budget Authority:

<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>Change</u>
\$12,000	\$12,000	0

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<sup>1</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2004. The Administration proposes to continue funding this program in FY 2015 through appropriations language.

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### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) provides grants to States for services to assist eligible individuals and applicants for the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) State Grants program and other programs, projects, and services funded under the Rehabilitation Act (the Act). Services are provided to help eligible individuals and applicants understand the rehabilitation services and benefits available under the Act, and to advise them of their rights and responsibilities in connection with those benefits. Assistance may also be provided to help eligible individuals and applicants in their relationships with those providing services under the Act, including assistance and advocacy in pursuing legal and administrative remedies to ensure the protection of their rights. State VR agencies must inform VR consumers about the services available from the CAP and how to contact the CAP. States must operate a CAP in order to receive VR State grant funds.

States and outlying areas have adopted different organizational structures for meeting the requirement to establish a CAP in each State. Each Governor designates a public or private agency to operate a CAP. This designated agency must be independent of any agency that provides services under the Act, except in cases where the Act “grandfathered” agencies providing services under the Act. In the event one of these “grandfathered” agencies is restructured, the Governor is required to redesignate the CAP to an agency that does not provide services under the Act.

Current designations include the following:

- 29 of the Governors have designated their State Protection and Advocacy (P&A) system to provide CAP services;
- 11 of the Governors have designated the VR agency to provide services; and
- The remaining 16 Governors have designated other entities to provide CAP services.

Of the 16 CAPs located outside State VR agencies and not within the P&A system, 5 are located in the Governor’s Office; 6 are located in another State agency, office, or government-

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### Client assistance State grants

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sponsored commission or group; 4 are located in legal aid and nonprofit organizations; and 1 is located in a private law firm.

The CAP is a current-funded formula grant program. When appropriations exceed \$7.5 million, funds are distributed on the basis of population, with a minimum allotment of \$100,000 to each of the 50 States, D.C., and Puerto Rico and \$45,000 to each of the outlying areas. When the appropriation increases, the Act also requires the Secretary to increase the minimum allotments for States and outlying areas by a percentage not greater than the percentage increase in the appropriation. Funds must be set-aside under this program for two activities before awarding grants to eligible States and outlying areas with the remaining appropriation. If the appropriation is equal to or exceeds \$5.5 million, the Secretary must first set-aside between 1.8 percent and 2.2 percent of the amount appropriated for training and technical assistance to eligible systems established under this program.

In addition, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (the Act) requires that in any year in which the total appropriation exceeds \$10.5 million, the Secretary must award \$50,000 to the eligible system established under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act to serve the American Indian consortium. The Secretary distributes the remainder of the appropriation to the eligible systems with the States and outlying areas based on population estimates and after satisfying minimum allocations. The fiscal year 2013 State distributions were based on the July 1, 2011 estimates published in December 2011. The fiscal year 2014 State distributions are based on the July 1, 2012 estimates published on December 20, 2012. The fiscal year 2015 State distributions would be based on the July 1, 2013 estimates published on December 30, 2013. Grantees may carry over unobligated Federal funds for an additional year.

Funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years were as follows:

	(dollars in thousands)
2010.....	\$12,288
2011.....	12,263
2012.....	12,240
2013.....	11,600
2014.....	12,000

### FY 2015 BUDGET REQUEST

The Administration requests \$12 million for the CAP in fiscal year 2015, the same amount as the fiscal year 2014 level. This request will help ensure that individuals with disabilities who are applying for or receiving services funded under the Rehabilitation Act will receive appropriate services and have access to administrative, legal, and other appropriate remedies when needed to protect their rights.

Data collected in fiscal year 2012 show that, nationwide, CAPs responded to 47,109 requests for information and provided extensive services to 7,005 individuals. Slightly more than 91 percent of those cases in which extensive services were provided involved applicants for or recipients of services from the VR State Grants program. In 88 percent of all cases, issues

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were related to the VR process or delivery of VR services. This data also demonstrates that in 36 percent of the cases closed, CAPs enabled the individuals to advocate for themselves through the explanation of policies; 18 percent resulted in the development or implementation of an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE); and 15 percent of these cases resulted in the reestablishment of communication between the individuals and other parties. In addition, 66 percent of the cases requiring action by the CAP on behalf of the individual were resolved in the individual's favor.

Examples of CAP activities during FY 2012 include:

- In New York, a 41-year-old Hispanic male with a substance abuse disability contacted CAP for assistance concerning his individualized plan for employment. The consumer stated he asked his counselor for State VR agency support in receiving training for a level two training program of heavy equipment operation. The VR counselor referred him to a local vocational skills training program for heavy equipment operation training, but only for level one training. The consumer reported that his VR counselor made the decision for the consumer to receive level one training against his stated wishes and felt he had no choice but to comply in order to continue receiving VR services.

After the successful completion of his training program, the consumer contacted CAP for assistance to achieve his intended training goal. Initially, CAP contacted the Director of Admission Services who confirmed that the consumer would be more marketable if he received the level two training. CAP contacted the VR agency counselor and tried to negotiate on behalf of consumer. After failing to resolve the matter with the VR counselor, CAP contacted the counselor's supervisor to resolve the matter at the lowest level. The supervisor initially supported the counselor's decision, stating the consumer was employable with his current skills and experience. CAP provided the VR agency supervisor with labor market information and possible employment opportunities with level two training skills. The supervisor investigated this information with the school and the Department of Labor. Following additional negotiation with CAP, the supervisor agreed to support the level two training for the consumer. The consumer's IPE was amended and the consumer was referred to the vocational training program for level two training.

- In Minnesota, a female with a severe visual impairment is self-employed as an assistive technology trainer, motivational speaker, and singer. Although the VR agency had provided her with VR services for several years without incident, the parties ran into difficulty when the woman's obsolete Braille display reader and note-taker needed to be replaced and upgraded. An exploratory technology evaluation was completed by an assistive technology (AT) specialist employed by the VR agency. The AT specialist recommended a specific type of Braille display that is used by the evaluator for his own personal needs. This recommendation was made without observing the consumer read Braille or use a Braille reader. The consumer determined that the Braille display chosen for her would not meet her particular needs and requested funding for a Braille display that would better meet her vocational needs. When the VR agency denied her funding for the AT requested, the consumer appealed the decision and requested a Fair Hearing.

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In an effort to assist the consumer, CAP staff provided extensive assistance before and after the hearing date, advising her on hearing procedures, helping her frame her arguments, plan her presentation of testimony and evidence, and providing her with research findings regarding legal standards for the hearing decision. The hearing was successful and resulted in the administrative law judge's decision in the consumer's favor. The VR agency worked with the consumer to provide her with the funding needed for the requested Braille display reader, which met the consumer's employment needs.

- A California male with a traumatic brain injury (TBI) contacted CAP regarding the denial of funding for educational training as a State certified court interpreter. The consumer had met with his VR counselor soon after being found eligible for VR services and requested funding to become a court interpreter. However, the consumer's VR counselor did not agree with his choice of employment goal due to the results of a neurological evaluation and VR counselor's belief that the client did not have the capacity to succeed at his requested goal of a court interpreter. The consumer refused to sign his IPE due to the disagreement of services needed to obtain his vocational goal.

The CAP advocate reviewed the neurological assessment used to deny the consumer's participation in the training program, which did not include current and previous relevant medical information available from the consumer's treating neurologist at a rehabilitation center that the consumer had been attending for the prior three years since sustaining the TBI. The CAP advocate discussed these findings with the VR agency and noted that State and Federal regulations require that the VR agency request all available medical documentation when determining eligibility and the provision of services. The CAP advocate suggested that the consumer be allowed the opportunity to take the program entrance screening prior to the VR agency making any determination.

After considering the CAP advocate's findings and recommendation, the VR agency agreed to fund a certificate program at a local State university extension program contingent on the consumer passing the screening exam required for admission to the program. The consumer passed the screening exam and was accepted into the interpreter program. Subsequently, the consumer's IPE was developed to provide services and supports consistent with the consumer's employment goal. The consumer likewise agreed to maintain passing grades in all classes and report any issues that may inhibit his progress towards certification consistent with the State agency's policy.

### PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

<u>Measures</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Information inquiries/referrals	47,100	47,100	47,100
Individuals provided case services	7,000	7,000	7,000

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NOTE: Data for fiscal years 2013 through 2015 are projected from actual data collected for fiscal year 2012 in which CAPs responded to 47,109 requests for information and provided extensive services to 7,005 individuals. Data for fiscal year 2013 will be available in December of 2014.

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#### PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

##### Performance Measures

This section presents selected program performance information, including, for example, GPRA goals, objectives, measures, and performance targets and data, and an assessment of the progress made toward achieving program results. Achievement of results is based on the cumulative effect of the resources provided in previous years and those requested in fiscal year 2015 and future years, as well as the resources and efforts invested by those served by this program.

**Goal:** To provide assistance and information to help individuals with disabilities secure the benefits available under the Vocational Rehabilitation State Grants program and other programs funded under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

**Objective:** *Accurately identify problem areas requiring systemic change and engage in systemic activity to improve services under the Rehabilitation Act.*

**Measure:** The percentage of CAPs that reported that their systemic advocacy resulted in changes in policy or practice.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	60%	64%
2011	65	87
2012	70	80
2013	70	
2014	72	
2015	74	

**Additional information:** CAPs address numerous systemic issues related to the provision of VR and other services under the Act. CAPs utilize a variety of methods to achieve changes in policies and practices, including individual advocacy, participation in the policymaking process, and negotiation with State agencies. Permanent systemic change is very difficult to achieve, and some States undertake activities that may take years to accomplish. All 56 CAPs currently are engaged in work that should ultimately result in systemic change, but this indicator measures only those States that report their activity as complete. Data are compiled from narrative reports submitted by all CAPs. A random sample of files is cross-checked with reported data to verify the data quality. The grantees input their data into the RSA Management Information System (MIS), which has edit checks to verify the accuracy of the information entered into the data fields.

Based on fiscal year 2009 performance on this measure, the Administration increased the performance target from 65 to 70 percent for 2012. While the number of CAPs reporting success for this measure decreased in fiscal year 2010, performance improved in fiscal year 2011 to 87 percent—the highest percentage since this measure was established in 1999. Performance on this measure for fiscal year 2012 decreased, but remains above the target for the year. Performance data for fiscal year 2013 will be available in December 2014.

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**Objective:** *Resolve cases at lowest possible level.*

**Measure:** The percentage of cases resolved through the use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR).

Year	Target	Actual
2010	86%	98%
2011	93	97
2012	93	98
2013	98	
2014	98	
2015	98	

**Additional information:** Since fiscal year 2007, the percentage of cases being resolved through the use of ADR has ranged from about 97 to 99 percent and the program has consistently met the performance targets established for this measure. Targets for fiscal year 2013 and future years were raised to reflect the high level of performance. Performance data for fiscal year 2013 will be available in December 2014

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### Supported employment State grants

(Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VI, Part B)

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2015 Authorization: 0<sup>1</sup>

Budget Authority:

<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>Change</u>
\$27,548	0	-\$27,548

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<sup>1</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2004. No appropriations language or reauthorizing language is sought for fiscal year 2015.

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### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the Supported Employment (SE) State Grants program is to assist States in developing collaborative programs with appropriate public and private nonprofit organizations to provide supported employment services for individuals with the most significant disabilities. Under this formula grant program, State vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies receive supplemental funds to assist VR consumers with the most significant disabilities in achieving the employment outcome of supported employment. The term "supported employment" includes both competitive employment and working in an integrated setting toward competitive employment. Individuals in competitive employment must earn at least the minimum wage.

The SE State Grants program was first authorized under the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1986 to provide supplemental grants to assist States in developing collaborative programs with public agencies and private nonprofit organizations for training and time-limited post-employment services for individuals with the most severe handicaps. At that time, supported employment was a new promising practice in employing individuals who traditionally would not have achieved employment in the integrated labor market.

Supported employment placements are achieved by augmenting short-term vocational rehabilitation services (supported employment services) with ongoing support provided by other public or nonprofit agencies or organizations (extended services) for the duration of that employment. State VR agencies provide time-limited services for a period not to exceed 18 months, unless a longer period to achieve job stabilization has been established in the individualized plan for employment (IPE). The IPE for an individual with a goal of supported employment must specify the expected extended services that will be needed to support the individual in integrated employment and identify the source of extended services at the time the IPE is developed, including the basis for determining that there is a reasonable expectation that those services will become available.

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### Supported employment State grants

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An individual's potential for supported employment must be considered as part of the assessment to determine eligibility for the Title I Vocational Rehabilitation State Grants program. The requirements pertaining to individuals with an employment goal of supported employment are the same in both the Title I VR State Grants program and the Title VI-B SE State Grants program. A State VR agency may support an individual's supported employment services solely with VR State Grant funds, or it may fund the cost of SE services in whole or in part with funds under the SE State Grants program. Title VI-B SE funds may only be used to provide supported employment services and are essentially used to supplement Title I funds.

To be eligible for this current-funded formula grant program, States must submit a supplement to their Title I VR State Grants program plan. Funds are distributed on the basis of population, except that no State receives less than \$300,000, or one-third of 1 percent of the sums appropriated, whichever is greater. The minimum allotment for Territories is one-eighth of 1 percent of the sums appropriated. The fiscal year 2013 allotments were based on the July 1, 2011 estimates published in December 2011. The fiscal year 2014 State allotments are based on the July 1, 2012 estimates published in December 2012.

Funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years were as follows:

	(dollars in thousands)
2010.....	\$29,181
2011.....	29,123
2012.....	29,068
2013.....	27,548
2014.....	27,548

### FY 2015 BUDGET REQUEST

No funds are requested for fiscal year 2015 for the SE State Grants program. The Administration recognizes that supported employment can be an effective strategy in assisting individuals with the most significant disabilities to obtain competitive employment in integrated settings. However, because supported employment is now an integral part of the VR State Grants program, the Administration believes that there is no longer a need for a separate funding stream to ensure the provision of such services. The proposed program elimination will reduce unnecessary administrative burden at the national, State, and local levels and will enhance efforts to assess the provision and effectiveness of supported employment services. The Administration is also examining options to help ensure that State agencies continue to invest appropriate levels of their resources in supported employment.

The SE State Grants program was first authorized under the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1986 to provide supplemental grants to assist States in developing collaborative programs with public agencies and private nonprofit organizations for training and time-limited post-employment services for individuals with the most severe handicaps. At that time, supported employment was a new promising practice in employing individuals who traditionally would not have achieved employment in the integrated labor market. Initially, many rehabilitation professionals were skeptical about its feasibility and concerned about the potential costs. As a

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### Supported employment State grants

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supplemental source of dedicated funds, the SE State Grants program provided an incentive for State VR agencies to provide supported employment services.

In addition, from 1986 to 1996 the Department of Education supported a number of supported employment discretionary grant projects designed to further develop and expand the provision of supported employment services. These included a total of 54 State-wide systems change grants to 47 States, the District of Columbia, and the Virgin Islands; 2 national scope projects; 2 national technical assistance projects; and a total of 66 community-based supported employment projects. Finally, in fiscal year 1997, the Department awarded a 3-year cooperative agreement to support the Supported Employment Consortium whose purpose was to identify and disseminate replicable policies, models, and supported employment practices appropriate for dissemination and to provide technical assistance.

Data from the *FY 2012 RSA-911 Case Service Report* show that approximately 35,700 individuals whose cases were closed that year after receiving services had a goal of supported employment on their individualized plan for employment at some time during their participation in the VR program. Of those individuals, about 57 percent had their supported employment services paid solely with VR State Grant funds and about 43 percent received at least some support for their supported employment services from Title VI-B Supported Employment funds. These numbers do not include those individuals who were still receiving supported employment services at the close of the fiscal year. On a national level, individuals who had a goal of supported employment represented about 11 percent of the total individuals whose cases were closed after receiving VR services in FY 2012. However, RSA-911 2012 State data indicate there is variation among State agencies in the percentage of individuals who have supported employment (SE) as an employment goal.

Information on how State VR agencies use their SE State Grant funds to supplement their VR funds is limited. State agencies report whether any SE funds were used to provide services to an individual with a supported employment goal, but not the amount of SE funds that were expended for such individuals. Because VR agencies may use funds from one or both funding sources to purchase supported employment services, information is unavailable on the actual cost of providing SE services to an individual with a SE goal, including individuals who did or did not obtain a supported employment outcome. Data collected through the RSA 911 report indicate that there is significant variation in SE practices and the use of SE funds among State agencies. As a part of its recent re-design of the RSA 911 data collection, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) included additional SE-related data elements that will enable RSA to better monitor the services, service costs, and the outcomes achieved by individuals with a supported employment goal under the VR State Grants program and identify those agencies that need technical assistance. The revised data collection form went into effect on October 1, 2013.

The SE State Grants program has accomplished its goal. State VR agencies recognize supported employment as an integral part of the VR program and a viable employment option for individuals with the most significant disabilities. State VR agencies continue to spend VR State Grant funds (including State matching funds) to provide supported employment services for those individuals who require such services to participate in the integrated labor market. State VR agencies must also give priority to serving individuals with the most significant

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disabilities, many of whom may require supported employment services. The Department expects that State VR agencies will continue to provide supported employment services in fiscal year 2015 through the VR State Grants program to at least as many individuals as they did under the two separate authorities.

### PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES (dollars in thousands)

<u>Measures</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Individuals with a supported employment IPE goal who received services and exited the program.	35,720	35,720	35,720
Employment outcomes: <sup>1</sup>	18,610	18,610	18,610
Supported employment outcomes <sup>2</sup>	16,970	16,970	16,970
Employment without supports in an integrated setting <sup>3</sup>	1,570	1,570	1,570
Other employment outcomes <sup>4</sup>	70	70	70
<u>Minority outreach</u>	<u>\$275</u>	<u>\$275</u>	<u>0</u>

Note: Estimates for FYs 2013, 2014, and 2015 are based on actual 2010, 2011, and 2012 closure data from the RSA-911 Case Service Report for all VR consumers with a supported employment goal identified on their IPE (including consumers who received SE services with funds provided under the VR State Grants and/or under the Supported Employment State Grants programs). Under the Administration's FY 2015 request, all VR services, including SE services, would be provided with VR State Grants funds.

<sup>1</sup> Includes employment outcomes for VR consumers who had or are estimated to have a supported employment goal.

<sup>2</sup> Of the individuals who had a supported employment goal, the number who were employed in an integrated setting and receiving ongoing support services.

<sup>3</sup> Of the individuals who had a supported employment goal, the number who met the employment outcome criteria for the VR State Grants program but who were not receiving ongoing support services.

<sup>4</sup> Of the individuals who had a supported employment goal, the number who met the employment outcome criteria for the VR State Grants program who were either self-employed, employed in a Business Enterprise Program, a family worker, or a homemaker.

### PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

#### Performance Measures

This section presents program performance information, including, for example, GPRA goals, objectives, measures, and performance targets and data, and an assessment of the progress made toward achieving program results. Achievement of program results is based on the cumulative effect of the resources provided for this program and the Vocational Rehabilitation State Grants program in previous years, as well as the resources and efforts invested by those served by these programs.

**Goal: Individuals with significant disabilities with a goal of supported employment will achieve high quality employment.**

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Supported employment State grants

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**Objective:** *Ensure that individuals with significant disabilities with a supported employment goal achieve high quality employment.*

**Measure:** Of those individuals with significant disabilities who had a supported employment goal and achieved an employment outcome, the percentage who obtained competitive employment, including individuals who receive supported employment services funded under the VR State Grants program and/or the Supported Employment State Grants program.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	94%	92%
2011	94	93
2012	94	94
2013	94	
2014	94	

**Additional information:** Individuals with a supported employment goal who achieve an employment outcome may be working in competitive employment (employment at least at the minimum wage in an integrated setting) or may be working in an integrated setting toward competitive work (receipt of the minimum wage). In fiscal year 2012, 18,613 individuals, or 53 percent of individuals whose service records were closed after receiving services who had a SE goal, including both consumers who received SE services from funds provided under the VR State Grants and under the Supported Employment State Grants programs, achieved an employment outcome. Of those who achieved an employment outcome, 94 percent of individuals with a supported employment goal achieved a competitive employment outcome, a slight increase over the prior year, and the performance target was met.

Fiscal year 2012 RSA 911 Case Service Report data show that the total number of individuals with a supported employment goal who achieved an employment outcome (employment in the integrated labor market and receiving ongoing supports) increased from 17,566 to 18,613, or about 6 percent over the prior year. The percentage of individuals with a supported employment goal achieving an employment outcome who obtained a supported employment outcome was 91 percent in fiscal year 2012. Data for fiscal year 2013 are expected to be available in April 2014.

**Measure:** Average weekly earnings for individuals with significant disabilities who achieved a supported employment outcome.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	\$203	\$208
2011	203	205
2012	203	211
2013	205	
2014	208	

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**Additional information:** The Department established a measure in FY 2008 to monitor the average weekly earnings of individuals with significant disabilities who achieved a supported employment outcome. As previously stated, individuals with significant disabilities in supported employment may be working in competitive employment or may be working in an integrated setting toward the receipt of the minimum wage. Performance data for this measure are calculated by dividing the average weekly earnings for all individuals who obtained a supported employment outcome with earnings by the total number of individuals who obtained a supported employment outcome with earnings. The performance data do not include individuals served by State VR agencies for the Blind. Performance targets were set based on 2007 and 2008 data.

For the performance group, fiscal year 2012 data show that the average weekly earnings of individuals with significant disabilities who achieved a supported employment outcome was \$211, an increase of about 2.9 percent from the previous year (\$205). The performance target was exceeded for the third consecutive year. As a result, targets for 2013 and subsequent years have been increased.

### Efficiency Measure

**Objective:** *Ensure that State VR agencies effectively use Supported Employment Grant funds to achieve supported employment outcomes.*

**Measure:** Percentage of general and combined State VR agencies that demonstrate at least 30 supported employment outcomes per \$100,000 received in SE Grant funds.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	75%	67%
2011	70	81
2012	75	75
2013	75	
2014	75	

**Additional information:** The efficiency measure developed for the Supported Employment State Grants program examines the percentage of State VR agencies for which the number of supported employment outcomes per \$100,000 received in SE Grants funds is within a specified range. For the purpose of this measure, the number of supported employment outcomes per \$100,000 is calculated by dividing the reported number of individuals that achieved a supported employment outcome by the amount of a State agency's SE allocation and multiplying the result by 100,000. The performance group does not include State VR agencies for the Blind or the 4 territories because they receive less than \$100,000 in SE Grants funds. In fiscal year 2010, performance remained at 67 percent, the same as in fiscal year 2009. As a result, the performance targets for fiscal year 2011 and fiscal year 2012 were adjusted to reflect expectations for improvement from that level. However, in FY 2011 performance increased significantly and exceeded the target with 81 percent of the performance group achieving at least 30 supported employment outcomes per \$100,000. In FY 2012, performance decreased to 75 percent; however, the target was still met.

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### Supported employment State grants

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The average number of supported employment outcomes per \$100,000 remained unchanged at 75 in fiscal years 2011 and 2012, with a median of 56 supported employment outcomes per \$100,000. However it should be noted that there is significant variation among agencies in the performance group, with the average number in fiscal year 2012 ranging from 3 (Hawaii) to 232 (New Jersey),

### Other Performance Information

Limited information is available about how State VR agencies serve individuals who have a goal of SE or how State VR agencies use Title VI Part B funds from the SE State Grants Program in conjunction with Title I funds to pay for services provided to individuals with disabilities. Moreover, the reviews of the State plans and monitoring reports reveal that the extent to which State VR agencies achieve SE outcomes for individuals with disabilities is uneven. This variability stems in part from differences in policies, practices, and resources that States and State agencies have with regard to SE.

The Department recently completed a study to obtain a more in-depth understanding of how State VR agencies provide SE services for their consumers, including how the supplemental SE appropriation is used in conjunction with VR State Grant funds to assist individuals with the most significant disabilities to achieve a supported employment outcome. The Department collected survey data from 94 percent of the 80 State VR agencies on how they implement SE services, how they use Title VI Part B funds in conjunction with Title I funds to fund SE, and SE outcomes. To explore agency strategies for providing SE services in more detail, the final step in data collection was to conduct in-depth discussions with three agencies to follow up on their responses and to learn more about the administration of the SE State Grants program as implemented in these agencies. The final report, released in August, 2013, contained the following findings:

- The majority of individuals with an SE goal had cognitive disabilities (53.5 percent). More than half (55.7 percent) of individuals with an SE goal were age 25 and older.
- Compared to other individuals receiving VR services without an SE goal, individuals with an SE goal were more likely to be under age 25 (44.3 percent compared to 33.9 percent) and more likely to have public support as their primary support at application (49.2 percent compared to 27.0 percent).
- Supported employment (Title VI-B) spending was a very small percentage of all agency expenditures on services: 5.5 percent in general agencies, 2.5 percent in combined agencies, and 2.1 percent in blind agencies.
- 32 agencies limited the use of supported employment funds to specific services, including on-site job coaching, job development, job placement, and supplemental assessments.
- Among the 38 responding agencies that used multiple methods to reimburse SE service providers, 15 agencies said performance-based methods resulted in more competitive employment outcomes; 10 said fee-for-service; 4 said contract/slot-based, 7 said other,

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### Supported employment State grants

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and 6 said the methods are not comparable. The other 28 agencies did not use multiple methods to reimburse SE service providers.

- Agencies that purchased more of their services tended to have a higher concentration of SE outcomes among all employment outcomes.
- Employment rates ranged from a low of 41.5 percent for physical impairments to a high of 54.3 percent for communicative impairments and for cognitive impairments.
- Average weekly earnings ranged from \$157.70 for individuals with visual impairments to \$209.30 for individuals with communicative impairments.
- Overall and for general and combined agencies, most limits on availability of SE services were external. Insufficient funding from other partners or agencies was ranked as the most common limit of availability of program services.

This study was designed to complement other studies that examine SE supports beyond the time-limited support provided through the VR program such as the one described below.

In 2010, funds appropriated under RSA's Evaluation program were used to support a sub-study focusing on supported employment (SE) services through the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research's Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Vocational Rehabilitation (VR RRTC). The purpose of this sub-study was to identify the role and impact of the VR program within the larger supported employment delivery system. This research focused on vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency partnerships with other State entities, and sources and models for long-term funding (extended services). Examples of topics that were investigated include providers and sources of funding for supported employment, the availability of supported employment services, SE placements, and extended services, and methods or models of collaboration and coordination in providing SE services that can be identified within or across States.

The study design called for embedding supported employment questions in ongoing surveys of multiple State agencies and case studies of SE coordination and funding models in several States to illuminate issues identified through these surveys. The SE sub-study also included additional analysis of data obtained from an ongoing survey of community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) relevant to supported employment. The VR RRTC then conducted case studies of SE partnerships in five States. These case studies were designed to further the Department's understanding of the range of practices that VR systems might use to ensure more successful transitions to long-term support through other resources. The survey and case study effort raised several issues for further discussion and review.

- First, there is a need for further clarification, guidance, and consensus on indicators of job stability and on what constitutes integration in employment (i.e., acceptable employment settings for SE).
- Second, there is a need for more exploration of creative models for SE funding that focus on the needs of individuals more than the constraints (real and perceived) of funding sources and service providers, including further consideration of strategies for

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Supported employment State grants

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more “braided” funding mechanisms between VR and other public systems such as Mental Health or Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities. Such strategies would certainly enhance coordination of service delivery around the individual, create more robust partnerships, and promote more efficient use of resources by agencies.

- Third, there is a need to expand State funding for extended employment for groups that might not otherwise have access to long-term support dollars (e.g., people with learning disabilities, chronic physical impairments, or traumatic brain injuries). However, the report notes that this system improvement may be difficult to achieve in a challenging economy.
- Fourth, more work is needed to refine and develop practical strategies for VR, partner agencies, and their providers to use in developing strong and sufficient natural supports as part of the long-term services required post-VR in SE. The report states that “it is clear from our on-site interviews as well as the extant research on this issue that policy and practice in this area varies dramatically, and that many States lack a structured approach to the use of natural supports.”

In addition, the report recommended that RSA and Medicaid consider working together to develop guidance for State Medicaid systems about allowable Medicaid reimbursable expenses under the Mental Health Rehabilitation Option or the new 1915(i) State plan amendment attendant to employment.

**REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH**

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**Migrant and seasonal farmworkers**

(Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title III, Section 304)

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2015 Authorization: 0 <sup>1</sup>

Budget Authority:

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>Change</u>
	\$1,196	0	-\$1,196

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<sup>1</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2004. No appropriations language or new reauthorizing legislation is sought for FY 2015.

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**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

The Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFW) program makes comprehensive vocational rehabilitation (VR) services available to migrant and seasonal farmworkers with disabilities, with the goal of increasing employment opportunities for them. Projects also develop innovative methods for reaching and serving this population with emphasis to outreach, specialized bilingual rehabilitation counseling, and coordination of VR services with services from other sources. Projects provide VR services to migrant and seasonal farmworkers and to members of their families when such services will contribute to the rehabilitation of the worker with a disability. Discretionary grants are limited to 90 percent of the costs of the projects providing these services. This is a current-funded program.

The Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers program is administered in coordination with other programs serving migrant and seasonal farmworkers, including programs under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965, Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act, the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act, and the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

Funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years were as follows:

	(dollars in thousands)
2010.....	\$2,239
2011.....	1,856
2012.....	1,262
2013.....	1,196
2014.....	1,196

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Migrant and seasonal farmworkers

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#### FY 2015 BUDGET REQUEST

No funds are requested for the MSFW program in fiscal year 2015, as the four current grantees will receive their final year of support in fiscal year 2014. As in previous years, the Administration proposes to eliminate funding for this small, duplicative competitive grants program as services can be provided under the larger VR State grants program. The Administration believes that elimination of this separate program improves administrative inefficiencies and helps focus Federal efforts on ensuring that States provide effective appropriate services to all eligible individuals, including the population served under this program.

The authorizing legislation for the VR State grants program requires States to submit a plan to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) that describes how the State will provide services to all eligible individuals within that State. The statute contains many provisions to ensure that State VR agencies reach and serve all individuals with disabilities within the State, including minority, unserved, and underserved populations--

- States must provide for the cooperation, collaboration, and coordination with other components of the Statewide workforce investment system. Specifically, States must describe their interagency cooperation with, and utilization of the services and facilities of, Federal, State and local agencies and programs, including programs carried out by the Department of Agriculture's Under Secretary for Rural Development.
- States must provide an assurance that the State will not impose a residence requirement that excludes from services any individual who is present in the State.
- States must conduct comprehensive, statewide assessments describing the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the States, particularly the VR service needs of individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR State grants program. Using the statewide assessment, States must identify their goals and priorities in carrying out their programs.
- States must provide a description of the strategies they will use to address the needs identified in the comprehensive, statewide assessment and to achieve the identified goals and priorities, including outreach procedures to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR State grants program.

Specialized services, such as those provided through the MSFW program, can be beneficial in meeting the complex needs of migrant or seasonal farmworkers with disabilities. However, the specialized services provided under the MSFW program are services that all State VR agencies should be providing to reach and appropriately serve underserved populations under the VR State grants program and should not depend on the availability of separate funding. For example, outreach activities in churches and community centers that identify farmworkers with disabilities would also assist in identifying other persons with disabilities who visit these places. The hiring of bilingual counselors benefits all consumers who are monolingual in a non-English language, whether those consumers are farmworkers or not. In addition, the provision of transportation services for rural areas will benefit all rural residents, whether farmworkers or not.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Migrant and seasonal farmworkers

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The Administration believes that continuing to provide separate funding for this small, narrowly targeted program is not an efficient way to ensure appropriate and high quality services for special populations who may be underserved under the VR State grants program. State VR agencies should have resources to provide services that would benefit migrant or seasonal farmworkers, along with other unserved or underserved populations under the Administration's request for the VR State grants program. The Administration believes that RSA should focus its monitoring and technical assistance efforts on improving the performance of the VR State grants program, including its delivery of services to and the outcomes of its most needy and vulnerable populations.

#### PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES (dollars in thousands)

	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
<b>Program funding:</b>			
Continuation projects	\$797 <sup>1</sup>	\$569	0
Minority outreach	<u>399<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>627<sup>3</sup></u>	<u>0</u>
Total	1,196	1,196	0
<b>Number of projects:</b>			
Continuation projects	4	4	0

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<sup>1</sup> This amount includes \$121,889 that was used to cover a portion of FY 2014 continuation costs.

<sup>2</sup> The Rehabilitation Act allows the RSA Commissioner flexibility in determining how it will meet the 1 percent set-aside for Minority Outreach activities required under section 21 of the Rehabilitation Act.

<sup>3</sup> The FY 2014 appropriation of \$1.196 million for this program exceeds the amount needed to fully fund continuation costs. The excess funds provided in FY 2014 will be used to support the Minority Outreach set-aside.

#### PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

##### Performance Measures

This section presents selected program performance information, including, for example, GPRA goals, objectives, measures, and performance targets and data, and an assessment of the progress made toward achieving program results. Achievement of results is based on the cumulative effect of the resources provided in previous years, as well as the resources and efforts invested by those served by this program.

**Goal: To increase employment opportunities for migrant and seasonal farmworkers who have disabilities.**

**Objective:** *Ensure that eligible Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers(MSFWs) with disabilities receive Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services and achieve employment.*

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Migrant and seasonal farmworkers

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**Measure:** The percentage of migrant or seasonal farmworkers with disabilities served by both the VR State Grants program and the VR Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers projects who were placed in employment.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	65%	60%
2011	65	52
2012	65	62
2013	65	
2014	65	

#### Additional information:

This measure is calculated by dividing the number of MSFWs who obtained employment by the total number of MSFWs served by both the VR agencies and the projects funded under this program. In fiscal year 2011, 65 MSFWs were served and 34 obtained employment – 52.4 percent, which did not meet our target of 65 percent. Fiscal year 2012 data indicate that the target was not met with 62.3 percent of individuals served under these programs (VR State Grants and MSFW projects) being placed in employment.

A fiscal year 2015 performance target was not set for this measure because the Administration is proposing to eliminate the separate funding authority for the MSFW program in fiscal year 2015.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

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### Training

(Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title III, Section 302 (a)-(g)(2), (h)-(i), Section 303(c)-(d))

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2015 Authorization: 0 <sup>1</sup>

Budget Authority:

<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>Change</u>
\$33,657	\$30,188	-\$3,469

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<sup>1</sup>The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2004. The Administration proposes to continue funding this program in FY 2015 through appropriations language.

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### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the Training program is to ensure that skilled personnel are available to meet the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities assisted through vocational rehabilitation (VR), supported employment, and independent living programs. The program supports training and related activities designed to increase the number of qualified personnel providing rehabilitation services. Grants and contracts are awarded to States and public and nonprofit agencies and organizations, including institutions of higher education, to pay all or part of the cost of conducting training programs.

Awards may be made in any of 31 long-term training fields, in addition to awards for continuing education, short-term training, experimental and innovative training, and training interpreters for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing and persons who are deaf-blind. These training programs vary in terms of content, methodology, and type of trainee. For example, the Long-Term Training program supports academic training grants that must direct 75 percent of the funds to trainee scholarships. Students who receive financial assistance from projects funded under the program are required to pay back such assistance, either by maintaining acceptable employment in public or private non-profit rehabilitation agencies for a period of time after they complete their training, or by making a cash repayment to the Federal Government.

The Training program authority requires recipients of grants under the Long-Term Training program to build closer relationships between training institutions and State VR agencies, promote careers in public vocational rehabilitation programs, identify potential employers who would meet students' payback requirements, and ensure that data on student employment are accurate. Training of statewide workforce systems personnel is authorized under the Training program, and such training may be jointly funded by the Department of Labor. Statewide workforce systems personnel may be trained in evaluation skills to determine whether an individual with a disability may be served by the VR State grants program or another component of the statewide workforce system.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Training

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Of the funds appropriated for the Training program, 15 percent must be used to support the In-Service Training program. This program is intended to assist State VR agencies in the training of State agency staff consistent with the State's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD). Under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, each State is required to establish procedures to ensure there is an adequate supply of qualified staff for the State agency, to assess personnel needs and make projections for future needs, and to address the current and projected personnel training needs. States are further required to develop and maintain policies and procedures for job-specific personnel standards that are consistent with certification, licensure, or other State personnel requirements for comparable positions. If a State's current personnel do not meet the highest requirements for personnel standards within the State, the CSPD must identify the steps a State will take to upgrade the qualifications of its staff, through retraining or hiring. VR State grant funds may be used to comply with these requirements.

Funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years were as follows:

	(dollars in thousands)
2010.....	\$37,766
2011.....	35,582
2012.....	35,515
2013.....	33,657
2014.....	33,657

### FY 2015 BUDGET REQUEST

The Administration requests \$30.188 million for the Training program in fiscal year 2015, a decrease of \$3.469 million from the fiscal year 2014 appropriation. This reduction from the 2014 level reflects the elimination of funding for the In-Service Training program. The Administration does not seek funding for this program because in-service training activities can be carried out under the larger Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) State Grants program. In fiscal year 2015, 76 percent of the funds requested would be used to support continuation costs.

Currently, the Act requires that 15 percent of the funds appropriated for the Training program be set aside to support the training of existing State VR agency personnel. However, State VR agencies have the responsibility to provide needed professional development to State agency personnel, consistent with the agency's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) plan under Title I of the Act and can use the funds provided under the VR State Grants program for this purpose. In addition, the elimination of the set-aside would save on the administrative costs involved in making small grants to State agencies and the associated reporting requirements for grantees. Hence, the Department believes a separate revenue stream to support in-service training through the Training program is inefficient. The requested increase in funding in the VR State Grants program would ensure that State VR agencies have resources available to support in-service training for their personnel.

The Training program is designed to support programs that provide training to new VR staff or upgrade the qualifications of existing staff. In recent years, the major focus of the program has been to address the shortage of qualified State VR agency staff by supporting long-term training

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Training

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programs at institutions of higher education (IHEs) to train new counselors and administrators. Currently, VR agencies are undergoing dramatic turnover in their staffs due to the retirement of a large number of qualified counselors. According to 2013 data from State VR agencies, there were 1,622 vacancies out of the 17,655 total positions nationwide in these offices. Over the next 5 years, these agencies projected an additional 5,201 vacancies. This would mean that, in the next 5 years, State VR agencies may need to hire as much as 39 percent of their staff to maintain current staffing levels. The Administration believes that similar shortages, though not as severe, will also affect other VR providers in the same timeframe. In order to address this issue, the Administration has focused a considerable amount of resources in the Training program on long-term training, and is seeking to further target funds to address those areas of greatest need. Additionally, the Rehabilitation Act (the Act) requires that 75 percent of the funds awarded to universities under the Long-Term Training (LTT) program must go directly to students for tuition assistance and stipends. Since this tuition assistance must be repaid through work in State VR agencies and other appropriate work settings, the Department believes it is the best mechanism for recruiting new graduates into the field of rehabilitation.

In fiscal year 2015, the Administration will also continue support for continuing education and technical assistance to State VR agencies and their partners to improve their performance under and compliance with the Rehabilitation Act. The majority of funds requested for fiscal year 2015 would be used to support awards in this area and in the Long-Term Training program.

#### PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES (dollars in thousands)

<u>Program Funding:</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Long-Term Training:			
New	0	\$13,010	TBD
Continuations	<u>\$17,119</u> <sup>1</sup>	<u>4,233</u>	<u>\$14,544</u>
Subtotal	17,119	17,243	TBD
Technical Assistance & Continuing Education:			
New	0	8,000	TBD
Continuations	<u>9,190</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>8,000</u>
Subtotal	9,190	8,000	TBD
Short-Term Training:			
New	0	0	TBD
Continuations	<u>200</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>0</u>
Subtotal	200	200	TBD
Unit In-Service Training: <sup>2</sup>			
New	0	5,256	0
Continuations	<u>5,048</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Subtotal	5,048	5,256	0

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Training

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<u>Program Funding:</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Training for Interpreters for Individuals who are Deaf and Deaf-Blind:			
New	0	0	TBD
Continuations	<u>\$2,100</u>	<u>\$2,100</u>	<u>0</u>
Subtotal	2,100	2,100	TBD
General Training:			
New	0	500	TBD
Continuations	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>\$500</u>
Subtotal	0	0	TBD
 <u>Program Totals:</u>			
New	0	26,766	6,827
Continuations	33,657	6,533	23,044
Peer review of new award applications	0	21	15
Minority Outreach <sup>3</sup>	<u>0</u>	<u>337</u>	<u>302</u>
Program Total	33,657	33,657	30,188

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NOTE: Amounts listed as "TBD" in FY 2015 reflect topical areas for which decisions on FY 2015 competitions are not yet final.

<sup>1</sup> The FY 2013 awards total includes approximately \$3,144 thousand in FY 2013 funds used to support FY 2014 continuation costs.

<sup>2</sup> Under the Administration's FY 2015 proposal, funding would no longer be provided for this activity under the Training program.

<sup>3</sup> Section 21(b) the Rehabilitation Act requires the Rehabilitation Services Administration to set aside 1 percent of funds appropriated under this account for minority outreach activities.

### PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

#### Performance Measures

This section presents selected program performance information, including, for example, GPRA goals, objectives, measures and performance targets and data; and an assessment of the progress made toward achieving program results. Achievement of program results is based on the cumulative effect of the resources provided in previous years and those requested in FY 2015 and future years, and the resources and efforts invested by those served by this program.

**Goal:** To provide the public vocational rehabilitation (VR) sector with well-trained staff and to maintain and upgrade the skills of current staff.

**Objective:** To provide graduates who work within the vocational rehabilitation (VR) system to help individuals with disabilities achieve their goals.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Training

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#### Annual Performance Measures

This program has three annual performance measures. All three of these measures are designed to provide information on various aspects of the program, including its ability to address the shortage of State VR agency counselors and staff, the proportion of scholars fulfilling their payback requirements, and the proportion of currently employed State VR agency counselors who meet their State's CSPD requirements. While these measures alone do not provide a comprehensive view of the Training program, the Administration believes that they do provide evidence as to the efficacy of the program and its expenditures.

**Measure:** The percentage of Masters-level counseling graduates fulfilling their payback requirements through employment in State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	53%	39%
2011	53	37
2012	53	35
2013	55	
2014	45	
2015	47	

**Additional Information:** The Department annually collects data about scholars through the Payback Reporting Form, which grantees submit by November 30 of each year. After a consistent decline from 2005 to 2008, the proportion of Masters-level counseling graduates fulfilling their payback requirements through employment in State VR agencies decreased more slowly from 2009 through 2012. While program graduates are not mandated to meet their service obligation by working in State VR agencies, the Administration believes that these agencies should be the main employer of these graduates, especially given the current and future shortages outlined above. This overall downward trend may have been the result of a confluence of factors, including, but not limited to, the range of acceptable employment for meeting the service obligations outlined in statute, State hiring freezes, and the salary and working conditions in State VR agencies relative to those in other acceptable employment settings. According to the Act, program graduates are able to meet the requirements of their payback through employment in a number of different types of agencies, including employment in private VR agencies or in related State agencies, such as special education. As a result, some of the program's graduates are able to find acceptable employment in a number of different settings other than State VR agencies. When combined with the lower salary offered by State VR agencies compared to those in private firms, it may be that more program graduates are opting to seek employment elsewhere, while still meeting the terms of their service obligation. Of all Masters-level graduates, 81 percent were fulfilling their service obligation in some form of acceptable employment in 2012, with roughly 57 percent of the employed graduates opting to work in settings other than the State VR agency. Over the past eight years, the proportion of graduates fulfilling their payback requirements in settings other than the State VR agency has, in general, been slowly increasing.

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### Training

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**Measure:** The percentage of RSA-supported graduates fulfilling their payback requirements through acceptable employment.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	86%	83%
2011	87	83
2012	87	81
2013	87	
2014	85	
2015	85	

**Additional Information:** Using the annual Payback Reporting Form, grantees are required to report the number of Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)-supported graduates fulfilling their payback requirements through acceptable employment. This measure captures all program graduates who received RSA-supported scholarships, including those receiving undergraduate and graduate degrees and certificates. It also includes individuals maintaining acceptable employment in all acceptable agencies, not just State VR agencies. The Act requires that all program graduates maintain acceptable employment for at least 2 years for every year they received assistance from an RSA-supported grant. However, only four in five scholars are currently doing so. It is possible that some portion of program graduates are receiving waivers of their payback requirements for various reasons, including exceptions and deferrals provided in accordance with 34 CFR 386.41, such as permanent disability or full-time enrollment in an institution of higher education. It is also possible that some subset of individuals who received scholarship support opt to obtain employment in for-profit rehabilitation agencies and simply repay their initial scholarship as if it were a loan. Without further information, the Department cannot determine the extent to which these explanations hold, but RSA has revised the Payback Reporting Form to be used by grantees in order to significantly improve the quality and accuracy of the data RSA receives about scholars. The Department does not expect data on this issue from the revised form to be available until winter 2015 at the earliest.

**Measure:** The percentage of currently employed State Vocational Rehabilitation agency counselors who meet their state's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) standards.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	75%	84%
2011	76	86
2012	77	
2013	78	
2014	78	
2015	80	

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### Training

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**Additional Information:** The Department annually collects data from State VR agencies about the qualifications of their currently-employed counselors. Since 2002, the proportion of currently employed State VR agency counselors who meet their State's CSPD standards has increased and performance on this measure in 2010 and 2011 was markedly better than in prior years. The general trend of improved performance could be due, in part, to enhanced training made possible through the Training program. However, it could also be due to the natural aging of the State VR workforce accompanied by replacing retiring counselors who do not meet the CSPD standards with new counselors who do. The Department believes that both factors may have contributed to the increased qualifications of State VR counselors, but cannot definitively parse out the individual effects of each. Performance on this measure increased by 9 percentage points in 2010, which the Department believes may be due to higher quality data reporting on the part of States and increased monitoring and technical assistance from the Department. In general, more information is needed about this measure and the potential causes of the recent trends. The Department has recently changed the way it collects data on this measure and, as a result, will not be collecting data on this measure for 2012. Data for 2013 will be available in summer 2014.

### Efficiency Measures

The Department has adopted an efficiency measure for the Long-Term Training program (LTT). This measure is the cost per Master's-level vocational rehabilitation counseling graduate.

**Measure:** The Federal cost per RSA supported rehabilitation counseling graduate at the Masters-level.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	\$10,702	\$23,477
2011	10,702	23,721
2012	10,702	20,275
2013	24,000	
2014	24,000	
2015	24,000	

**Additional Information:** The measure is calculated by dividing the total funds spent on long-term training during a fiscal year by the number of graduates supported under that program during the same fiscal year. Since 2001, the Federal cost per RSA supported rehabilitation graduate at the Masters level typically ranged from \$10,000 to \$12,000. Beginning in 2010, the Department has calculated this measure for individual cohorts of grantees by dividing the sum of all project costs supported with Federal funds (across all years of each individual scholar's training) by the number of degree recipients who successfully completed funded training programs closing in that year. Prior to 2010, this measure was calculated using only the funds directly made available for scholarships. For purposes of the table above, the Department recalculated the 2010 measure using the revised methodology in order to allow cross-year comparisons. The targets for 2010 through 2012 are based on the previous methodology. The higher Federal cost per RSA-supported graduate under the new methodology is in line with

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Training

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similar measures in other programs supporting training at the Masters level. However, there remains wide variation across types of programs and projects. The decrease in Federal cost in 2012 is because only one project qualified for inclusion in this measure in that year, and may not actually reflect any improvements in efficiency. The Department is currently reviewing its methodology for calculating this measure to ensure that it accurately and reliably reflects the Federal cost per Masters-level graduate. Data for 2013 are expected to be available in fall 2014.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

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### Demonstration and training programs

(Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title III, Section 303)

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2015 Authorization: 0 <sup>1</sup>

Budget Authority:

<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>Change</u>
\$5,796	\$5,796	0

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<sup>1</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2004. The Department proposes to continue funding this program in FY 2015 through appropriations language.

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### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Demonstration and Training programs are authorized to provide competitive grants to, or contracts with, eligible entities to expand and improve the provision of rehabilitation and other services authorized under the Rehabilitation Act (the Act) and to further the purposes and policies of the Act. These current-funded discretionary programs also are authorized to support activities that increase the provision, extent, availability, scope, and quality of rehabilitation services under the Act, including related research and evaluation activities.

Section 303(b) of the Rehabilitation Act authorizes the support of activities to demonstrate methods of service delivery to individuals with disabilities, as well as activities such as technical assistance, systems change, special studies and evaluation, and dissemination and utilization of project findings. Eligible entities include State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies, community rehabilitation programs, Indian tribes or tribal organizations, other public or nonprofit agencies or organizations, and for-profit organizations. Competitions may be limited to one or more type of entity.

Sections 303(c) and (d) of the Act authorize a parent information and training program and a Braille training program.

The majority of projects currently supported under Demonstration and Training programs are designed to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities by expanding and improving the availability and provision of rehabilitation and other services. These projects are intended to increase employment outcomes for individuals for whom vocational rehabilitation services were previously unavailable or who previously did not take advantage of such services.

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### Demonstration and training programs

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Funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years were:

	(dollars in thousands)
2010.....	\$11,601
2011.....	6,459
2012.....	5,325
2013.....	5,046
2014.....	5,796

### FY 2015 BUDGET REQUEST

The Administration requests \$5.796 million for the Demonstration and Training programs in fiscal year 2015, the same as the fiscal year 2014 level. The request includes about \$4 million for new awards and the remaining funds would be used to support continuation costs for awards made in fiscal year 2014.

Fiscal year 2014 is the last year of Federal support for the 5-year Social Security Disability Insurance/Supplemental Security Income (SSDI/SSI) demonstration project that began in fiscal year 2010, and was designed to identify State VR agency best practices for improving the employment outcomes of SSDI/SSI beneficiaries. In fiscal year 2015, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) plans to propose a new priority that would support demonstration grants to assist State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies and their partner programs to improve employment outcomes for youths with significant disabilities transitioning from secondary school to postsecondary education and employment. Five-year grants would be awarded to develop and implement model VR strategies and services for youths with significant disabilities that will lead to increased college completion and preparation for employment. State VR agencies would be required to collaborate with State and local partners, such as State and local education agencies, postsecondary education institutions, employers, and community rehabilitation providers to demonstrate promising strategies and practices that would prepare individuals with significant disabilities to make informed decisions about postsecondary education and employment, improve access to postsecondary education and training, as well as assist such individuals to be successful during the early critical period following their transition from secondary education.

Projects would be required to document and report uniform cross-project data that would be used to evaluate the results of the projects consistent with project measures that would be published in the final priority. The knowledge gained from the outcomes and results of these projects would be translated for use in providing technical assistance and professional development to State VR agency and other key personnel that work in coordination with VR agencies to assist individuals with significant disabilities to achieve their postsecondary education and employment goals. This activity supports the White House focus on college to career emphasis and the Secretary's goals related to college access, college completion, and preparing students for college and career.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Demonstration and training programs

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In fiscal year 2015, funds (\$1.715 million) would also be used to pay the continuation costs of projects that the Administration plans to award under this program during fiscal year 2014, including parent information and training, braille training, and technical assistance grants.

#### PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES (dollars in thousands)

<b>Program funding and number of awards:</b>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
<u>Program funding:</u>			
<i>Demonstration projects</i>			
New Transition projects	0	0	\$3967
SSDI/SSI Continuations	\$4,746	\$4,025	0
<i>Technical assistance activities</i>			
Continuation award	0	0	400
New award	<u>0</u>	<u>400</u> <sup>1</sup>	<u>0</u>
Subtotal	0	400	400
<i>Braille training</i>			
Continuation awards	300	0	330
New awards	<u>0</u>	<u>330</u>	<u>0</u>
Subtotal	300	330	330
<i>Parent information and training</i>			
Continuation awards	0	0	985
New awards <sup>2</sup>	<u>0</u>	<u>985</u>	<u>0</u>
Subtotal	0	985	985
<i>Program improvement activities</i>	0	50	50
<i>Peer review of new award applications</i>	0	6	6
<i>Minority Outreach</i>	<u>0</u> <sup>3</sup>	<u>0</u> <sup>3</sup>	<u>58</u>
Total---Program funding	5,046	5,796	5,796
<u>Number of awards:</u>			
Continuation awards	4	1	11
New awards	<u>0</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>1</u>
Total---Number of awards	4	12	12

<sup>1</sup> These funds will be used to jointly fund a new Transition Technical Assistance Center with the Office of Special Education Programs.

<sup>2</sup> In FY 2014, the Department intends to award 6 Parent Information and Training Centers as well one National Parent Technical Assistance Center.

<sup>3</sup> The Rehabilitation Act allows the RSA Commissioner flexibility in determining how it will meet the 1 percent set-aside for Minority Outreach activities required under section 21 of the Rehabilitation Act. In FYs 2013 and 2014, no funds will be used from this program to meet this requirement.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Demonstration and training programs

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#### PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

##### Efficiency Measure

**Goal: To expand, improve or further the purposes of activities authorized under the Act.**

**Objective:** *Expand and improve the provision of rehabilitation services that lead to employment outcomes.*

The efficiency measure for this program is the percentage of projects that met their goals and objectives as established in their original applications, or as modified during the first year. This efficiency measure is designed to determine whether the grantees are providing the services for which they were awarded funding through the competitive process. In 2013, RSA received final reports from 13 grantees, including 6 Transition Model Demonstrations and 7 Parent Information and Training Centers. RSA is reviewing the applications submitted by these grantees in relation to their final reports to determine whether these grantees achieved the goals and objectives they set out to accomplish.

##### Other Performance Information

RSA has developed performance measures tailored to the specific projects being funded under this program. For example, in fiscal year 2010, RSA established performance measures for the Model Demonstration Project to Improve Outcomes for Individuals Receiving SSDI served by State VR agencies to assess the effectiveness of the grantee's performance in the following areas:

- The degree to which the data collected from the project sites show that the intervention model results in improvement in employment outcomes, such as employment rate, wages at case closure, average hours worked, and percentage of individuals earning an amount greater than substantial gainful activity, as determined by the Social Security Administration, at closure;
- The degree to which the project recommended strategies that could be used by other State VR agencies to implement the model;
- The degree to which the grantee has disseminated its findings to State VR agencies; and
- The responsiveness of the grantee to recommendations made through the reviews conducted by the panel of experts.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

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### Independent living

(Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VII, Parts B and C, and Chapter 2)

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2015 Authorization: 0<sup>1</sup>

Budget Authority:

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>Change</u>
Independent living State grants	\$22,878	\$22,878	0
Centers for independent living	78,305	78,305	0
Services for older individuals who are blind	33,317	33,317	0

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<sup>1</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2004. The Administration proposes to continue funding this program in FY 2015 through appropriations language.

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### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the independent living programs is to maximize the leadership, empowerment, independence, and productivity of individuals with disabilities, and to integrate these individuals into the mainstream of American society. Independent living programs provide financial assistance to sustain, expand, and improve independent living services; develop and support statewide networks of centers for independent living; and foster working relationships among State independent living rehabilitation programs, centers for independent living, Statewide Independent Living Councils, Rehabilitation Act programs outside of Title VII, and other relevant Federal and non-Federal programs. The independent living programs are current-funded.

The **Independent Living State Grants** program supports formula grants to States, with funds allotted based on total population. States participating in the State Grants program must match 10 percent of their grant with non-Federal cash or in-kind resources in the year for which the Federal funds are appropriated. The fiscal year 2013 State allotments were based on the July 1, 2011 population estimates released by the Census Bureau in December 2011. The fiscal year 2014 State distributions are based on the July 1, 2012 estimates released in December 2012. The fiscal year 2015 allotments would be based on the July 1, 2013 estimates published by the Census Bureau in December 2013.

To be eligible for financial assistance under the Independent Living (IL) State Grants or Centers for Independent Living program, States are required to establish a Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). Each State must also submit a State Plan for Independent Living that is jointly developed and signed by the director of the designated State vocational rehabilitation unit(s) (DSU) and the chairperson of the SILC. States may use these funds to provide resources to support the operation of the SILC and for one or more of the following purposes:

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Independent living

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- To demonstrate ways to expand and improve independent living services;
- To provide independent living services;
- To support the operation of centers for independent living;
- To increase the capacity of public or nonprofit agencies and organizations and other entities to develop comprehensive approaches or systems for providing independent living services;
- To conduct studies and analyses, gather information, develop model policies and procedures, and present information, approaches, strategies, findings, conclusions, and recommendations to Federal, State, and local policymakers;
- To provide training on the independent living philosophy; and
- To provide outreach to populations who are unserved or underserved by programs under Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act, including minority groups and urban and rural populations.

The **Centers for Independent Living (CIL)** program provides grants for consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability, nonresidential, private nonprofit agencies that are designed and operated within a local community by individuals with disabilities and provide an array of independent living services. At a minimum, centers are required to provide the core services of information and referral, independent living skills training, peer counseling, and individual and systems advocacy. Most centers are also actively involved in one or more of the following activities: community planning and decisionmaking; school-based peer counseling, role modeling, and skills training; working with local governments and employers to open and facilitate employment opportunities; interacting with local, State, and Federal legislators; and staging recreational events that integrate individuals with disabilities with their non-disabled peers.

A population-based formula determines the total amount that is available for discretionary grants to centers in each State. In most cases, the Department awards funds directly to centers for independent living. In fiscal year 2013, 356 centers and two States received funding from the CIL program. If State funding for CIL operation exceeds the level of Federal CIL funding in any fiscal year, the State may apply for the authority to award grants under this program through its DSU. There are currently only two States, Massachusetts and Minnesota, that are both eligible and have elected to manage their own CIL programs.

In addition to funding centers for independent living, the Department must award between 1.8 and 2 percent of the funds appropriated for this program for grants, contracts, or cooperative agreements to provide training and technical assistance with respect to planning, developing, conducting, administering, and evaluating centers for independent living. Each State must submit an annual performance report providing information regarding the centers' and SILCs' most pressing training and technical assistance needs.

The Rehabilitation Act establishes a set of standards and assurances that centers for independent living must meet and requires the Department to develop and publish indicators of minimum compliance with the standards. These standards and assurances are used in

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Independent living

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evaluating compliance in the following areas: philosophy, including consumer control and equal access; provision of services on a cross-disability basis; support of the development and achievement of the independent living goals chosen by consumers; advocacy to increase the quality of community options for independent living; provision of independent living core services; resource development; and community capacity-building activities, such as community advocacy, technical assistance, and outreach. Each year, the Department must conduct compliance reviews of at least 15 percent of the centers and one-third of the designated State units funded under this part. The Rehabilitation Act requires the Department to award grants to any eligible agency that had been awarded a grant as of September 30, 1997. In effect, all centers funded by the end of fiscal year 1997 are "grandfathered in" and thus guaranteed continued funding as long as they continue to meet program and fiscal standards and assurances.

The **Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who Are Blind** program supports services to assist individuals aged 55 or older whose recent severe visual impairment makes competitive employment extremely difficult to obtain, but for whom independent living goals are feasible. Funds are used to provide independent living services, conduct activities that will improve or expand services for these individuals, and conduct activities to improve public understanding of the problems of these individuals. Services are designed to help persons served under this program to adjust to their blindness by increasing their ability to care for their individual needs. Services provided under this program are typically not covered under private insurance or Medicaid.

Grantees are State vocational rehabilitation agencies for persons who are blind and visually impaired or, in States with no separate agency for persons who are blind, State combined vocational rehabilitation agencies. States participating in the Services for Older Individuals Who Are Blind program must match 10 percent of their grant with non-Federal cash or in kind resources in the year for which the Federal funds are appropriated. When appropriations for this program exceed \$13 million—as they have since fiscal year 2000—awards are distributed to States according to a formula based on the population of individuals who are 55 years of age or older. The fiscal year 2013 allotments were based on the July 1, 2011 estimates of the population of individuals age 55 and older published by the Census Bureau in December 2011. The fiscal year 2014 and 2015 State allotments are based on the July 1, 2012 population estimates released in December 2012. The fiscal year 2015 allotments will be revised when new population estimates by age group become available.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Independent living

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Funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years were:

#### Independent living State grants

(dollars in thousands)

2010.....	\$23,450
2011.....	23,403
2012.....	23,359
2013.....	22,137
2014.....	22,878

#### Centers for independent living

(dollars in thousands)

2010.....	\$80,266
2011.....	80,105
2012.....	79,953
2013.....	75,772
2014.....	78,305

#### Services for older individuals who are blind

(dollars in thousands)

2010.....	\$34,151
2011.....	34,083
2012.....	34,018
2013.....	32,239
2014.....	33,317

### FY 2015 BUDGET REQUEST

The Administration requests \$22.88 million for the Independent Living State Grants (IL State Grants) program, \$78.31 million for the Centers for Independent Living program (CIL), and \$33.32 million for the Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who are Blind (Older Blind) program. The request for each of these programs is the same as the fiscal year 2014 appropriation.

### Independent Living State Grants and Centers for Independent Living

The Administration requests \$22.88 million for the State Grants program and \$78.31 million for the CIL program, the same level as the fiscal year 2014 appropriation. Funds requested for the State Grants program would continue the Department's support of 77 designated State units (DSUs) that use grant funds to: support Statewide Independent Living Councils (SILCs); provide independent living services in unserved and underserved geographic areas; promote coordination among centers for independent living; and support the operation of centers for independent living. A majority of State Grant funds are used to provide independent living services, either directly or through grants and contracts with centers for independent living and

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Independent living

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other providers. These services include independent living skills training, communication services, and the provision of assistive technology devices and equipment.

The request for the CIL program would continue support for existing centers, including any new center grants awarded in 2015. As funding for this program has increased, approximately 75 new centers have been funded since 2000, particularly in the years immediately following the Recovery Act. These new and existing centers provide essential services that help individuals with disabilities to live independently and participate as productive members of their communities.

### Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who Are Blind

The Administration requests \$33.32 million for the Independent Living Services for Older Individuals who are Blind program for fiscal year 2015, the same as the fiscal year 2014 appropriation. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 American Community Survey, 6.5 percent of individuals 65 and older (about 2.7 million people) have a vision-related disability. The occurrence of a sensory disability was more than six times greater among older adults than working-age people. Persons age 55 or older, the target population of this program, are projected to comprise a larger share of the population over the next decade and beyond. Independent living services for these individuals are predominately provided through contracts administered by State vocational rehabilitation agencies, not centers for independent living, and many of the needs of this older population are different from those of the consumers that would be served under the proposed Grants for Independent Living program. For these reasons, the Administration believes a sustained investment in this program separate from the Grants for Independent Living program is warranted. At the requested funding level, an estimated 16 States would receive the minimum award of \$225,000, and the Territories would continue to be funded at their minimum level.

### PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES (dollars in thousands)

<u>Measures:</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Centers for Independent Living:			
Number of Grantees	356	356	356
Minimum State Allocation	\$813	\$839	\$839
Average State allocation	\$1,405	\$1,452	\$1,452
Minority outreach	\$758	\$783	\$783
Training and Technical Assistance	\$1,364	\$1,444	\$1,444
Services for Older Individuals Who Are Blind:			
Number of Grantees	56	56	56
Minimum State award	\$225	\$225	\$225
Average State award	\$611	\$631	\$631
Minority outreach	\$322	\$333	\$333

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Independent living

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#### PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES (dollars in thousands) (continued)

<u>Measures:</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Independent Living State Grants:			
Number of Grantees	77	77	77
Minimum State award	\$295	\$295	\$295
Average State award	\$419	\$433	\$433
Minority outreach	\$221	\$229	\$229

#### PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

##### Performance Measures

This section presents selected program performance information, including, for example, GPRA goals, objectives, measures, and performance targets and data; and an assessment of the progress made toward achieving program results. Achievement of program results is based on the cumulative effect of the resources provided in previous years, including funding provided under the Recovery Act, and those requested in fiscal year 2015 and future years, as well as the resources and efforts invested by those served by the program.

**Goal:** To promote and support a philosophy of independent living (IL)—including a philosophy of consumer control, peer support, self-help, self-determination, equal access, and individual and system advocacy—in order to maximize the leadership, empowerment, independence, and productivity of individuals with disabilities, and the integration and full inclusion of individuals with disabilities into the mainstream of American society.

**Objective:** *Through the provision of IL services (including the four IL core services), increase the percentage of consumers who report having access to services needed to improve their ability to live more independently and participate fully in their communities.*

**Measure:** The percentage of Independent Living Centers consumers who report having access to previously unavailable appropriate accommodations to receive health care services, as a result of direct services provided by an Independent Living Center (including referral to another service provider).

Year	Target	Actual
2010	69%	60%
2011	70	62
2012	70	61
2013	71	
2014	71	
2015	71	

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Independent living

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**Measure:** The percentage of Independent Living Centers consumers who report having access to previously unavailable assistive technology which results in increased independence in at least one significant life area, as a result of direct services provided by an Independent Living Center (including referral to another service provider).

Year	Target	Actual
2010	74%	69%
2011	76	67
2012	76	70
2013	76	
2014	76	
2015	76	

**Measure:** The percentage of Independent Living Centers consumers who report having access to previously unavailable transportation, as a result of direct services provided by an Independent Living Center (including referral to another service provider).

Year	Target	Actual
2010	86%	69%
2011	87	92
2012	87	70
2013	87	
2014	87	
2015	87	

**Additional information:** For these measures, grantees in the Centers for Independent Living program are required under section 704 of the Rehabilitation Act to report annually detailed data on the services they provided and the resulting outcomes, including the percentage of their consumers who report—as result of services provided by a CIL (including referral to another service provider), designated State unit, or designated State unit’s grantee or contractor—having access to previously unavailable transportation, appropriate accommodations to receive health care services, and/or assistive technology resulting in increased independence in at least one significant life area. The denominator is determined by the grantee based on the number of consumers who have goals specified in their Independent Living Plans that require measurable progress on these intermediate outcomes (access to transportation, health care services, and/or assistive technology) for their achievement. These are not the only outcomes of interest to CIL grantees or consumers, but RSA believes that a significant portion of CIL activities are directly related to these outcomes and that improved performance on these outcomes will result in increased independence for CIL consumers overall.

Data for 2012 indicate that targets were not met for all the three outcome areas reported under these measures. However, performance on one of the measures (access to assistive technology) showed progress compared to the previous year. The measure on access to transportation returned to historically normal levels in 2012 after an unexplained spike in 2011.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Independent living

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The third measure (access to health care) showed a slight decline in 2012. Data for 2013 are expected in April 2014. RSA staff and the program's technical assistance grantees have conducted data quality training sessions in recent years to improve the validity of the data. RSA also implemented a series of automated data checks, which have resulted in further improvements in the accuracy of the data. RSA will examine whether to reset targets for these measures using the more accurate data.

**Measure:** The percentage of Independent Living Centers' consumers who move out of institutions into a community-based setting through the provision of Independent Living services (including the four independent living core services).

Year	Target	Actual
2010	56%	54%
2011	57	54
2012	57	56
2013	58	
2014	58	
2015	58	

**Additional information:** Many CILs believe that one of the most important functions of the CIL program is assisting people with disabilities with moving out of institutions and living independently. Consumers counted by this measure must have set a goal to move out of an institution or nursing home and now live in a community-based setting. This measure is calculated by dividing the number of consumers who, with the assistance of a center for independent living, moved to a community-based setting by the number of consumers who set a community living goal ( $4,314 / 7,686 = 56\%$ ). The percentage of consumers who met their community living goal increased to 56 percent in 2012 and is slightly below the target. Data for 2013 are expected in April 2014.

**Objective:** *Increase access to community life for persons with disabilities through the provision of community services.*

The Department previously developed measures designed to capture CIL efforts at the community level on key outcomes that correspond to the outcome measures for services and activities provided at the individual level. Grantees have found that measuring and reporting valid and reliable data on these outcomes at the community level is much more difficult. RSA is working to develop new measures that capture community-level activities and will include these new measures in the next version of the section 704 reporting instrument.

**Objective:** *Through the provision of services (either directly or through contracts), increase the percentage of consumers receiving services funded through the Older Blind program who report having access to services needed to improve their ability to live more independently and participate fully in their communities.*

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Independent living

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**Measure:** The percentage of Independent Living Older Blind program consumers who have access to previously unavailable assistive technology aids and devices.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	56%	57%
2011	58	52
2012	58	50
2013	58	
2014	58	
2015	58	

**Additional information:** The percentage of consumers reporting access to previously unavailable assistive technology in 2012 declined from the prior year and fell below the target level for the second consecutive year. Assistive technology is one of the most frequently requested and expensive forms of assistance offered by this program, and consequently some States may have difficulty meeting consumer demand. This measure is calculated by dividing the number of consumers who received assistive technology by the total number of Older Blind program consumers ( $32,596 / 65,055 = 50\%$ ). Data for 2013 are expected by April 2014.

**Measure:** The percentage of Independent Living Older Blind program consumers who report an improvement in daily living skills.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	58%	60%
2011	59	52
2012	59	51
2013	60	
2014	60	
2015	60	

**Additional information:** The percentage of consumers reporting improvement in their daily living skills for 2012 declined slightly from the prior year and fell below the target level for the second consecutive year. This measure is calculated by dividing the number of Older Blind program consumers who reported improvement in daily living skills by the total number of Older Blind program consumers ( $33,331 / 65,055 = 51\%$ ). Daily living skills include activities such as bathing, moving around the home, getting out of bed or a chair, and eating a meal. State agencies collect and provide this data in their annual program reports. Data for 2013 are expected by April 2014.

### Efficiency Measures

The Department has not established efficiency measures for the CIL program. Several years ago, the Department examined the utility of two possible measures of efficiency: the number of consumer service records closed with all goals met for every \$10,000 in net operating funds, and the number of consumer goals accomplished per \$10,000 in net operating funds. RSA pilot

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### **Independent living**

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tested these measures and commissioned a contractor to analyze the efficiency data, but found that these measures did not provide valid and reliable results. Data from the measures showed that CILs varied widely in their reported efficiency depending on the size, location, funding sources, intensity of services, and accuracy of records of each CIL. The Department will continue to explore alternative methods of evaluating the efficiency of the program.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

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### Protection and advocacy of individual rights (Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title V, Section 509)

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2015 Authorization: 0 <sup>1</sup>

Budget Authority:

<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>Change</u>
\$17,650	\$17,650	0

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<sup>1</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2004. The Administration proposes to continue funding this program in FY 2015 through appropriations language.

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### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Protection and Advocacy of Individual Rights (PAIR) program supports a statewide system to protect the legal and human rights of individuals with disabilities who are ineligible for protection and advocacy (P&A) services provided under Part C of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness Act, or who need P&A services that are beyond the scope of the Client Assistance Program. The purpose of this program is to provide assistance and information to eligible individuals with disabilities and conduct advocacy to ensure the protection of their rights under Federal law. States may use these funds to plan and carry out P&A programs for eligible individuals with disabilities and to develop outreach strategies to inform individuals with disabilities of their rights.

Funds must be set aside under this program for two activities before awarding grants to eligible States and outlying areas with the remaining appropriation. If the appropriation is equal to or exceeds \$5.5 million, the Secretary must first set aside between 1.8 percent and 2.2 percent of the amount appropriated for training and technical assistance to eligible systems established under this program. In addition, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (the Act) requires that in any year in which the total appropriation exceeds \$10.5 million, the Secretary must award \$50,000 to the eligible system established under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act to serve the American Indian consortium. The Secretary distributes the remainder of the appropriation to the eligible systems within the States and outlying areas based on population estimates and after satisfying minimum allocations. The fiscal year 2013 State distributions were based on the July 1, 2011 estimates published in December 2011. The fiscal year 2014 State distributions are based on the July 1, 2012 estimates published on December 20, 2012. The fiscal year 2015 State distributions would be based on the July 1, 2013 estimates published on December 30, 2013.

The Act also requires the Secretary to increase the minimum allotments for States and outlying areas by a percentage not greater than the percentage increase in the total amount

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Protection and advocacy of individual rights

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appropriated for this program for the previous fiscal year. The Act establishes a minimum allotment of \$100,000 for States or one-third of 1 percent of funds remaining after the technical assistance set-aside and grant for the American Indian consortium, whichever is greater. The outlying areas receive a minimum allotment of \$50,000. The program is current-funded but States and outlying areas may carry over unobligated Federal funds for an additional year.

Funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years were as follows:

	(dollars in thousands)
2010.....	\$18,101
2011.....	18,065
2012.....	18,031
2013.....	17,088
2014.....	17,650

### FY 2015 BUDGET REQUEST

The Administration requests \$17.650 million for the PAIR program in fiscal year 2015, the same as the fiscal year 2014 level. The Protection and Advocacy of Individual Rights (PAIR) program supports a state-wide system to protect the legal and human rights of individuals with disabilities who are ineligible for protection and advocacy (P&A) services provided under Part C of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness Act, or who need P&A services that are beyond the scope of the Client Assistance Program. The purpose of this program is to provide assistance and information to eligible individuals with disabilities and conduct advocacy to ensure the protection of their rights under Federal Law.

During fiscal year 2012, PAIR programs reported handling 14,464 cases and responding to 48,738 requests for information or referral. Of the cases handled by PAIR programs in that year, the greatest number of specified issues involved government benefits/services (22 percent), education (15 percent), health care (13 percent), employment (12 percent), and housing (12 percent).

In addition to providing representation to individuals, PAIR programs address systemic issues faced by persons with disabilities through a variety of methods, including negotiations with public and private entities and class action litigation. In fiscal year 2012, 55 out of the 57 PAIR programs (96 percent) reported that these activities resulted in changes in policies and practices benefiting individuals with disabilities.

The following examples of case services provided in fiscal year 2012 illustrate how PAIR programs assist individuals and bring about systemic change:

- Arizona Center for Disability Law provided assistance to a woman with digestive disorders who recently moved into a semi-independent apartment that did not include a dietician as part of the agreed upon housing arrangement. The woman submitted follow-up letters to document the medical condition, but the facility would not provide the appropriate meals or

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Protection and advocacy of individual rights

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waive the paid meal plans. The Center assisted the woman to file a complaint through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The outcome is that the individual was waived from the meal plan requirement, reimbursed for all the monthly meal plan payments, and the facility agreed to make accommodations impacting future consumers with disabilities.

- Disability Rights North Carolina (DRNC) provided assistance to a deaf individual after visiting a large estate tourist attraction. The individual requested in advance an interpreter for the tour of the mansion and grounds, but was informed that they did not provide interpreters and could only provide a transcript of the audio tour of the house. DRNC provided advocacy services in meeting with estate management to explain accessibility requirements. The outcome is that the estate modified its accessibility policies to provide interpreters with advance notice, educated their customer service representatives of the new requirements, and developed a page within its website welcoming guests with special needs and how they can receive assistance. The client was personally invited back to tour the estate with an interpreter.

### PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

<u>Measures</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Information inquiries/referrals	48,700	48,700	48,700
Individuals provided case services	14,400	14,400	14,400

NOTE: Data for fiscal years 2013 through 2015 are projected from actual data collected for fiscal year 2012. Data for fiscal year 2013 will be available in April 2014.

### PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

#### Performance Measures

This section presents selected program performance information, including, for example, GPRA goals, objectives, measures, and performance targets and data, and an assessment of the progress made toward achieving program results. Achievement of results is based on the cumulative effect of the resources provided in previous years and those requested in fiscal year 2015 and future years, as well as the resources and efforts invested by those served by this program.

**Goal: To provide assistance and information to individuals with disabilities eligible for the Protection and Advocacy of Individual Rights program and conduct advocacy to ensure the protection of their rights under Federal law.**

**Objective:** *Identify problem areas requiring systemic change and engage in systemic activities to address those problems.*

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Protection and advocacy of individual rights

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**Measure:** The percentage of PAIR programs that reported that their systemic advocacy resulted in a change in policy or practice.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	85%	93%
2011	89	89
2012	91	96
2013	91	
2014	91	
2015	92	

**Additional information:** Because PAIR programs cannot address all issues facing individuals with disabilities solely through individual advocacy, they seek to change public and private policies and practices that present barriers to the rights of individuals with disabilities, utilizing negotiations and class action litigation. Successful performance under this measure is measured by the number of PAIR programs reporting a change in policy or practice that is a result from their intervention. The target was met in fiscal year 2012 with 55 out of the 57 (96 percent) PAIR programs reporting success, 4 programs more than in fiscal year 2011.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

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### National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research

(Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II)

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2015 Authorization: 0 <sup>1</sup>

Budget Authority:

<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>Change</u>
\$103,970	\$108,000	+\$4,030

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<sup>1</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2004. The Administration proposes to continue funding this program in FY 2015 through appropriations language.

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### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The mission of the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) is to generate knowledge and promote its effective use to improve the abilities of people with disabilities to perform activities of their choice in the community, and also to expand society's capacity to provide full opportunities and accommodations for its citizens with disabilities. NIDRR conducts comprehensive and coordinated programs of research and related activities to maximize the full inclusion, social integration, employment, and independent living of individuals with disabilities of all ages. The purposes of NIDRR are to:

- Promote, coordinate, and provide for research, demonstration and training, and related activities with respect to individuals with disabilities;
- Widely disseminate findings, conclusions, and recommendations resulting from its activities; and
- Provide leadership in advancing the quality of life of individuals with disabilities.

NIDRR's research is conducted through a network of individual research projects and centers of excellence located throughout the Nation. Most funding is awarded through competitive grants, and most of the funds are awarded to universities or providers of rehabilitation or related services.

As required by the Rehabilitation Act in §202(h), NIDRR operates under a Long-Range Plan (LRP), published April 4, 2013 in the Federal Register, entitled "*Long-Range Plan for Fiscal Years 2013—2017*". This plan outlines four long-term performance goals and its strategies for achieving these goals. These goals are:

- Goal 1: Create a portfolio of research, development, and other activities that balances domains, populations of focus, and who, whether NIDRR or the grant applicant, defines the specific approach to a disability or rehabilitation research topic.

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- Goal 2: Support centers and projects that conduct well-designed research and development activities using a range of appropriate methods.
- Goal 3: Promote the effective use of knowledge in areas of importance to individuals with disabilities and their families.
- Goal 4: Improve program administration.

The following is a description of the primary areas for which NIDRR makes awards:

*Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers (RRTCs).* RRTCs receive funding to conduct coordinated and advanced programs of research, training, and information dissemination in problem areas that are specified by NIDRR. More specifically, RRTCs conduct research to improve rehabilitation methodologies and service delivery systems, alleviate or stabilize disabling conditions, and promote maximum social and economic independence for persons with disabilities. In addition, RRTCs provide training, including graduate, pre-service, and in-service training, to help rehabilitation personnel provide more effective rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities; and serve as centers of excellence in rehabilitation research for providers and for individuals with disabilities and their representatives. Typically, awards are for 5 years. However, NIDRR also may award grants for less than 5 years to support new or innovative research.

*Rehabilitation Engineering Research Centers (RERCs).* The RERCs conduct research on issues dealing with rehabilitation technology, including rehabilitation engineering and assistive technology devices and services. RERC activities include developing and disseminating innovative methods of applying advanced technology, scientific achievements, and psychological and social knowledge to rehabilitation issues such as the removal of environmental barriers; developing and disseminating technology designed to lessen the effects of sensory loss, mobility impairment, chronic pain, and communication difficulties; scientific research to assist in meeting the employment and independent living needs of individuals with severe disabilities; and stimulating the production and distribution of equipment in the private sector, as well as clinical evaluations of equipment. Each RERC must provide training opportunities to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities, to become researchers and practitioners in the field of rehabilitation technology. Typically, awards are for 5 years. However, NIDRR also may award grants for less than 5 years to support new or innovative research.

*Model Systems.* NIDRR funds model systems projects in three areas: spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury, and burn injury. Model systems funding supports 5-year grants to establish innovative projects for the delivery, demonstration, and evaluation of comprehensive medical, vocational, and other rehabilitation services to meet the wide range of needs of individuals in these areas. Grantees in each of the three areas contribute to a national database that is supported by NIDRR funding. These model systems programs have become platforms for conducting multi-site research, including randomized controlled trials to determine the efficacy of interventions.

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- *Spinal Cord Injury Model Systems.* The Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) program funds research to meet the wide range of needs of individuals with spinal cord injuries. (See <http://www.ncddr.org/rpp/hf/hfdw/mscis/>.) The projects also disseminate information to individuals with SCI and others.
- *Traumatic Brain Injury Model Systems.* The Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Model Systems projects are research and demonstration grants designed to advance the understanding of TBI and its consequences and improve rehabilitation outcomes. Currently, the NIDRR TBI model systems is the largest nonmilitary TBI service delivery/research entity participating in various intergovernmental efforts to improve treatment and outcomes for returning veterans. (See <http://www.tbindsc.org/>.)
- *Burn Model Systems.* The Burn Model Systems (BMS) projects are research and demonstration grants designed to establish, demonstrate, and evaluate a model system of care for burn injury survivors. The goal of the projects is to reduce disability by improving treatment and rehabilitation. (See <http://mama.uchsc.edu/pub/NIDRR/index.html>.)

*Field-Initiated Projects (FIPs).* Field-Initiated Projects supplement NIDRR's directed research and address a wide range of topics identified by investigators, including research, demonstrations, development, and knowledge translation. These projects allow NIDRR to address emerging developments in the field beyond the scope of announced priorities. Most of these awards are made for 3 years.

*Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects (DRRPs).* Grantees under this program focus on discrete research topics identified by NIDRR and address problems encountered by people with disabilities through a variety of methods that may include research, demonstrations, training, dissemination, utilization, technical assistance, or combinations of these activities.

*ADA National Network Centers (ADA Network).* The ADA Network supports 10 regional centers that provide detailed technical assistance, disseminate information, and provide training related to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and promote awareness of the ADA. Typically, these awards are for 5 years.

*Advanced Rehabilitation Research Training (ARRT).* The ARRT program supports grants to institutions to provide advanced postdoctoral training in areas that are directly related to NIDRR's research portfolio, such as medical rehabilitation, engineering, technology, community integration, and employment. Grants are made to institutions to recruit qualified persons with doctoral or similar advanced degrees and prepare them to conduct independent research in areas related to disability and rehabilitation. These training programs must operate in interdisciplinary environments and provide training in rigorous scientific methods.

*Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR).* SBIR awards support the development of new rehabilitation technologies that are useful to persons with disabilities by inviting the participation of small business firms with strong research capabilities in science, engineering, or educational technology. This 2-phase program takes a product from development to market readiness. During Phase I, firms conduct feasibility studies to evaluate the scientific and technical merit of an idea. During Phase II, they expand on the results and pursue further development. In order to be eligible, small businesses must be American-owned and independently operated and be

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for-profit with no more than 500 employees. The principal researcher must be employed by the business.

*Switzer Research Fellowships.* Switzer research fellows receive 1-year fellowships to carry out discrete research activities that are related to NIDRR's research priorities or to pursue studies in areas of importance to the rehabilitation community.

*Outreach to Minority Institutions.* The Rehabilitation Act (§21) requires that 1 percent of funds appropriated for programs authorized under certain titles be reserved for awards to minority entities and Indian tribes, or to provide outreach and assistance to minority entities and Indian tribes.

*Other Activities:* NIDRR funding also supports a variety of other activities, including knowledge translation; collaborative projects with other agencies; development and maintenance of grantee reporting systems; program review; and reporting, evaluation, long-range planning, and the *Interagency Committee on Disability Research* (ICDR). The primary purpose of the ICDR is to promote cooperation across various Federal agencies in the development and execution of disability and rehabilitation research activities. (See <http://www.icdr.us/>.)

NIDRR funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years were:

	(dollars in thousands)
2010 .....	\$109,241
2011 .....	109,023
2012 .....	108,817
2013 .....	103,125
2014 .....	103,970

### FY 2015 BUDGET REQUEST

The Administration requests \$108 million for the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research in fiscal year 2015, an increase of \$4 million over the fiscal year 2014 level for this program. About 81 percent of the funds requested would be used to cover the costs of grants that began in previous fiscal years (\$87 million). In addition, an estimated \$15.4 million would be used to fund new grant awards under a new regulatory framework that NIDRR intends to have in place for its research activities in fiscal year 2015.

Through absolute priorities published in the Federal Register in fiscal year 2013 based on NIDRR's revised Long-Range Plan (published in final in April 2013), NIDRR established three domains—employment, health and function, and community living and participation. In light of the need to learn more about employment practices that improve outcomes for people with disabilities, the Administration will expand NIDRR's employment portfolio. For fiscal year 2015, NIDRR is considering announcing applications for RRTC's in the following *employment* areas:

- Employer Practices in Successful Employment;
- Employment Policy Research;

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- Employment Outcomes for Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities;
- Employment for Individuals who are Blind or Visually Impaired; and
- Knowledge Translation in Employment

In fiscal year 2015, NIDRR is considering announcing applications for new RERCs in the following broad priority areas:

- Rehabilitation Strategies, Techniques, and Interventions;
- Information and Communication Technologies;
- Individual Mobility and Manipulation; and
- Physical Access and Transportation.

In fiscal year 2014, the Department plans to publish proposed regulations that would amend 34 CFR Part 350 governing NIDRR's Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects and Centers Program and publish final regulations in time for fiscal year 2015 competitions. NIDRR believes that these regulations will strengthen its overall research portfolio by expanding opportunities for field-initiated work within a clear framework that is designed to both encourage innovation and promote rigorous research, and by allowing for a regular schedule of competitions in pre-established priority areas. To establish clear and consistent requirements for similar types of projects, the regulations will define the types of projects to be supported and specify the application requirements for each of them. Under the proposed framework, NIDRR would support the following four types of projects.

- **Exploration and Discovery:** Generate new and refined analyses, findings, hypotheses, and theories that enhance knowledge of the barriers to and facilitators of improved outcomes for individuals with disabilities. This research can also be used to identify existing practices, programs, or policies that are associated with better outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The results from this work may either inform the development of interventions or lead to evaluations of interventions.
- **Intervention Development:** Generate and test interventions—such as research tools, products, programs, practices, and policies—that have potential to improve outcomes for individuals with disabilities. NIDRR supports grants to develop innovative interventions or to improve existing interventions.
- **Intervention Efficacy:** Evaluate the efficacy of interventions—such as research tools, products, programs, practices, and policies—to determine whether they are feasible and practical and can have a positive impact on outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Efficacy studies can be used to assess the strength of an intervention's impact on a desired outcome. Efficacy studies often apply experimental or quasi-experimental research methods.

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- **Scale-up Evaluation:** Conduct evaluations to determine whether interventions—such as research tools, products, programs, practices, and policies—are effective in producing improved outcomes for individuals with disabilities when implemented in multiple real-world settings.

These regulations would also specify the priority areas in which NIDRR plans to support new research. The broad priority areas, which are based on the domains in NIDRR's recently published Long-Range Plan (LRP) for fiscal years 2013-2017, would be employment, community living and participation, and health and function. In each domain area, NIDRR would specify broadly-framed priority areas, in which applicants would have flexibility to determine the specific topics and methodologies to be proposed in response to the needs of persons with disabilities, families, and service providers.

Within each domain, NIDRR plans to structure its competitions to target its research/investments in four broad disability categories—physical, psychiatric, developmental/intellectual, and sensory disabilities. These priorities would remain in place for up to five years. Having these priority areas in place for a prolonged period of time would provide the field with stable opportunities for funding. Applicants who are not successful in one competition would be able to revise and improve their applications knowing that there will soon be another opportunity to have their proposal funded. Using recurring topical priorities would also simplify the management of NIDRR's competitions by reducing the need for annual rule-making.

NIDRR established the use of these domains beginning in fiscal year 2012 through rule-making on individual grant priorities under the DRRP, RRTC, and RERC programs. During fiscal year 2015, NIDRR plans to use its new regulation for the following broad priority topics in its domain areas:

#### Employment

- Technology to improve employment outcomes for individuals with physical disabilities.
- Individual and environmental factors associated with improved employment outcomes for individuals with physical disabilities.
- Interventions that contribute to improved employment outcomes for individuals with physical disabilities. Interventions include any strategy, practice, program, policy, or tool that, when implemented as intended, contributes to improvements in outcomes for individuals with physical disabilities.
- Effects of government practices, policies, and programs on employment outcomes for individuals with physical disabilities.
- Practices and policies that contribute to improved employment outcomes for transition-aged youth with physical disabilities.
- Vocational rehabilitation (VR) practices that contribute to improved employment outcomes for individuals with physical disabilities.

#### Community Living and Participation

- Technology to improve community living and participation outcomes for individuals with physical disabilities.

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- Individual and environmental factors associated with improved community living and participation outcomes for individuals with physical disabilities.
- Interventions that contribute to improved community living and participation outcomes for individuals with physical disabilities. Interventions include any strategy, practice, program, policy, or tool that, when implemented as intended, contributes to improvements in outcomes for individuals with physical disabilities.
- Effects of government practices, policies, and programs on community living and participation outcomes for individuals with physical disabilities.
- Practices and policies that contribute to improved community living and participation outcomes for transition-aged youth with physical disabilities.

#### Health and Function

- Technology to improve health and function outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Individual and environmental factors associated with improved access to rehabilitation and health care and improved health and function outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Interventions that contribute to improved health and function outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Interventions include any strategy, practice, program, policy, or tool that, when implemented as intended, contributes to improvements in outcomes for the specified population.
- Effects of government practices, policies, and programs on health care access and on health and function outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Practices and policies that contribute to improved health and function outcomes for transition-aged youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

#### PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES (dollars in thousands)

<b>Project Type</b>	<b>Amount of Funding</b>			<b>Number of Awards</b>		
	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
<u>Research Domains</u>						
<i>Employment</i>						
Continuations	\$1,000	\$3,466	\$5,446	2	7	11
New awards	<u>1,000</u>	<u>2,000</u>	<u>TBD</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>TBD</u>
Subtotal	2,000	5,466	TBD	4	11	TBD
<i>Health and Function</i>						
Continuations	0	950	2,450	0	2	5
New awards	<u>1,000</u>	<u>1,500</u>	<u>TBD</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>TBD</u>
Subtotal	1,000	2,450	TBD	0	5	TBD

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Project Type	Amount of Funding			Number of Awards		
	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
<i>Community Living and Participation</i>						
Continuations	0	\$950	\$2,450	0	2	5
New awards	<u>\$1,000</u>	<u>1,500</u>	<u>TBD</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>TBD</u>
Subtotal	1,000	2,450	TBD	2	5	TBD
<i>Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers</i>						
Continuations	12,669	15,415	16,575	18	18	20
New awards	<u>8,250</u>	<u>5,700</u>	<u>TBD</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>TBD</u>
Subtotal	20,919	21,115	TBD	27	26	TBD
<i>Rehabilitation Engineering Research Centers</i>						
Continuations	5,700	11,174	12,174	9	13	14
New awards	<u>6,650</u>	<u>1,900</u>	<u>TBD</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>TBD</u>
Subtotal	12,350	13,074	TBD	16	15	TBD
<i>Spinal Cord Injury Model Systems</i>						
Continuations	8,019	8,018	8,018	16	16	16
New awards	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Subtotal	8,017	8,018	8,018	16	16	16
<i>Traumatic Brain Injury Model Systems</i>						
Continuations	8,125	8,224	8,224	17	18	18
New awards	<u>850</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Subtotal	8,975	8,224	8,224	18	18	18
<i>Burn Model Systems</i>						
Continuations	1,850	1,850	1,850	5	5	5
New awards	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Subtotal	1,850	1,850	1,850	5	5	5
<i>Field Initiated Projects</i>						
Continuations	7,621	7,191	7,800	46	43	41
New awards	<u>4,000</u>	<u>4,000</u>	<u>TBD</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>TBD</u>
Subtotal	11,621	11,191	TBD	63	66	TBD
<i>Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects</i>						
Continuations	4,550	2,299	2,750	8	4	5
New awards	<u>750</u>	<u>1,500</u>	<u>TBD</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>TBD</u>
Subtotal	5,300	3,799	TBD	9	7	TBD

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Project Type	Amount of Funding			Number of Awards		
	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
<i>Advanced Rehabilitation Research and Training</i>						
Continuations	\$2,397	\$2,250	\$2,250	16	16	16
New awards	<u>600</u>	<u>600</u>	<u>TBD</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>TBD</u>
Subtotal	2,997	2,850	TBD	20	20	TBD
<i>Minority Outreach</i>						
Continuations	0	1,110	1,110	0	3	3
New awards	<u>1,031</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Subtotal	1,031	1,110	1,110	3	3	3
<i>Small Business Innovation Research</i>						
Continuations	1,250	1,150	1,438	5	4	5
New awards	<u>2,375</u>	<u>2,188</u>	<u>TBD</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>TBD</u>
Subtotal	3,625	3,338	TBD	25	19	TBD
<i>Switzer Research Fellowships</i>						
New awards	505	500	430	7	7	6
<i>ADA National Network</i>						
Continuations	12,534	12,532	12,532	12	12	12
New awards	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Subtotal	12,534	12,532	12,532	12	12	12
<i>Knowledge Translation</i>						
Continuations	2,600	3,525	2,475	4	5	3
New awards	<u>1,000</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>TBD</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>TBD</u>
Subtotal	3,600	3,525	TBD	5	5	TBD
<b>Subtotals</b>						
Subtotal, continuation grants	68,754	77,324	86,980	158	165	176
Subtotal new grants	<u>28,629</u>	<u>20,919</u>	<u>15,392</u>	<u>80</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>TBD</u>
Total grants	97,383	98,243	102,372	238	237	TBD
Other Activities (Contracts)	4,803	4,927	4,728			
Peer review of new grant applications	<u>939</u>	<u>800</u>	<u>900</u>			
Subtotal	5,742	5,727	5,628			
Total, NIDRR	103,125	103,970	108,000			

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#### PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

##### Performance Measures

This section presents selected program performance information, including, for example, GPRA goals, objectives, measures, and performance targets and data, and an assessment of the progress made toward achieving program results. Achievement of results is based on the cumulative effect of the resources provided in previous years and those requested in fiscal year 2015 and future years, as well as the resources and efforts invested by those served by this program.

**Goal:** To conduct high-quality research and related activities that lead to high-quality products.

**Objective:** *Advance knowledge through capacity building: Increase capacity to conduct and use high-quality and relevant disability and rehabilitation research and related activities designed to guide decision-making, change practice, and improve the lives of individuals with disabilities.*

**Measure:** The percentage of NIDRR-supported fellows, post-doctoral trainees, and doctoral students who publish results of NIDRR-sponsored research in refereed journals.

Year	Target	Actual
2010		9%
2011		15.8
2012		17.1
2013	8%	
2014	8	
2015	8	

**Additional information:** For this measure, refereed journals are those journals that are recognized by the Thompson Institute for Scientific Information. See: <http://www.thompsonscientific.com/cgi-bin/jrnlst/jloptions.cgi?PC=master>.

In calculating performance on this measure, a single author is counted only once if he or she produces multiple peer-reviewed publications, and fellows or graduate students who coauthored a publication are counted individually for their contributions to one publication. In 2012, there were a total of 516 currently supported NIDRR fellows, post-doc trainees and doctoral students that produced 88 publications; of these, 17.1 percent appeared in refereed journals. This statistic requires some qualification because of the lag time it takes to have publications appear. Some of the publications produced by the 2012 students will not appear until 2013 or later. In addition publishing in refereed journals only allow for the calculation of a rough estimate using currently funded students in the denominator.

The measure includes researchers supported under the following programs: Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers (RRTC), Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC), Advanced Rehabilitation Research Training (ARRT), Model Systems (MS), Disability

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Rehabilitation Research Projects (DRRPs), and Field Initiated Projects (FIP) grants. These data do not include those funded by Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program. Data for fiscal year 2013 will be available in December 2014. Targets may be revised for 2015 after 2013 data have been compiled and reviewed.

**Measure:** Percentage of NIDRR-funded grant applications that receive an average peer review score of 85 or higher.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	96%	94%
2011	96	93
2012	96	100
2013	96	
2014	96	
2015	96	

**Additional information:** This measure assesses the extent to which NIDRR-funded grant applications are judged by expert review panels to be of high quality. Data for the measure include all grant awards made within a given fiscal year. In fiscal year 2012, one hundred percent of the eighty-six new awards received ratings of 85 or higher. Fiscal year 2013 data will be available in late March 2014.

**Measure:** Percentage of new grants that assess the effectiveness of interventions, programs, and devices using rigorous methods.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	60%	32%
2011	56	35
2012	61	33
2013	62	
2014	36	
2015	36	

**Additional information:** This measure provides information on the proportion of NIDRR grantees that are engaged in experimental, quasi-experimental, or single subject research to determine whether interventions, programs, and devices are effective. Targets for fiscal years 2010 through 2013 were set as ambitious goals based on fiscal year 2008 data. However, performance on this measure has been lower than expected for a number of reasons, including the variation in the mix of the types of projects awarded in a particular year.

In 2012, 247 of the total 741 newly funded NIDRR projects (33.3 percent) were reported to be using rigorous research methodologies, such as true experimental, quasi-experimental or single subject designs. Targets have been reduced for fiscal years 2014 and 2015 to reflect more realistic expectations. Fiscal year 2013 data will be available in April 2014.

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**Objective:** Advance knowledge through translation and dissemination: Promote the effective use of scientific-based knowledge, technologies, and applications to inform policy, improve practice, and enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities.

**Measure:** The number of new or improved NIDRR-funded assistive and universally designed technologies, products, and devices transferred to industry for potential commercialization.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	27	15
2011	15	16
2012	16	22
2013	29	21
2014	20	
2015	20	

**Additional information:** In fiscal year 2013, NIDRR's Annual Performance Report asked grantees implementing development projects to identify: "What stage of the development process are you in during this reporting period?" Those selecting choice "(f) commercialization" are included in this measure.

In 2013, NIDRR grantees reported one hundred forty-six development projects, of these 21 or 14.4 percent were reported as technology products and devices that were transferred to industry. We expect that that this number will remain relatively small because of the length of time it takes to develop new technologies. In 2010, an overly ambitious target was set for 2013 based on 2009 data. The targets for fiscal years 2014 and 2015 have been established based on actual performance for fiscal years 2011 through 2013.

Development projects funded under the following programs are included in this measure: Small Business Innovation Research Phase II (SBIRs), Rehabilitation Engineering and Research Centers (RERCs), and Field Initiated Programs (FIPs).

**Measure:** The average number of publications per award based on NIDRR-funded research and development activities in refereed journals.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	3.0	1.5
2011	1.4	1.7
2012	1.4	1.7
2013	1.5	
2014	1.5	
2015	1.5	

**Additional information:** For this measure, refereed journals are those journals that are recognized by the Thompson Institute for Scientific Information journal selection process (<http://www.thompsonscientific.com/cgi-bin/jrnlst/jloptions.cgi?PC=master>). The methodology

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for determining performance under this measure was changed in 2007 to include only NIDRR projects that are expected to produce publications as part of their specified tasks. This measure is now limited to NIDRR research grantees funded under the RRTCs, RERCs, ARRTs, MS, DRRPs, and FIPs programs. In addition, the methodology was changed to ensure that publications related to a grant were counted only once, regardless of the number of authors under the grant that participated in the publication. In FY 2012, two hundred and sixty-seven NIDRR grantees published a total of 458 publications in refereed publications or an average of 1.7 publications per grant. This rate was similar to the previous year. Fiscal year 2013 data for this measure will be available by December 2014.

**Objective:** *Enhance the efficiency of the NIDRR grant award process.*

#### Efficiency Measures

**Measure:** The percentage of grant competitions for a given fiscal year that are announced by the beginning of that fiscal year (October 1).

**Performance information:** As in the previous three fiscal years, NIDRR was unable to announce any of its fiscal year 2013 competitions by October 1 of the new fiscal year. NIDRR's goal of announcing competitions by October 1 has not been achievable for a number of reasons, including uncertainty about the budget due to late appropriations, changes in the Department's spending plan process, and the number of priorities that require rule-making before the competition can be announced. While the Department believes that the changes NIDRR is putting into place to reduce the number of priorities that require rule-making will improve its ability to announce competitions earlier in the fiscal year, consideration is also being given to whether the criterion for meeting this measure (October 1) should be revised.

**Measure:** The percentage of grant awards issued within 6 months of the competition closing date.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	85%	94%
2011	85	40
2012	50	82
2013	60	
2014	72	
2015	72	

**Additional information:** This measure assesses the timeliness of the process of reviewing new applications, identifying and reviewing a slate of awards recommended for funding, and notifying applicants whether they have received an award. As in FY 2012, NIDRR made 14 of its 17 (82 percent) grant competition awards within 6 months of the closing date, and exceeded its target for this measure. The targets for fiscal years 2014 and 2015 have been established based on actual performance for fiscal years 2010 through 2012.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

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### Helen Keller National Center

(Helen Keller National Center Act)

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2015 Authorization: 0 <sup>1</sup>

Budget Authority:

<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>Change</u>
\$9,127	\$9,127	0

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<sup>1</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2004. The Administration proposes to continue funding this program in FY 2015 through appropriations language.

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### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults (HKNC) was created by Congress in 1969, and operates under the auspices of Helen Keller Services for the Blind, Inc. The Center provides services on a national basis to adults who are deaf-blind, their families, and service providers through two component programs: a national headquarters center located just outside New York City, in Sands Point, New York, with a residential training and rehabilitation facility where deaf-blind individuals receive intensive specialized services; and a network of 10 regional field offices that provide referral, counseling, and transition assistance to deaf-blind individuals and technical assistance to service providers.

The purpose of the program at the national headquarters center is to provide direct services for individuals with deaf-blindness in order to enhance their potential for employment and to live independently in their home communities. The program provides clients with an array of services and training leading to enhanced mobility, improved means of communication, constructive participation in the home and community, increased employability, and other improvements to their personal development. The headquarters program also offers training and consultation to other programs serving individuals who are deaf-blind through a technical assistance center and a national training team. The national training team provides training nationwide on a request basis, with the requesting agency covering the travel costs for the team. The national training team also coordinates onsite conferences and workshops across the country to train professionals working with individuals who are deaf-blind.

The Center employs 11 regional representatives to serve individuals who are deaf-blind in their home communities. These representatives provide a variety of services, including training for State and local service agency staff, general technical assistance, program assessment, community advocacy, and helping vocational rehabilitation counselors, mental health workers, special education personnel, and deaf-blind consumers with developing individualized service plans. In addition, the regional offices provide counseling, information, and referral services for individuals who are deaf-blind and their families to assist them to live and work independently.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Helen Keller National Center

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The regional representatives also assist clients who have received training at headquarters with making the transition back to their home community.

HKNC also operates a number of special projects related to deaf-blindness. These include a service project for deaf-blind individuals who are elderly, a national parent and family services project, and a small but expanding research portfolio focused on such areas as assistive technology and diseases that cause deaf-blindness. In addition, the Center operates an internship program for undergraduate and graduate students in the field of deaf-blindness. These interns are financially supported by their sponsoring institutions or colleges during their stay and are expected to initiate and complete at least one project while at HKNC.

Funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years were:

	(dollars in thousands)
2010.....	\$9,181
2011.....	9,163
2012.....	9,145
2013.....	8,667
2014.....	9,127

### FY 2015 BUDGET REQUEST

The Administration's request for the Helen Keller National Center is \$9.127 million, the same as the fiscal year 2014 level. The request would support the Center's educational and training programs that expand independent living and employment opportunities for individuals who are deaf-blind. Most of the Center's budget supports operations and programs associated with serving clients in the headquarters program. In 2013, the Center served 52 adult clients in the intensive training program and 14 short-term clients at headquarters. HKNC also served 1,755 consumers through its regional offices.

In fiscal year 2015, HKNC would use a majority of the funds requested to support client training, program support activities, consumer housing and residence life expenses, maintenance and plant operations, and administrative functions at the Center's headquarters facility. These funded activities are carried out by the Center's 11 departments: audiology; case management; communications; independent living; low vision; medical; orientation and mobility; vocational services; adaptive technology; clinical social work services; and staff functions such as payroll and benefits. At the request level, the Center estimates that it would serve approximately 65 adult clients with deaf-blindness at its headquarters intensive training program and provide specialized short-term training for approximately 11 high school students, 3 senior citizens, and 2 individuals who need training in the use of technology or other targeted skills.

HKNC would devote approximately 20 percent of the amount requested to its field services and community education programs, including the activities of HKNC's 10 regional offices and its national training team for other service providers. These programs help reach consumers in their home communities and assist personnel at State agencies and other organizations to serve or acquire the capacity to serve individuals who are deaf-blind through training, community education, and technical assistance. HKNC helps to address a critical shortage of professionals qualified to meet the unique needs of individuals who are deaf-blind by training

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Helen Keller National Center

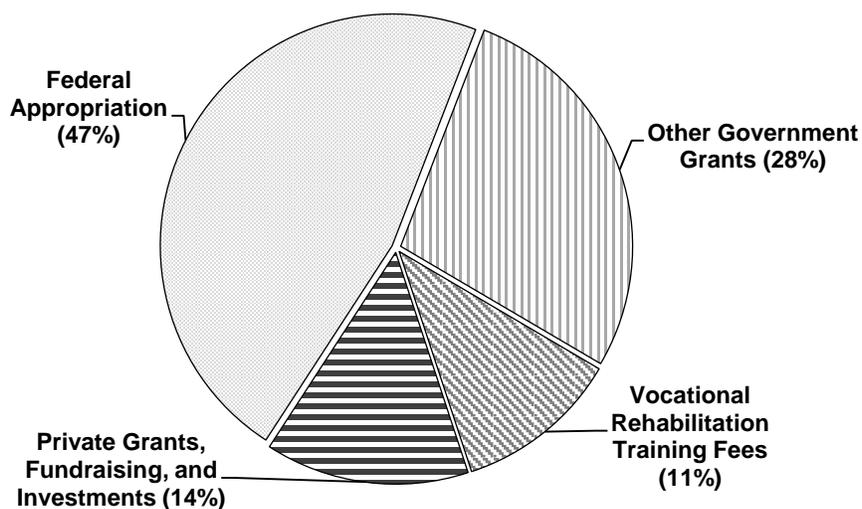
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personnel such as teachers and vocational rehabilitation counselors in the specialized skills necessary to serve these consumers.

Other Sources of Funding: In addition to funds provided through the appropriation, the Center receives funding from a variety of State, private, and other Federal sources. For example, as a member on the National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness, HKNC received \$844,019 in fiscal year 2012 through a grant from the Department's Office of Special Education Programs to provide technical assistance to State and local educational agencies. In recent years, the Center has also received a number of non-Federal grants. This includes a 5-year grant from the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities for \$1.1 million per year to operate housing and provide supported employment services for individuals who are deaf-blind with intellectual disabilities who were former participants in HKNC's training program. HKNC also has a contract with the New York State Commission for Blind and Visually Impaired to operate a Community Services Program that provides rehabilitation teaching, orientation and mobility, case work, and job placement to deaf-blind individuals in the New York metropolitan area who do not require the comprehensive services offered at the headquarters training program.

In recent years, HKNC has also actively expanded its efforts to raise funds from private sources, including charitable foundations. The Center's largest private grant is a \$2 million per year award from the Helmsley Foundation for 2012 to 2014. The following charts show the revenues and expenses from the Center's audited financial statements in program year 2011-2012.<sup>1</sup>

**2011-2012 Program Year Sources of Funds (\$19.59 million)**



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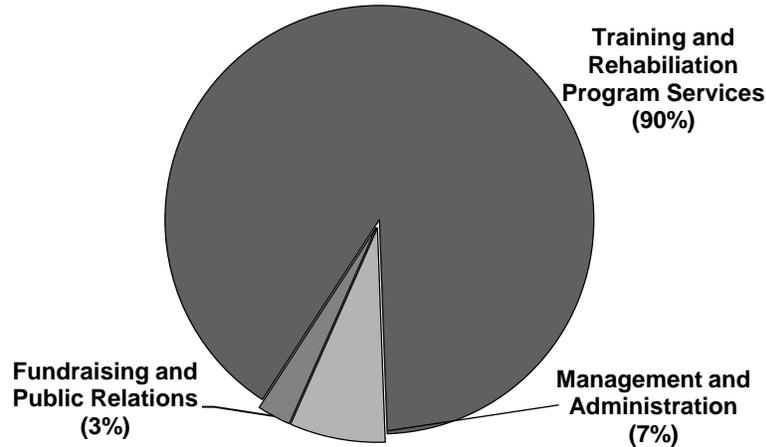
<sup>1</sup> 2011-2012 total sources of funds exceed expenses because of pension accounting adjustments and the timing of grant receipts. These do not reflect real surpluses.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

Helen Keller National Center

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**2011-2012 Program Year Expenses (\$14.17 million)  
(all funds)**



### PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

<u>Measures</u> <sup>1</sup>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Number of individuals served at headquarters:			
Adult training program clients	52	65	65
Specialized training services:			
Transition for high school students	8	11	11
Senior citizens	4	3	3
Targeted skills training	2	2	2
Community Services Program (CSP) <sup>2</sup>			
Number of individuals served through regional representatives: <sup>3</sup>			
Consumers	1,755	1,500	1,500
Families	453	350	350
Agencies/organizations	802	800	800
HKNC FTE staff	121	144	144

<sup>1</sup> Output data are provided according to fiscal year, not HKNC's program year of July to June. These figures are estimates based on data from HKNC and expected funding levels.

<sup>2</sup> In 2013, HKNC began tracking consumers served off-campus through the NYS Community Services Program, which is supported by federal funds similar to other state contracts. In fiscal year 2013, 52 consumers were served by the HKNC CSP program.

<sup>3</sup> Individuals served by the regional representatives include individuals attending workshops or conferences in which HKNC participates, who receive materials from the Center, or who receive assessment, advocacy, counseling, training, or referral services from regional staff.

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### Helen Keller National Center

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#### PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

This section presents selected program performance information, including, for example, GPRA goals, objectives, measures, and performance targets and data; and an assessment of the progress made toward achieving program results. Achievement of program results is based on the cumulative effect of the resources provided in previous years and those requested in fiscal year 2015 and future years, as well as the resources and efforts invested by those served by this program.

**Goal: Individuals who are deaf-blind will become independent and function as full and productive members of their local community.**

**Objective:** *Individuals who are deaf-blind receive the specialized services and training they need to become as independent and self-sufficient as possible.*

**Measure:** The percentage of training goals set and achieved by adult consumers, of adult consumers seeking employment who are placed in employment, and of adult consumers seeking to maintain their ability to live independently or move to less restrictive settings who achieve their goals.

Year	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
	# of Adult Consumers	# of Adult Consumers	% in Less Restrictive Settings	% in Less Restrictive Settings	% of Training goals met	% of Training goals met	% Placed in Employment	% Placed in Employment
<b>2010</b>	95	68	75%	93%	90%	92%	45%	43%
<b>2011</b>	90	85 <sup>1</sup>	75	81	90	94	45	43
<b>2012</b>	90	52	75	89	90	89	45	38
<b>2013</b>	68	52	85	83	95	96	46	36
<b>2014</b>	70		86		95		47	
<b>2015</b>	71		87		95		48	

<sup>1</sup> Program year change- statistic includes period from July 2010 – September 2011.

**Additional information:** The number of adult clients attending the HKNC on-campus rehabilitation training center in fiscal year 2013, 52, was below the target of 68. HKNC points out that the number of consumers served may fluctuate from year to year due to factors beyond the control of the Center. For example, the length of time an individual participates in training may vary anywhere from two weeks to beyond one year due to the level of intensity of training needs.

In addition to traditional adult consumers, HKNC also provided training for eight high school students, seven homemakers and six participated in an eight week evaluation. The high school students participate in career exploration, college preparation, and other services offered by the Center and returned to high school after their training. The high school students are not

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Helen Keller National Center

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included in the counts of adult consumers, consumers placed in employment or less restrictive settings, or consumers who meet their individualized training goals.

The Center evaluates the progress of consumers in achieving the goals stated in their individualized training plans (ITPs). This measure represents the percent of adult consumers served by Helen Keller National Center who successfully achieved identified training goals during the program year. The consumers and their instructors mutually develop these instructional objectives. To ensure that the measure is an accurate reflection of the Center's performance, the Department and HKNC have agreed that it should only include the outcomes for adult consumers enrolled in the long-term formal program and the targeted skills training program. Consumers in the short-term programs for high school students are not included in the calculation. In 2013, 96 percent of adult consumers achieved their training goals, an increase from the previous year.

The less restrictive settings measure refers to clients who move from settings such as living with parents or guardians, assisted living settings, and nursing homes to more independent living arrangements such as their own home or apartment or group homes. In addition this measure includes participants who achieved a less restrictive living environment by successfully acquiring skills in two or more core areas resulting in the ability to maintain a home and more fully participate in community life. In 2013, 83 percent of clients moved into, or remained in, less restrictive settings, which was slightly below the target set for this measure.

The percent placed in employment measure refers to outcomes for those individuals who had determined an employment objective. In the year 2013, 16 of the 52 individuals who terminated training had a desire to achieve a vocational outcome. Of the 16, 5 achieved this goal, 9 are home seeking competitive or supportive employment, and 2 individuals suspended their job search due to serious medical issues. Among the 34 individuals not seeking a vocational outcome, 7 were homemakers and 6 are continuing their education, and 5 did not complete the program and/or took a leave of absence. In addition HKNC served 8 high school consumers; 6 participated in an 8 week evaluation, 2 attended a day habilitation program; 9 individuals completed the Community Service Program (CSP) with an employment goal; and 6 of these individuals are successfully employed in competitive positions. These outcomes contribute to the 49 percent successfully placed in employment. The percentage for individuals successfully employed who participated in HKNC's on-campus program is 36 percent.

**Objective:** *Increase the capacity of deaf-blind consumers to function more independently in the home community.*

**Measure:** The number of individuals (or families on behalf of individuals) referred to State or local agencies or service providers by HKNC's regional offices.

Year	Target	Actual
2010		272
2011		239
2012		300
2013	245	898
2014	265	
2015	285	

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### Helen Keller National Center

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**Additional information:** The increase in performance in 2013 is due to the regional representatives' involvement in four state-wide needs assessments and services rendered as part of the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP). Other contributing factors are varied. Examples of activities include one state supporting the initiative for systems change resulting in VR hiring a Deaf-blind specialist. In one state the Deaf-blind state organization held various awareness and training events titled "No Deaf-blind Left Behind". The members advocated consistently at VR and DBS regional meetings via public comment with most activities supported by the HKNC regional representative.

**Measure:** The percentage of consumers who participated in services of programs (other than HKNC) as a result of receiving a referral from HKNC's regional offices.

Year	Target	Actual
2010		63%
2011		63
2012		74
2013	66%	66
2014	67	
2015	68	

**Additional information:** These measures provide information on the activities of the field services programs, including the 11 regional representatives and the national training team, which consume a significant portion of the Center's resources. Regional representatives serve individuals with deaf-blindness in their home communities, which often lack other service providers that are trained and equipped to the unique and multi-faceted needs of these consumers. The referrals provided by regional representatives often are the gateway to finding appropriate and individualized supports from various agencies and organizations. The intensity of consumers' interactions with HKNC field staff varies significantly. Some consumers interact with staff only once over the phone, while others benefit from repeated in-person visits for a variety of services, such as skills assessments, counseling, and advocacy. No targets were established prior to 2013 because the Department only began collecting actual data for these measures in 2009.

**Objective:** *HKNC will assist State vocational rehabilitation and employment programs in increasing employment outcomes for individuals who are deaf-blind.*

**Measure:** The number of referrals by HKNC's regional offices to vocational rehabilitation or related employment programs.

Year	Target	Actual
2010		131
2011		32
2012		57
2013	84	62
2014	88	
2015	92	

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Helen Keller National Center

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**Measure:** The percentage of individuals who achieved successful employment outcomes in which HKNC's regional offices played a collaborative role contributing training, advocacy and/or support to the consumer or job training agency.

Year	Target	Actual
2010		24%
2011		28
2012		45
2013	28%	32
2014	30	
2015	32	

**Additional information:** HKNC plays an important role in connecting individuals who are deaf-blind to vocational rehabilitation agencies. Many vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies lack sufficient numbers of personnel trained in providing services to consumers who are deaf-blind. HKNC field staff frequently facilitate interactions between consumers and VR agencies, train VR agency staff about the specialized needs of these clients, and assist consumers who are returning to their State's VR system after attending intensive training at HKNC headquarters. However the number of referrals to VR agencies is somewhat limited by the fact that not all consumers served by HKNC field staff have vocational goals.

For the measure on the percentage of individuals who achieved employment outcomes, the numerator is the number of clients served by HKNC regional representatives who achieved employment outcomes in which HKNC's regional offices played a collaborative role contributing training, advocacy and/or support to the consumer or job training agency. The denominator is the total number of clients served by HKNC regional representatives who achieved employment outcomes. In 2013, performance on this measure was 32 percent and exceeded the target. No targets were established for these measures prior to 2013 because the Department only began collecting actual data in 2009. Data for 2014 is expected in January 2015.

### Other Performance Information

In July, 2011 the Department received the final report of a comprehensive study of HKNC conducted by an independent contractor, Westat. The purpose of the study was to examine the alignment of the Center's programs with the needs of the various populations served by HKNC and its regional offices; the Center's interactions with VR agencies; and the outreach that HKNC provides to other service providers and to the family members of deaf-blind individuals who, in turn, support those individuals. The research team's data sources included: detailed in-person interviews with HKNC staff and deaf-blind former HKNC consumers; telephone interviews with family members of deaf-blind individuals, VR agency staff, service providers, and representatives of stakeholder organizations; HKNC administrative records; an email survey of VR agencies; and site visits to HKNC headquarters and regional offices.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Helen Keller National Center

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Notable findings include:

- Many stakeholders familiar with HKNC's work consider HKNC to be the "gold standard" for the provision of services to deaf-blind individuals.
- VR agency respondents indicated that HKNC is offering an appropriate array of services, but more of the same services are needed to meet their needs. Specifically, the demand for training from the National Training Team and technical assistance from the regional representatives far outstrips the available supply of these services.
- Service providers generally reported that HKNC training led to enhanced capacity to serve deaf-blind populations. About two-thirds of service providers said there were no local training alternatives available for learning how to serve deaf-blind individuals.
- Some State VR staff, regional representatives, and family members expressed concerns that resources for post-training follow-up were often insufficient, citing the elimination of job development and community placement positions at HKNC headquarters and the already overloaded schedules of the regional representative.
- HKNC is filling a gap in services in many communities. VR agencies and former consumers reported that their States and local communities generally lack services and resources for deaf-blind individuals who do not attend programs at HKNC's headquarters. The survey of VR agencies revealed that only six States believe that they offer all of the services available from HKNC and that their services were as or more effective.
- Deaf-blind individuals who had participated in HKNC headquarters programs were generally satisfied with the training they received. Among the 13 studied service areas, orientation and mobility received the highest helpfulness rating (85 percent) and audiology received the lowest helpfulness rating (50 percent).
- Overall, the study found that HKNC is meeting its legislative mandate of providing specialized intensive services to maximize personal development of deaf-blind consumers. Data indicate that HKNC, in accordance with its mandate, also provides services to family members and allied service providers, and participates in applied research and development projects with respect to deaf-blind issues.

In addition, the study drew on these findings to make several recommendations focused on improving HKNC's services and the outcomes of deaf blind persons served by the Center:

- Regional representatives could provide more extensive outreach to the relatively large population of deaf-blind individuals who do not attend HKNC headquarters programs. These individuals are often underserved in their local communities.
- The study found no evidence to indicate that the performance measures included in the fiscal year 2011 program performance plan are insufficient for the level of monitoring needed for a small Federal direct grant program. However, several additional measures could provide useful information to the Rehabilitation Services Administration and HKNC.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Helen Keller National Center

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These measures include cost efficiency data to capture the cost per consumer served and a cost-effectiveness measure for achieving consumers' training, independent living, and employment goals.

- Consumers returning from HKNC headquarters programs could benefit from better coordination and follow-up from HKNC staff and State VR agency staff. In particular, HKNC and VR staff could clarify and communicate their respective post-training responsibilities, especially for follow-up employment services.
- Within applicable resource constraints, HKNC should consider expanding the National Training Team to meet the needs for additional training of service provider personnel in specialized deaf blind services. HKNC and RSA should investigate other cost-efficient service models, such as recorded webinars and train-the-trainer resources that could provide assistance to States with deaf blind services.

HKNC should examine the length and cost of consumer assessment and training programs to address the perception of some State VR agency representatives that HKNC HQ assessment and training is not as efficient as it could be. The Center should take appropriate action to ensure that adequate instructors are available to prevent reported delays during training programs at headquarters.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

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### Assistive technology

(Assistive Technology Act of 1998)

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2015 Authorization: 0<sup>1</sup>

Budget Authority:

<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>Change</u>
\$33,000	\$31,000	-\$2,000

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<sup>1</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2011. The Administration proposes to continue funding this program in FY 2015 through appropriations language. Up to \$1,235 thousand may be used for National Activities, unless the amount available for AT State grants exceeds \$20,953,534, in which case up to \$1,900 thousand may be used for National Activities.

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### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the Assistive Technology (AT) Act is to provide States with financial assistance that supports programs designed to maximize the ability of individuals with disabilities of all ages and their family members, guardians, advocates, and authorized representatives to obtain AT devices and AT services. AT devices are defined as any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. A few examples of such devices are computer or technology aids, modified driving controls, and durable medical equipment such as wheelchairs or walkers. Grants support comprehensive statewide programs that are designed to increase the:

- Availability of, funding for, access to, provision of, and training about AT devices and services;
- Ability of individuals with disabilities of all ages to secure and maintain possession of AT during periods of transition, such as transition between school or home and home and work;
- Capacity of public and private entities to provide and pay for AT devices and services;
- Involvement of individuals with disabilities in decisions about AT devices and services;
- Coordination of AT-related activities among State and local agencies and other private entities;
- Awareness of and facilitate changes in law, regulations, procedures, policies, practices, and organizational structures, in order to improve access to AT; and
- Awareness of the benefits of AT among targeted individuals and entities in the general population.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Assistive technology

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#### *Assistive Technology (AT) State grant program*

The AT State grant program is a population-based formula grant program to support comprehensive statewide programs that maximize the ability of individuals with disabilities of all ages to access and acquire AT. States must establish consumer-responsive advisory councils with a majority membership of individuals with disabilities who use AT to advise on the planning, implementation, and evaluation of these statewide programs.

Under the formula, States and outlying areas are initially allocated a base amount equal to the amount of funds they received under the AT program in fiscal year 2004 (totaling \$20,288,534). Any funds appropriated in excess of the fiscal year 2004 appropriation are initially distributed among the eligible entities with 50 percent of available funds distributed equally amongst them and 50 percent distributed according to the population of the State until each entity receives at least \$410,000. If any appropriated funds remain after each State receives this minimum, they are distributed with 20 percent divided equally amongst the States and 80 percent distributed according to their populations. To date, appropriated funds under this program have not been sufficient to necessitate this second round of distribution. The fiscal year 2013 State distributions were based on the July 1, 2011 estimates published in December 2011. The fiscal year 2014 State distributions are based on the July 1, 2012 estimates published on December 20, 2012. The fiscal year 2015 State distributions would be based on the July 1, 2013 estimates published on December 30, 2013.

Each State must set measurable goals, with timelines, that address the AT needs of individuals with disabilities related to: education (including goals related to the delivery of AT devices and services to students receiving services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)); employment (including goals related to the Rehabilitation Act's Vocational Rehabilitation State Grant program); telecommunications and information technology; and community living. The State must determine whether it has met its goals each year, and the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) has the authority to hold States accountable for a lack of progress toward these goals through technical assistance, corrective actions and/or sanctions if States are determined to be in noncompliance with the applicable requirements of the AT Act or have not made substantial progress toward achieving the measureable goals.

The State must implement each of the activities required under the program, which include State-level activities and State leadership activities. States must spend a minimum of 60 percent (unless the State elects to comply with the State flexibility provision in section 4(e)(6) of the AT Act, as described below) of their formula grant funds on four State-level activities: State financing programs, device reutilization programs, device loan programs, and device demonstrations. States may, however, direct their funds towards these activities in varying amounts if they use other State or non-Federal funds to support these activities at a comparable or greater level.

States may use up to 40 percent of their AT State grant program funding on State leadership activities, with at least 5 percent of that amount devoted to technical assistance and training related to transition for students exiting school or adults entering community living. The State leadership activities include the provision of technical assistance and training to targeted individuals and entities focused on promoting the general awareness of the benefits of AT; skills

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### **Assistive technology**

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development for persons involved in the assessment of the need for AT; the appropriate application of AT; and the integration of AT devices and services in plans required to be developed under other Federal laws, such as the IDEA's Individualized Education Program and the Rehabilitation Act's Individualized Plan for Employment. In addition, States must use a portion of their grant funds on public awareness activities, including the continuation and maintenance of a statewide system of information and referral, and coordination and collaboration activities amongst entities in the States that are responsible for the provision of AT.

The law provides States with flexibility to decide to carry out only two or three State-level activities, rather than all four. If a State elects to carry out two or three State-level activities, it must spend a minimum of 70 percent of its funds on those activities, while spending not more than 30 percent on the State leadership activities.

The AT Act specifies what a State must include in its annual progress report to RSA, including data on: the State's financing program, device loan program activities, device reutilization programs, and device demonstrations, including an analysis of those individuals who benefited from each of these programs; training activities; the statewide system of information and referral; and the outcomes of any improvement initiatives carried out by the State. The report must also provide data on the use of resources, including any contributed to the program by other public and private entities, and the level of customer satisfaction.

### ***Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology***

Formula grants for protection and advocacy (P&A) systems established under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act support protection and advocacy services to assist individuals with disabilities of all ages in the acquisition, utilization, or maintenance of AT services or devices. Funds are distributed on a State population basis, with a minimum annual grant of \$50,000. Outlying areas must receive not less than \$30,000 annually. Also, the Act requires a minimum award of \$30,000 to the P&A system serving the American Indian consortium. The fiscal year 2013 State distributions were based on the July 1, 2011 estimates published in December 2011. The fiscal year 2014 State distributions are based on the July 1, 2012 estimates published on December 20, 2012. The fiscal year 2015 State distributions would be based on the July 1, 2013 estimates published on December 30, 2013.

### ***National Activities***

The AT Act provides authority for the provision of technical assistance—through grants, contracts, or cooperative agreements awarded on a competitive basis—to individuals with disabilities of all ages, to AT State grant program grantees, and to protection and advocacy systems. The AT Act also requires the Secretary to make an award to renovate, update, and maintain a national public Internet site (<http://www.assistivetech.net>). In addition, the AT Act includes authority for grants, contracts, or cooperative agreements to assist grantees in developing and implementing effective data collection and reporting systems.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Assistive technology

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In designing its technical assistance activities, RSA must consider the input of directors of AT State grant programs and Alternative Financing programs, individuals with disabilities who use AT, family members, and protection and advocacy service providers, among others. The technical assistance must respond to specific requests for information and disseminate information to States, entities funded under the AT Act, and any other public entities that seek information about AT. The technical assistance must provide model approaches for the removal of barriers to accessing AT, examples of effective program coordination, and practices that increase funding for AT devices.

### *Alternative Financing Program*

The fiscal year 2014 appropriations bill provided \$2 million for an alternative financing program authorized under appropriations language. Competitive grants will be awarded to support alternative financing programs that are providing for the purchase of assistive technology devices, such as a low-interest loan fund; an interest buy-down program; a revolving loan fund; a loan guarantee; or insurance program. Applicants will be required to assure that the alternative financing program will expand and emphasize consumer choice and control. State agencies and community-based disability organizations that are directed by and operated for individuals with disabilities will be eligible to compete.

Funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years were as follows:

	(dollars in thousands)
2010 .....	\$30,960
2011 .....	30,898
2012 .....	32,836
2013 .....	31,118
2014 .....	33,000

### FY 2015 BUDGET REQUEST

The Administration requests \$31 million in fiscal year 2015 for Assistive Technology (AT) programs, \$2 million less than the fiscal year 2014 appropriation level. The request does not include funds for an alternative financing program (AFP), a one-year competitive grant program that was authorized through appropriations language in fiscal year 2014. In fiscal year 2005 Congress amended the AT Act to eliminate the separate AFP and establish an AT State grant program that requires States to conduct State financing activities, including alternative financing loan programs. No funds are requested in 2015 for the duplicate competitive grant program funded in 2014.

Funding is requested for the AT State grant program, the Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology program, and National Activities. These programs enable individuals with disabilities to acquire technology they might not otherwise be able to obtain—technology that improves their quality of life, and in many cases, enables them to work or participate in other productive endeavors.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Assistive technology

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#### ***Assistive Technology (AT) State grant program***

The request includes \$25.704 million for the AT State grant program, the same as the fiscal year 2014 level. These funds will be used by States to carry out the first year of their 3-year State plan. State plans must describe how the State intends to carry out its AT State grant program to meet the AT needs of individuals with disabilities in the State, achieve the measurable goals required by the AT Act, and comply with all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

#### ***Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology***

The fiscal year 2015 request includes \$4.3 million for the Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology (PAAT) program, the same as the fiscal year 2014 level, 28 States would receive \$50,000, the minimum amount allowed under the AT Act for the protection and advocacy systems established under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act to carry out this program. Outlying areas each would receive \$30,000. Funds would be used to assist individuals with disabilities of all ages in the acquisition, utilization, or maintenance of AT services or devices.

#### ***National Activities***

The fiscal year 2015 request also includes \$996,000 for National Activities, the same as the fiscal year 2014 level. The Act requires support for State training, technical assistance, data collection, and reporting assistance, and authorizes a one-time grant to provide national public awareness about AT, and support for AT research and development activities. To support these activities, RSA competitively awards 3 grants. In fiscal year 2015, funds would be used for 2 new competitions in order to award a grant for State training and technical assistance, and a grant award for the AT Act informational website. Funds would also be used to continue support for the AT Act data collection activities in fiscal year 2015.

### PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES (dollars in thousands)

<u>Program Funding</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
AT State grant program	\$24,223	\$25,704	\$25,704
Protection and advocacy program	4,059	4,300	4,300
National activities	944	996	996
Alternative financing program	<u>1,892</u>	<u>2,000</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	31,118	33,000	31,000

### PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

#### **Performance Measures**

This section presents selected program performance information, including, for example, GPRA goals, objectives, measures, and performance targets and data, and an assessment of the

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progress made toward achieving program results. Achievement of results is based on the cumulative effect of the resources provided in previous years and those requested in fiscal year 2015 and future years, as well as the resources and efforts invested by those served by this program.

Under the AT Act, each State is required to establish measurable goals for access to and acquisition of AT, with timelines for meeting those goals. These goals must address the AT needs of individuals with disabilities in the State in the domains of education, employment, community living, and telecommunications and information technology (IT).

**Acquisition of AT:** In order to measure the increase in the acquisition of AT, the following three measures have been established for the AT State grant program. The Administration is requiring States to survey individuals served under this program to determine whether those who obtained AT (for **education, employment, or community living** purposes) believe they would not have otherwise obtained the AT device or service.

**Goal: To increase access to and acquisition of assistive technology for individuals with disabilities.**

**Objective:** *To increase **acquisition** of assistive technology for individuals with disabilities.*

**Measure:** The percentage of States meeting or exceeding the target for the percentage of individuals and entities who obtained assistive technology devices or services for **educational purposes** through State financing activities or reutilization programs, who would not have obtained the device or service.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	75%	79%
2011	69	87
2012	75	92
2013	75	
2014	75	
2015	75	

**Measure:** The percentage of States meeting or exceeding the target for the percentage of individuals and entities who obtained assistive technology devices or services for **employment purposes** through State financing activities or reutilization programs, who would not have obtained the device or service.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	75%	77%
2011	64	79
2012	75	87
2013	75	
2014	75	
2015	75	

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**Measure:** The percentage of States meeting or exceeding the target for the percentage of individuals and entities who obtained assistive technology devices or services for **community living purposes** through State financing activities or reutilization programs, who would not have obtained the device or service.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	90%	77%
2011	81	81
2012	75	94
2013	75	
2014	75	
2015	75	

**Additional information:** These measures assess the extent to which States are meeting targets for increasing the acquisition of AT by individuals with disabilities. For fiscal years 2008-2011 States had the flexibility to establish their own targets for each of these measures and the flexibility to change their targets over time. Therefore, the data for these years tell us how States did in relation to the performance targets they set for themselves, which ranged from as low as 65 percent to as high as 100 percent for these measures. In fiscal year 2011, RSA worked with States to establish a single performance target of 75 percent for each of the 3 acquisition measures that is to be used by all States. Beginning in fiscal year 2012, the data for these measures represent the proportion of the States for which at least 75 percent of surveyed consumers who obtained assistive technology devices or services through State financing activities or reutilization programs reported that they would not have otherwise obtained the AT device or service. In fiscal year 2012, the 75 percent performance target was met or exceeded for all three acquisition measures.

**Access to AT:** In order to measure the increase in access to AT, the following four measures have been established under the AT State grant program. The Administration is requiring States to collect information from individuals served under this program to determine whether access to device demonstration or loan programs has enabled them to make informed decisions about AT devices or services (for **education, employment, community living, and telecommunications** purposes).

**Goal: To increase access to and acquisition of assistive technology for individuals with disabilities.**

**Objective: To increase access to assistive technology for individuals with disabilities.**

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**Measure:** The percentage of States meeting or exceeding the target for the percentage of individuals and entities who have accessed assistive technology device demonstrations and/or device loan programs, and made a decision about the assistive technology device or services for **educational purposes** as a result of the assistance they received from the Assistive Technology Program.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	90%	71%
2011	79	85
2012	70	93
2013	70	
2014	70	
2015	70	

**Measure:** The percentage of States meeting or exceeding the target for the percentage of individuals and entities who have accessed assistive technology device demonstrations and/or device loan programs, and made a decision about the assistive technology device or services for **employment purposes** as a result of the assistance they received from the Assistive Technology Program.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	85%	84%
2011	75	84
2012	70	85
2013	70	
2014	70	
2015	70	

**Measure:** The percentage of States meeting or exceeding the target for the percentage of individuals and entities who have accessed assistive technology device demonstrations and/or device loan programs, and made a decision about the assistive technology device or services for **community living purposes** as a result of the assistance they received from the Assistive Technology Program.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	90%	71%
2011	79	82
2012	70	91
2013	70	
2014	70	
2015	70	

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**Measure:** The percentage of States meeting or exceeding the target for the percentage of individuals and entities who have accessed assistive technology device demonstrations and/or device loan programs, and made a decision about the assistive technology device or services for **technology/telecommunications purposes** as a result of the assistance they received from the Assistive Technology Program.

Year	Target	Actual
2010	80%	68%
2011	69	84
2012	70	83
2013	70	
2014	70	
2015	70	

**Additional information:** These measures assess the extent to which States are meeting targets for increasing the access to AT by individuals with disabilities. For fiscal years 2008-2011 States had the flexibility to establish their own targets for each of these measures and the flexibility to change their targets over time. Therefore, the data for these years tell us how States did in relation to the performance targets they set for themselves, which ranged from as low as 45 percent (for example, for the IT measure) to as high as 100 percent. In fiscal year 2011, RSA worked with States to establish a single performance target of 70 percent for each of the 4 access measures that is to be used by all States. Beginning in fiscal year 2012, the data for these measures represent the proportion of the States for which at least 70 percent of consumers, who accessed assistive technology device demonstrations and/or device loan programs, reported that they made a decision about the assistive technology device or services as a result of the assistance they received from the Assistive Technology Program. In fiscal year 2012, the 70 percent performance target was met or exceeded for all four access measures.

## State Tables