

Department of Education
REHABILITATION SERVICES
Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Request

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

REHABILITATION SERVICES [AND DISABILITY RESEARCH]¹

For carrying out, to the extent not otherwise provided, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973[, the Assistive Technology Act of 1998,]² and the Helen Keller National Center Act, [\$3,709,853,000] \$3,532,109,000, of which [~~\$3,335,074,000~~]\$3,391,770,000 shall be for grants for vocational rehabilitation services under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act:³ *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:⁴ *Provided further*, That States may award subgrants for a portion of the funds to other public and private, non-profit entities:⁵ *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, [2016]2017:⁶ [*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]:⁷ (*Department of Education Appropriations Act, 2015*)

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

Analysis of Language Provisions and Changes

Language Provision	Explanation
¹ [AND DISABILITY RESEARCH]	Section 491 of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, P.L. 113-128, (WIOA) transfers several programs from the Department's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services to the Administration for Community Living in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), including the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR), as renamed by WIOA. Consequently, the fiscal year 2016 request for this account does not include funds for NIDILRR. To reflect this change, the Administration's request would eliminate the reference to "Disability Research" from the title of this account.
² [the Assistive Technology Act of 1998,]	The reference to the Assistive Technology Act is deleted because WIOA transfers responsibility for its administration from the Department of Education to HHS. Funds to support these programs are not requested under this account.
³ ...of which [\$3,335,074,000] <u>\$3,391,770,000</u> shall be for grants for vocational rehabilitation services under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act:	This language earmarks funds provided for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) State Grants program.
⁴ <i>Provided further</i> , 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:	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. The inclusion 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.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Analysis of Language Provisions and Changes

Language Provision	Explanation
<p>⁵ <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>⁶ <i>Provided further</i>, 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, [2016]2017:</p>	<p>This language would permit the funds made available subsequent to reallocation of VR State Grant funds for activities aimed at improving the outcomes of individuals with disabilities to remain available for 2 years.</p>
<p>⁷ [<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 (AFP), is deleted because responsibility for the administration of the assistive technology programs, including the AFP, is transferred from the Department of Education to HHS. Funds to support these programs are not requested under this account.</p>

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Appropriation, Adjustments and Transfers
(dollars in thousands)

Appropriation/Adjustments/Transfers	2014	2015	2016
<hr/>			
Discretionary:			
Appropriation	\$378,444	\$374,779	\$140,339
 Mandatory:			
Appropriation	3,302,053	3,335,074	3,391,770
Sequester (P.L. 112-25)	<u>-237,748</u>	<u>-243,460</u>	<u>0</u>
Total, adjusted mandatory appropriation	3,064,305	3,091,614	3,391,770
 Total, discretionary and adjusted mandatory appropriation	 3,442,749	 3,446,393	 3,532,109

REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

Summary of Changes (dollars in thousands)

2015	3,709,853 ¹
2016	<u>3,532,109</u>
Net change	+177,744

¹ Excludes 7.3 percent sequester reduction of mandatory VR State Grant funds pursuant to the Budget Control Act (P.L. 112-25)

Increases:	<u>2015 base</u>	<u>Change from base</u>
<u>Program:</u>		
Increase in funding for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) State grants, consistent with the inflation increase specified in the authorizing statute.	\$3,335,074	+\$56,696
Increase in funding for Supported Employment State grants to help State agencies in meeting the new challenges and opportunities resulting from program changes made by WIOA.	27,548	+3,000
Increase in funding for the Helen Keller National Center to support one-time renovation projects.	9,127	<u>+713</u>
Subtotal, increases		60,409
Decreases:	<u>2014 base</u>	<u>Change from base</u>
<u>Program:</u>		
Eliminates funding for the Independent Living State grants program because responsibility for the program's administration transferred from the Department of Education to HHS pursuant to WIOA.	\$22,878	-22,878
Eliminates funding for the Centers for Independent Living program because responsibility for the program's administration transferred from the Department of Education to HHS pursuant to WIOA.	78,305	-78,305
Eliminates funding for the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research because responsibility for the Institute's administration transferred from the Department of Education to HHS pursuant to WIOA	103,970	-103,970
Eliminates funding for the Assistive Technology programs because responsibility for these programs' administration transferred from the Department of Education to HHS pursuant to WIOA.	33,000	<u>-33,000</u>
Subtotal, decreases		-238,153
Net change		-177,744

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Authorizing Legislation (dollars in thousands)

	2015 Authorized	2015 Estimate	2016 Authorized	2016 Request
Vocational rehabilitation (VR) State grants:				
Grants to States (RA-I A, B-110 and 111)	\$3,335,074 ¹	\$3,052,454	\$3,408,446 ²	\$3,350,594
Grants for Indians (RA-I-C)	--- ^{1,3}	39,160	--- ^{2,3}	41,176
Client assistance State grants (RA-I-112)	12,000	13,000	12,927	13,000
Supported employment State grants (RA-VI-B)	27,548	27,548	29,676	30,548
Training (RA-III-302)	33,657	30,188	36,257	30,188
Demonstration and training programs (RA-III-303)	5,796	5,796	6,244	5,796
Independent living (IL):				
State grants (RA-VII-1-B)	22,878	22,878 ⁴	---	---
Centers (RA-VII-1-C)	78,305	78,305 ⁴	---	---
Services for older blind individuals (RA-VII-2)	33,317	33,317	35,890	33,317
Protection and advocacy of individual rights (RA-V-509)	17,650	17,650	19,013	17,650
National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (RA-II)	103,970	103,970 ⁴	---	---
Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults (HKNCA)	0 ⁵	9,127	0 ⁵	9,840
Assistive technology (ATA):				
Assistive technology programs (ATA-4,5, and 6)	0 ⁶	31,000 ⁴	---	---
Alternative financing programs	0 ⁷	2,000 ⁴	---	---
	<u>0</u>	<u>2,000 ⁴</u>	<u>---</u>	<u>---</u>
Total definite authorization	0		0	
Total discretionary appropriation		374,779		140,339

REHABILITATION SERVICES
Authorizing Legislation—continued
(dollars in thousands)

Activity	2015 Authorized	2015 Estimate	2016 Authorized	2016 Request
Total mandatory appropriation		\$3,335,074		\$3,391,770
Total appropriation		3,709,853		3,532,109
Portion of request not authorized				9,840
Total appropriation including mandatory decrease		3,466,393		

¹ 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 \$3,335,074 thousand.

² 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 2016, this amount is \$3,391,770 thousand.

³ 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 to Indians.

⁴ On July 22, 2014, the President signed into law the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-128), which transfers the responsibility for administering this program from the Department of Education to the Department of Health and Human Services.

⁵ The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2004; the program is authorized in FY 2015 through appropriations language. Continued funding is proposed for this program in FY 2016 under appropriations language.

⁶ The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2011; the program is authorized in FY 2015 through appropriations language.

⁷ The FY 2015 appropriation authorized funds to support a separate competitive alternative financing program.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Appropriations History (dollars in thousands)

Year	Budget Estimate to Congress	House Allowance	Senate Allowance	Appropriation
2007	\$3,180,414	N/A ¹	N/A ¹	\$3,242,512
2008	3,184,263	\$3,279,743	\$3,286,942	3,276,768
2009	3,218,264	3,387,443 ²	3,379,109 ²	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 ³	3,506,861
2011	3,565,326	3,501,766 ⁴	3,542,510 ³	3,474,718 ⁵
2012	3,541,111	3,522,686 ⁶	3,511,735 ⁶	3,511,281
2013	3,517,710	3,511,281 ⁷	3,626,380 ⁷	3,622,925
2014	3,655,577	N/A ⁸	3,698,174 ³	3,680,497
2015	3,683,335	N/A ⁸	3,722,853 ⁹	3,709,853
2016	3,532,109			

¹ 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.

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

³ The levels for the Senate allowance reflects Committee action only.

⁴ The levels for the House allowance reflects the House-passed full-year continuing resolution.

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

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

⁷ 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.

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

⁹ The level for the Senate allowance reflects Senate Subcommittee action only.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Significant Items in FY 2015 Appropriations Reports

Vocational Rehabilitation State Grants – Disability Innovation Fund

Managers

Statement: The agreement continues language allowing excess funds above those requested during the reallocation process 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. After covering the continuation costs of PROMISE, the agreement includes VR funds remaining available at the end of fiscal year 2015 to support a new Transition Model System (TMS) that addresses the complex challenges facing youth with disabilities as they transition from school to adult life. The agreement expects that an estimated \$15,000,000 will be needed to support the cost of the 5-year TMS projects. The Department shall notify the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations in advance of announcements related to the initiative.

Response: The Department plans to use the VR funds that remain available at the end of fiscal year 2015 to conduct a Transition Model System competition in fiscal year 2016. The TMS 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 Department will notify the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations in advance of announcements related to the initiative.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FISCAL YEAR 2016 PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

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(in thousands of dollars)						
Account, Program and Activity	Category Code	2014 Appropriation	2015 Appropriation	2016 President's Budget	2016 President's Budget Compared to 2015 Appropriation Amount	Percent
Rehabilitation Services						
1. Vocational rehabilitation State grants:						
(a) Grants to States (RA Title I-A, sections 110 and 111)	M	3,027,104	3,052,454	3,350,594	298,140	9.767%
(b) Grants to Indians (RA Title I-C)	M	37,201	39,160	41,176	2,016	5.148%
Subtotal		3,064,305	3,091,614	3,391,770	300,156	9.709%
Mandatory baseline	M	3,302,053	3,335,074	3,391,770	56,696	1.700%
2. Client assistance State grants (RA section 112)	D	12,000	13,000	13,000	0	0.000%
3. Training (RA section 302)	D	33,657	30,188	30,188	0	0.000%
4. Demonstration and training programs (RA Section 303)	D	5,796	5,796	5,796	0	0.000%
5. Migrant and seasonal farmworkers (RA section 304)	D	1,196	0	0	0	---
6. Protection and advocacy of individual rights (RA section 509)	D	17,650	17,650	17,650	0	0.000%
7. Supported employment State grants (RA VI-8)	D	27,548	27,548	30,548	3,000	10.890%
8. Independent living (RA VII):						
(a) State grants (Chapter 1, Part B) ¹	D	22,878	22,878	0	(22,878)	-100.000%
(b) Centers (Chapter 1, Part C) ¹	D	78,305	78,305	0	(78,305)	-100.000%
(c) Services for older blind individuals (Chapter 2)	D	33,317	33,317	33,317	0	0.000%
9. Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults (HKNCA)	D	9,127	9,127	9,840	713	7.812%
10. National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (RA II) ¹	D	103,970	103,970	0	(103,970)	-100.000%
11. Assistive technology programs (ATA, sections 4, 5, and 6) ¹	D	33,000	33,000	0	(33,000)	-100.000%
Subtotal		378,444	374,779	140,339	(234,440)	-62.554%
Total		3,442,749	3,466,393	3,532,109	65,716	1.896%
Discretionary	D	378,444	374,779	140,339	(234,440)	-62.554%
Mandatory	M	3,064,305	3,091,614	3,391,770	300,156	9.709%

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

Accounts are shown under the administering office that has primary responsibility for most programs in that account; however, there may be some programs that are administered by another office.

For mandatory programs, the levels shown in the 2014 Appropriation column reflect the 7.2 percent sequester that went into effect October 1, 2013, and the levels shown in the 2015 Appropriation column reflect the 7.3 percent sequester that went into effect October 1, 2014, pursuant to the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25).

Detail may not add to totals due to rounding.

¹ On July 22, 2014, the President signed into law the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-128), which transfers the responsibility for administering this program from the Department of Education to the Department of Health and Human Services.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Summary of Request

People with disabilities represent a vital and integral part of our society. Giving workers with disabilities the support and the opportunity to acquire the skills that they need to in-demand jobs and careers is critical to growing our economy, ensuring that everyone who works hard is rewarded, and building a strong middle class. To help achieve this goal, the Rehabilitation Act seeks to empower individuals with disabilities to maximize employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence, and inclusion and integration into society.

The Administration's 2016 Request for the Rehabilitation Services account provides \$3.5 billion to support comprehensive and coordinated vocational rehabilitation for individuals with disabilities through training, demonstration, technical assistance, and advocacy, and to assist older individuals who are blind to live more independently. The Rehabilitation Act was reauthorized by Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) enacted in July of 2014. WIOA supports the Nation's workforce development system through programs and investments in employment services, workforce development, adult education, and vocational rehabilitation.

The \$3.4 billion request for the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) State Grants program includes an increase of \$56.7 million over the fiscal year 2015 mandatory level, consistent with the inflation increase specified in the authorizing statute, to assist States and tribal governments in increasing the participation of individuals with disabilities in the workforce. WIOA strengthened the alignment of the VR program with other components of the workforce development system to ensure a coordinated and streamlined workforce development system. As an integral partner in this system, the VR program is the primary Federal vehicle for assisting individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, to prepare for, obtain, retain, or advance in high quality employment. In implementing the changes to Titles I and IV of WIOA, the Department's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) is working with its partners in the Federal workforce development system to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with significant disabilities and youth with disabilities.

As in previous years, the 2016 Request includes appropriations language that would allow the Secretary to use amounts under the VR State Grants program that would otherwise return to the Treasury to support innovative activities aimed at improving outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The requested language also would provide authority for these funds to remain available for Federal obligation until September 30, 2017.

The Administration requests \$30.5 million for Supported Employment State Grants program, an increase of \$3 million over the 2015 level to assist State agencies in meeting the new challenges and opportunities resulting from WIOA. WIOA made several significant changes to this program in order to maximize the potential of individuals with the most significant disabilities, particularly youth with the most significant disabilities, who require ongoing supports to achieve competitive integrated employment. These changes will have a major impact on the provision of supported employment services, including increasing the demand and the cost of services.

For the Helen Keller National Center, the Administration requests \$9.8 million to provide direct services for approximately 65 clients at the Center's residential training and rehabilitation

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Summary of Request

program, and serve an estimated 1,500 consumers, 350 families, and 800 agencies and organizations through its regional offices. The \$713,000 increase requested for fiscal year 2016 would support one-time renovation projects to address safety and infrastructure needs and help to upgrade facilities to comply with the American with Disabilities Act.

Section 491 of WIOA transferred several programs administered by OSERS to the Administration for Community Living in the Department of Health and Human Services. Consequently, the Administration's 2016 Request does not include funds for the State Independent Living Services program, the Centers for Independent Living program, programs under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998 (including the Alternative Financing Program) and the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research.

All other programs in the Rehabilitation Services account would be maintained at the 2015 level. The Administration believes that this level will provide sufficient funds for the activities in these programs.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Vocational rehabilitation State grants

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

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2016 Authorization: \$3,391,770 ¹

Budget Authority:

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>Change</u>
State grants	\$3,294,586	\$3,350,594	+\$56,008
Indian set-aside	<u>40,488</u>	<u>41,176</u>	<u>+688</u>
Total	3,335,074 ²	3,391,770	+56,696

¹ The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) State Grants program was reauthorized in July 2014 by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act of 2014. 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 fiscal year 2016 this amount is \$3,391,770 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.

² The amount shown in the 2015 column is the mandatory amount to be appropriated for the VR State Grants program and does not include the sequester reduction for mandatory programs pursuant to the Budget Control Act of 2011. The reduced level for the Vocational Rehabilitation State Grants program in 2015 subsequent to the 7.3 percent sequester is \$3,091,613,598.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) State Grants program was reauthorized in July of 2014 in Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA supports the Nation's primary programs and investments in employment services, workforce development, adult education, and vocational rehabilitation. WIOA makes numerous changes that affect the VR program, including changes made to the workforce development system under Title I of WIOA and amendments to the Rehabilitation Act under Title IV of WIOA.

The 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 competitive integrated 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. 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,

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Vocational rehabilitation State grants

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 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.

An allotment formula that takes into account population and per capita income is used to distribute funds among the States. The fiscal year 2014 State distributions were based on the July 1, 2012 estimates published on December 20, 2012. The fiscal year 2015 State distributions are based on the July 1, 2013 estimates published on December 30, 2013. The fiscal year 2016 State distributions will be based on the July 1, 2014 estimates published on December 23, 2014. 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. Per capita income averages for fiscal year 2016 are based on Bureau of Economic Analysis revised estimates for calendar years 2011, 2012, and 2013 as reported by the Department of Commerce on September 30, 2014.

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. 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.

States are also 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. Amendments made by WIOA to section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act allow the Department to reduce a State’s VR grant by the amount of a Maintenance of Effort (MOE) deficit from any previous fiscal year. Previously, only the subsequent fiscal year’s grant could be reduced and the Department was required to recover penalties that were discovered after the subsequent fiscal year through an audit disallowance.

Each State is required to reserve and use at least 15 percent of their Federal VR State Grant allotment to support pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities provided in accordance with new section 113 of the Rehabilitation Act. 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).

The Rehabilitation Act (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 (AIVRS) 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.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Vocational rehabilitation State grants

Amendments made to the AIVRS program by WIOA require the Department to reserve not less than 1.8 percent and not more than 2 percent of the funds set aside for AIVRS to provide training and technical assistance to governing bodies of Indian tribes located on Federal and State reservations.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

WIOA makes significant changes to the provisions in Title I which govern the workforce development. The VR State Grants program is a core program and a required partner in the one-stop service delivery system established under 121(e) of WIOA for accessing employment and training services. The one-stop system operates through a network of centers in each state that provide a variety of services to assist individuals to meet their employment and training needs, while also assisting local employers to meet their needs for qualified personnel. For a State to be eligible to receive Federal funds for the core programs, the Governor must submit a unified State plan, including the VR plan. After approval of the VR portion of the plan by the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), the unified State plan is subject to the approval of both the Secretaries of Labor and Education. One-stop partners, including State VR agencies, are required to use a portion of their available funds to maintain the one-stop delivery system, including payment of the infrastructure costs of local one-stop centers. The one-stop centers must be physically and programmatically accessible to ensure the equal, effective, and meaningful participation by individuals with disabilities in the workforce development system. In addition, Title I of WIOA establishes performance accountability measures that apply across the core programs to assess the effectiveness of States and local areas in achieving positive outcomes for individuals served by those programs and eliminates the previous VR standards and indicators under section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act in Title IV of WIOA emphasize the achievement of competitive integrated employment by individuals with disabilities, including youth and those with the most significant disabilities. The definition of competitive integrated employment and extensive use of the term throughout the reauthorized Rehabilitation Act, including the purpose of the Rehabilitation Act, signal Congress' intent that individuals with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities, are capable of achieving competitive integrated employment if they are provided the appropriate supports, services, and training.

WIOA places great emphasis on services to youth, expands the population eligible to receive certain discrete VR services and permits a wider range of services to students who are transitioning from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education and employment. These changes include the expansion of individual services to students and youth with disabilities, including the provision of pre-employment transition services, the provision of services for the benefit of groups of students and youth with disabilities, and requirements to seek comparable benefits and services from other public agencies prior to expending VR program funds for accommodations and auxiliary aids and services. In addition, new State plan provisions require each State VR agency to describe how it will address the needs, goals, and strategies related to students with disabilities identified in their comprehensive needs assessment and how it will implement the provision of pre-employment services to students with disabilities.

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WIOA also amends the Rehabilitation Act by adding provisions (new section 511) that limit the use of special wage certificates to pay individuals with disabilities subminimum wages. These new provisions would prohibit employers from paying an individual with a disability who is age 24 or younger a sub-minimum wage, pursuant to section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, unless certain conditions are met. As a result, State VR agencies will need to develop methods of documenting the strategies and services that would meet these conditions in the event that an individual is unsuccessful in competitive integrated employment and is willing to work for an employer at a subminimum wage or makes an individual choice to do so as provided under the Rehabilitation Act.

There is also significant emphasis in WIOA on the relationship between VR agencies and employers in increasing the employment of individuals with disabilities through encouraging meaningful input by employers and expanding the scope of permissible activities under the VR program with respect to employers. For example, the State plan must now describe how the designated VR State unit will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment opportunities and career exploration opportunities, in order to facilitate the provision of services. The plan must also describe how the State will utilize initiatives involving in-demand industry sectors or occupations under sections 106(c) and 108 of WIOA to increase competitive integrated employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. In addition, amendments to section 109 of the Rehabilitation Act allow State VR agencies to use their funds to educate and provide services to employers, including providing training, technical assistance, and support to employers on workplace accommodations, assistive technology, and facilities and workplace access to enable the employers to recruit, job match, hire, and retain qualified individuals with disabilities; and working with employers to provide opportunities for work-based learning experiences and training of employees who are individuals with disabilities; and to promote awareness of disability-related obstacles to continued employment;

Finally, amendments to the Rehabilitation Act add numerous new reporting requirements. Currently RSA collects quarterly aggregate data on applicants and individuals receiving VR services during the fiscal year and data at the individual consumer level only after their case service record is closed. Amendments to the data collection requirements in section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act add new data elements and require that States report data at the consumer level on individuals who are currently receiving services ("open cases").

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

	(dollars in thousands)
2011	\$3,084,696
2012	3,121,712
2013	3,066,192
2014	3,064,305 ¹
2015	3,091,614 ¹

¹ The amounts shown for 2014 and 2015 reflect the sequester reduction for mandatory programs pursuant to the Budget Control Act of 2011. The mandatory appropriation was reduced by 7.2 percent in 2014 and 7.3 percent in 2015.

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FY 2016 BUDGET REQUEST

The Administration requests \$3.4 billion, an increase of \$56.7 million over the fiscal year 2015 mandatory level to assist States and Tribal governments to increase the participation of individuals with disabilities in the workforce. Of the amount requested, \$41.2 million would be set aside to support grants under the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS) program. The request reflects the CPIU adjustment specified in the authorizing statute (1.7 percent for 2016).

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 “Persons with a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics” report released in June 2014 (2013 data), the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics released results from the Current Population Survey 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 (26.8 percent versus 70.7 percent respectively) and that only 18.9 percent of working-age individuals with disabilities were usually working full-time. Of those people with disabilities who were employed, 29.7 percent usually worked part-time (less than 35 hours per week) compared to 17.6 percent of people without such disabilities. In addition, employed persons with a disability were more likely to be self-employed (10.9 percent) than those with no disability (6.4 percent). 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, retain, or advance in employment. Nationally, there are about 1 million individuals with disabilities in various phases of the vocational rehabilitation process within the VR system, about 94 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 2015, the State Plans of 34 of the 80 State VR agencies documented that the agency had established an order of selection, one agency more than in fiscal year 2014. This total includes 57 percent of the general and combined State VR agencies and 8 percent of the State VR agencies serving blind individuals.

WIOA recognizes the need for continued modernization and improvement of the workforce development system and the VR State Grants program to increase employment opportunities for disadvantaged populations, including individuals with disabilities. To ensure its swift implementation, WIOA established an aggressive timeframe for the Departments of Education and Labor to work together to publish regulations. Through these proposed joint regulations, we are laying the foundation for the establishment of a workforce development system that serves all individuals in need of employment services, including individuals with disabilities, and employers in a manner that is customer-focused and that supports an integrated service design and delivery model.

The Departments of Education and Labor plan to publish five Notices of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRMs) concurrently to implement WIOA, one of which will be a joint NPRM covering jointly administered activities, e.g., unified and combined state plans, performance accountability, and

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the one-stop system. The other NPRMs will implement: 1) the remaining provisions of Title I and Title III of WIOA, administered by the Department of Labor; 2) Title II, administered by the Department of Education; and 3) Title IV of WIOA, administered by the Department of Education, which will be presented in two separate NPRMs due to the number of programs affected. We are working diligently toward completion of this important and complex proposal and the publication of the NPRMs is currently anticipated to occur in Spring 2015. These NPRMs will be published in the Federal Register and posted on <http://www.regulations.gov/home>, where public comments can be submitted. The Departments of Labor and Education will analyze these public comments, and anticipate issuing Final Rules implementing WIOA in early 2016.

In implementing the changes to Titles I and IV of WIOA, ED's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) is working with its partners in the Federal workforce development system to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with significant disabilities and youth with disabilities. The Department's implementation of WIOA with respect to the VR program reflects the following guiding principles: (1) strengthen the alignment of the VR program with other components of the workforce development system; (2) emphasize the achievement of competitive integrated employment by individuals with disabilities, including individuals with the most significant disabilities; (3) expand services to support the transition of students and youth with disabilities to postsecondary education and employment; and (4) build stronger relationships with employers and provide individuals with disabilities with the skills they need to secure good jobs in the labor market that are ready to be filled.

The alignment of a comprehensive, accessible, and high quality workforce development system will increase access to, and opportunity for, employment, education, training, and support services for individuals with disabilities seeking employment.

The one-stop delivery system brings together entities responsible for administering separate workforce development, educational, and other human resource programs and funding streams to collaborate in the creation of a seamless customer-focused service delivery network that integrates service delivery across programs, enhances access to the programs' services, and improves long-term employment outcomes for individuals receiving assistance. A common performance accountability system can better address the needs of workers, job seekers, and employers by aligning definitions, streamlining performance measures, and integrating reporting for each of the core programs to the extent practicable, while maintaining program-specific requirements. State VR agencies will need to work with their partner programs to align their State workforce development system through unified strategic planning requirements, common performance accountability measures, and requirements governing the one-stop delivery system.

The unified or combined State plan will promote a shared understanding of the workforce needs of a State, provide a comprehensive strategy to address those needs, align Federal investments in job training, and ensure that the workforce development system is job-driven and matches employers with skilled individuals, including individuals with disabilities served by the VR program and other one-stop system partners. VR agencies must enter into cooperative agreements with the other components of the workforce development system regarding the provision of staff training and technical assistance to promote equal, effective, and meaningful

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participation by individuals with disabilities in workforce development activities in the State through program accessibility, include both programmatic and physical accessibility.

Individuals with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities, are capable of achieving high-quality, competitive integrated employment.

The foundation of the VR program is the principle that individuals with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities, are capable of achieving high-quality, competitive integrated employment when provided the necessary skills and supports. However, to increase the employment of individuals with disabilities in the competitive labor market, the workforce system must be able to provide the opportunity for such individuals to participate in job-driven training and pursue high-quality employment outcomes, including full access to necessary supports and services. State VR agencies must coordinate and collaborate with other entities, including employers, educational and non-educational agencies working with youth, and other agencies and programs providing services to individuals with disabilities to maximize opportunities that support the achievement of competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities. In particular, State VR agencies must ensure that individuals with disabilities served under the VR program are prepared for, obtain, retain, and advance in the same type of high-quality jobs and high-demand careers as persons without disabilities.

Students and youth with disabilities require coordinated transition planning and services, including postsecondary education and training, and supports to achieve employment outcomes in competitive integrated employment.

Approximately 35 percent of current VR consumers are youth with disabilities aged 14-24 and the percentage is expected to rise. WIOA places great emphasis on the provision of services to students and youth with disabilities to ensure that they have meaningful opportunities to receive the training and other services they need to achieve employment outcomes in competitive integrated employment. WIOA contains a number of requirements to help ensure to the greatest extent possible that youth with disabilities who are transitioning from special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) have the opportunities for postsecondary success, including greater coordination between services provided by States under the IDEA and VR program. Effective transition planning and implementation for youth with disabilities generally requires a much broader spectrum of service delivery than job training. Particularly for youth with significant disabilities, effective transition requires VR counselors to work in concert with various education systems, job training programs, Medicaid, independent living centers, housing and transportation authorities, as well as businesses and employers.

To ensure youth with disabilities have the education and skills necessary to be successful, OSERS is leveraging resources across the Department to strengthen the linkages between K-12 and postsecondary education and careers for individuals with disabilities and their families, including general and special education, postsecondary education, civil rights, adult and career and technical education, as well as other agencies across the Federal government. In addition to issuing regulations that will help State VR agencies in implementing these new provisions, OSERS will be developing guidance for the many partners, including parents and families, that play a role in the success of a student with a disability's transition from high school to

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postsecondary education and careers, to encourage collaborative transition practices that will enable youth with disabilities to participate in competitive, integrated employment.

The workforce development system, including the VR program, must provide maximum opportunities for individuals with disabilities to participate in job-driven training: providing workers with the skills they need to secure good jobs in the labor market that are ready to be filled.

VR counselors must build and maintain relationships with employers, work up-front with employers to determine local or regional hiring needs, and design training programs that are responsive to those needs. VR agencies and counselors must understand data about job trends and industry and occupational classification systems, a knowledge base that is necessary for them to engage effectively with employers, as well as knowledge about ways to customize employment for individuals with disabilities. VR State agencies will need to coordinate with employers to make sure they train individuals with skills that have a high likelihood of leading to employment, and should include work-based learning opportunities, such as paid internships, apprenticeships, or on-the-job-training.

Collaboration with employers is essential to the success of VR program participants. VR agencies will need to implement effective strategies for providing training and technical assistance services to employers hiring, or interested in hiring individuals with disabilities. These services could include consultation, technical assistance, and support to employers on workplace accommodations, assistive technology, and facilities and workplace access through collaboration with community partners and employers to enable the employers to recruit, job match, hire, and retain qualified individuals with disabilities.

In fiscal year 2014, RSA awarded a 3-year grant under the Rehabilitation Training Program to establish a Job-Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center to help support State VR agency personnel in implementing job-driven strategies for employer-engagement and training for VR consumers. This investment will help to ensure that counselors have the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the demands of employers and to promote employment of individuals with disabilities.

While we are optimistic that these changes will improve performance of the VR program in the long-term, we recognize that State VR agencies will face challenges in their implementation, particularly where such changes are likely to increase the costs and the demand for services. For example, new data collection and reporting requirements will increase the cost of administering the program. Without additional resources, increased costs coupled with new set-asides and infrastructure support will strain resources for providing direct services to VR consumers. Unfortunately resources for the VR program have been reduced through sequestration, including the implementation of the sequester reduction in funding for mandatory programs of 7.2 percent in fiscal year 2014 and 7.3 percent in fiscal year 2015 by the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25).

Disability Innovation Fund

In recent years, the economic downturn affected a number of States' ability to provide the required non-Federal share (21.3 percent) in order to receive their full Federal VR allotment and to meet their MOE requirement. In addition, fewer States requested additional funds during

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reallotment. Section 110(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act requires the Commissioner of RSA to make available for reallotment to States any funds that were allotted but not utilized by a State to carry out the VR program, if they 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. Historically, the Department had been able to reallot all of the funds that had been returned or unallotted due to MOE penalties because the request for additional funds exceeded the amounts available for reobligation. However, since 2009, the amount of funds that were returned by States, or remained unobligated due to MOE penalties, exceeded the additional funds requested because many States were unable to match the Federal funds.

As a result, beginning with the fiscal year 2012 budget request, the Administration has sought authority to use amounts that remain available subsequent to the reallotment of funds to States under the VR State Grants program to conduct innovative activities aimed at improving outcomes for individuals with disabilities (Disability Innovation Fund or "DIF"). Absent authority provided in appropriations language, these annual funds would lapse and no longer be available for Federal obligation. In fiscal years 2012 and 2013 the Administration requested and received authority to use these unobligated funds to improve the education and employment outcomes of children receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and their families, including language for the funds to remain available for Federal obligation for an additional 12 month period.

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 have developed 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 is being 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 used 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 continuation costs of the MDPs, as well as the costs of the PROMISE technical assistance grant awarded in fiscal year 2014. All six MDP projects are recruiting and enrolling participants and they will continue this process through April 2016. In total, the projects have committed to enrolling 13,172 child SSI participants. Approximately half of the children and families enrolled will be placed in the treatment group and receive project services. To date, approximately 2,000 youth have been enrolled across the six projects.

Cloud Automatic Personalization Project

The fiscal year 2014 appropriation included language that allows the Department to use funds that remain available subsequent to the reallotment of 2014 funds to State VR agencies to support activities under the PROMISE program and up to an additional \$20 million of such funds for other innovative activities aimed at improving outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The

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2014 language also provides authority for the funds to remain available for Federal obligation until September 30, 2015. In fiscal year 2015, the Department plans to use unobligated fiscal year 2014 VR funds (about \$40 million) to cover any additional costs of the PROMISE MDPs and up to \$20 million to fully-fund an innovative project that would help to advance equal access to Web-based content and tools for individuals with disabilities or language barriers. The goal of this proposal is to ensure that individuals with disabilities can access computer information with personalized accommodations whether at home, school, or the workplace, as long as there is Web access. This proposed initiative, the Cloud Automatic Personalization project (CAPP), would build upon past research supported by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) on cloud computing (the cloud), including its work with the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Accessibility Initiative, which sets international standards for internet accessibility.

The CAPP would be designed as a public/private partnership that would set the foundation for and build a government secured cloud server that hosts internet accommodations that work on any Web-enabled device. These accommodations are known as "automatic personalization" because when a person uses a secure login, the cloud is used instantly to draw down the preferences of the user and make any Web-enabled device meet those preferences or requirements. Examples of such preferences could include font size or color, text-to-speech functionality, overall cognitive access (such as site simplification, or simple language), translation from one language to another, and volume levels of audio features. The Department will be partnering with National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR), now administered by the Administration for Community Living in HHS, and other interested Federal entities in refining the development of this proposal.

Transition Model System

Consistent with the President's 2015 Request, the Department proposes to use VR funds that remain available at the end of fiscal year 2015 to support a 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. 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. 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. The target population under consideration 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. The Department plans to use the balance of any unobligated fiscal year 2015 funds, if any, to begin to develop and support the activities described below for implementation with subsequent year DIF funds.

DIF Proposal for Fiscal Year 2016 Funds

After a record high in fiscal year 2012 (over \$100 million), the amount of VR funds that remain unobligated at the end of the fiscal year is declining, with about \$39 million, including approximately \$15 million in MOE penalties, remaining unobligated at the end of fiscal year

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2014. Similar to previous years, most of these funds were relinquished by a small number of States. States continue to recover from the earlier economic downturn and stabilize their spending patterns. In addition, the sequestration of mandatory funds required by the Budget Control Act in recent years, has reduced the amount of funds State VR agencies would have otherwise received through the allotment formula. Thus, we expect that only a very few State VR agencies will be unable to match their fiscal year 2016 Federal funds or meet their MOE requirement and the Department will be able to reallocate nearly all unused funds to other State VR agencies.

While, we anticipate that there will be very few VR funds that will remain available after reallocation at the end of fiscal year 2016, the Administration is requesting appropriations language for fiscal year 2016 to continue the authority to use such funds to support innovative activities under the DIF that would otherwise be unavailable for Federal obligation. If sufficient funds are available, the Administration proposes to use \$5 million to support demonstrations to provide early intervention services to populations at risk of dependence on Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)/SSI. Section 412(a)(3) of WIOA amends the VR State plan to include a new provision that permits a State to elect to serve eligible individuals (whether or not receiving vocational rehabilitation services) who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment. People with chronic conditions and disabilities, even when those conditions cause significant functional impairments, can often remain at work as their condition worsens, provided they have affordable access to the right types of accommodations, supports, health care, and job training or retraining at the right time. The Department will work with SSA and other agencies to further develop this proposal as well as other possible demonstrations to provide early intervention services to populations at risk of dependence on SSDI/SSI. As changes to the workforce development system are implemented, the Department will be exploring how best to use available resources to support innovation strategies that can improve outcomes for individuals with disabilities in the new WIOA environment.

American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services

In fiscal year 2016, the Department would set aside \$41.2 million for grants under the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS) program, at least 1.8 percent of which must be used to support training and technical assistance to governing bodies of Indian tribes located on Federal and State reservations. The request would enable the Department to provide support for about 83 tribal VR projects, including 12 new awards and 71 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.

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PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

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<u>Measures</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
Individuals receiving services ¹	955,000	970,000	990,000
Individuals with significant disabilities as a percent of all individuals receiving services	94%	94%	94%
Total number of cases closed	463,000	464,000	466,000
Individuals whose cases were closed and received VR services	326,120	327,000	329,000
Individuals achieving an employment outcome ²	183,500	184,000	185,000
Individuals with significant disabilities as a percent of all individuals achieving an employment outcome	92%	92%	92%

Note: Data for fiscal years 2014 - 2016 are projections based on actual data for fiscal years 2012, 2013, and preliminary data for 2014 from the RSA Quarterly Cumulative Caseload Report (RSA-113).

¹ Includes all eligible individuals who received VR services during the fiscal year.

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

American Indian vocational rehabilitation services

<u>Program funding</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
Project funding:			
New VR project funds	\$21,977	\$12,607	\$5,852
Continuation VR project funds	\$15,212 ^{1,2}	\$25,836 ²	\$34,574
Technical assistance	---	\$705 ³	\$741 ³
Peer review of new awards	\$12	\$12	\$9
Number of VR projects:			
New projects	46	25	12
Continuation projects	<u>37</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>71</u>
Total projects	83	80	83

¹ The total amount of continuation funding shown in the table does not include three 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).

² The total amount of continuation funding shown in the table does not include two 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).

³ Beginning with fiscal year 2015, WIOA requires the Commissioner to reserve not less than 1.8 percent and not more than 2 percent of the funds set aside for AIVRS to provide training and technical assistance to governing bodies of Indian tribes located on Federal and State reservations.

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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 program results is based on the cumulative effect of the resources provided in previous years and those requested in fiscal year 2016 and future years, as well as the resources and efforts invested by those served by this program. Fiscal year 2014 data for the VR State Grants and the American Indian VR Services programs will be available in May of 2015.

WIOA eliminated the current VR standards and indicators under section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act which are the basis for most of the VR State Grant program measures below. While fiscal year 2016 targets have been set for the current measures, these measures will most likely be revised.

VR State Grants

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

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
2011	70%	54%
2012	55	57
2013	57	64
2014	59	
2015	60	
2016	62	

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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
2011	60%	62%
2012	60	67
2013	62	62
2014	62	
2015	64	
2016	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 2013, the target set for the group of general and combined State VR agencies was exceeded and performance on this measure improved significantly as compared to fiscal year 2012, with four 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 2013 target for this measure. However, performance declined to the 2011 level, because one less State VR agency for individuals who are blind met the 68.9 percent performance criteria as compared to 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). However, in fiscal years 2011 and 2012 the number of employment outcomes increased. Overall, fiscal year 2013 data show continued progress, with a 1.4 percent increase in employment outcomes. However, the performance of many State agencies continues to vary, particularly in terms of the number and percentage of employment outcomes. For example, in fiscal year 2013, 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. While 80 percent of general and combined State VR agencies experienced an increase or no change in the number of employment outcomes, only 50 percent of State VR agencies serving blind individuals did so.

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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
2011	97%	93%
2012	95	96
2013	95	96
2014	95	
2015	96	
2016	98	

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
2011	80%	92%
2012	85	92
2013	90	88
2014	92	
2015	92	
2016	92	

Additional information: This measure is derived from Section 106 performance indicator 1.3, which measures the percentage of all individuals with employment outcomes who achieve competitive employment. Competitive employment is currently defined in State VR program regulations 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 2013, the performance of the general and combined agencies on this measure was the same as in 2012 and the target was again exceeded. In fiscal year 2013, only 2 of the 56 general and combined agencies did not meet the performance criterion. In 2013, performance for the group of agencies for the blind declined as compared to fiscal years 2011 and 2012; with three agencies (one less than previous years) not performing at the 65 percent criterion and so the target was not met.

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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
2011	89%	93%
2012	90	89
2013	91	91
2014	92	
2015	92	
2016	93	

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
2011	100%	96%
2012	100	96
2013	100	96
2014	100	
2015	100	
2016	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 2013, the performance of general and combined agencies on this measure increased as compared to 2012 and the 91 percent GPRA target was 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 higher, 90 percent compared to 80 percent, because a higher percentage of individuals served by these agencies have significant disabilities. As in the three previous years, all but one of the 24 agencies for the blind did meet the 90 percent performance criterion and the 100 percent GPRA target was not met.

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Efficiency Measures

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.

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

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
2011	70%	68%
2012	70	68
2013	70	70
2014	70	
2015	70	
2016	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
2011	70%	63%
2012	63	63
2013	63	58
2014	65	
2015	65	
2016	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. In fiscal year 2013, performance improved compared to 2012 with 38 of the 56 (70 percent) general and combined State VR agencies demonstrating an average cost per participant within the established performance range (between \$1,200 and \$3,300). Of the 24 agencies for the blind, 14 (58 percent) had an average cost per participant of no more than \$8,000 – one less agency than in 2012. 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.

For fiscal year 2013, the average annual cost per participant for general and combined State vocational rehabilitation agencies was \$2,885 with a range (excluding the outlying areas) of

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Vocational rehabilitation State grants

\$1,218 to \$6,265. For agencies for the blind, the average annual cost per participant was \$6,994 with a range from \$3,114 to \$14,149. In comparison, the fiscal year 2012 average annual cost per participant for general and combined State vocational rehabilitation agencies was \$2,711, while for agencies for the blind it was \$7,355.

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
2011	74%	70%
2012	74	69
2013	74	70
2014	74	
2015	74	
2016	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
2011	65%	67%
2012	66	58
2013	68	71
2014	70	
2015	70	
2016	72	

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 2013, performance increased slightly with 37 of the 53 general and combined VR agencies reporting data for this measure (70 percent) demonstrated an average annual consumer expenditure rate of at least 83 percent and the target was not met (American Samoa, Alaska, 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 88 percent with a range (excluding the outlying areas) of 60 percent to nearly 100 percent. In 2013, 17 of the 24 agencies for the blind (71 percent) had an average annual consumer expenditure rate of at least 70 percent and the target was met. The average annual consumer service expenditure rate for all agencies for the blind ranged from 41 percent to nearly 100 percent.

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Vocational rehabilitation State grants

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
2011	66%	63%
2012	64	62
2013	65	69
2014	65	
2015	65	
2016	67	

Additional information: The numbers of American Indians with disabilities achieving an employment outcome continued to increase in fiscal year 2013. In fiscal year 2013, the 81 projects operating in that fiscal year (projects funded with fiscal year 2012 appropriations) that reported data assisted a total of 1,891 American Indians with disabilities to achieve an employment outcome. Data for fiscal year 2013 show that 68.8 percent of the 2,750 individuals with disabilities who exited the program after receiving services achieved an employment outcome year and the target for this measure was met. While data show a significant increase in overall performance as compared to the previous year, part of the increase is due to that fact that there were fewer individuals who exited the program in 2013, 2,750 compared to 2,977 in 2012. However, there is a wide variation in the percentage of individuals who achieved an employment outcome reported by AIVRS projects. Fiscal year 2014 data will be available in May 2015.

Efficiency Measures

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

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

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

Year	Target	Actual
2011	72%	72%
2012	72	76
2013	72	76
2014	72	
2015	74	
2016	76	

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 2013, 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 81 projects reporting data was approximately \$20,768. 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
2011	78%	85%
2012	84	88
2013	85	88
2014	86	
2015	88	
2016	88	

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 2013, 85 AIVRS projects reported serving a total of 7,781 American Indians with disabilities, about 263 less individuals than in 2012. For fiscal year 2013, 88 percent of the projects demonstrated an average annual cost per participant of no more than \$10,000 and the target was met. However, the overall average annual cost per participant for the 81 projects reporting data was approximately \$5,054, compared to \$4,804 in 2012.

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Client assistance State grants

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

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2016 Authorization: \$12,927

Budget Authority:

<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>Change</u>
\$13,000	\$13,000	0

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:

- 12 of the Governors have designated the CAP to external State agencies;
- 7 of the Governors have designated CAP agencies internal to the VR agency; and
- 37 of the Governors have designated CAP to private or non-profit organizations.

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. The fiscal year 2014 allotments were based on the July 1, 2012 population estimates published in December 2012. The fiscal year 2015 allotments are based on the

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July 1, 2013 population estimates published in December 2013. The fiscal year 2016 State distributions will be based on the July 1, 2014 Census data released on December 23, 2014.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

Title IV of WIOA sets specific authorization levels for fiscal years 2015 through 2020 and expands the scope of the program's activities by authorizing CAPs to inform and advise clients and client applicants of the benefits available under sections 113 (pre-employment transition services) and 511 (subminimum wage) of the Rehabilitation Act. WIOA also requires that funds be set aside under this program for two activities before awarding grants to eligible States and outlying areas with the remaining funds. The first set-aside reserves funds, at the same amount as provided to outlying areas, for an award to the eligible system established under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act to serve the American Indian consortium. In addition, if the appropriation is equal to or exceeds \$14 million, the Secretary must set aside between 1.8 percent and 2.2 percent of the amount appropriated for training and technical assistance to CAPs established under this program.

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

	(dollars in thousands)
2011.....	\$12,263
2012.....	12,240
2013.....	11,600
2014.....	12,000
2015.....	13,000

FY 2016 BUDGET REQUEST

The Administration requests \$13 million for the CAP in fiscal year 2016, the same as the fiscal year 2015 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 by the Rehabilitation Services Administration for fiscal year 2013 show that, nationwide, CAPs responded to 48,723 requests for information and provided extensive services to 6,698 individuals. Slightly more than 95 percent of those cases in which extensive services were provided involved applicants for or recipients of services from the VR program. In 83 percent of all cases, issues related to the VR process or delivery of VR services. This data also demonstrates that in 39 percent of the cases closed, CAPs enabled the individuals to advocate for themselves through the explanation of policies; 16 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, 71 percent of the cases requiring action by the CAP on behalf of the individual were resolved in the individual's favor.

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Examples of CAP activities during FY 2013 include:

- In Maryland, a 19 year old woman who was studying to become a special education teacher contacted CAP and requested information and assistance to resolve funding issues with the VR agency for her to attend college and receive funding for room and board. A review of the VR case file for this individual showed that she had completed an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) with a vocational goal of becoming a special education teacher at Gallaudet University. The consumer had a letter from her doctor stating that she should be allowed to stay on campus due to a medical limitation that affected her ability to commute to classes. This letter was submitted along with the required Administrative Approval form for room and board, but was denied based on lack of sufficient documentation regarding functional limitations. The consumer then submitted additional medical documentation and again her request was denied. The client and her family chose to send a formal letter of appeal to the VR Director with the assistance of CAP. The client case was referred to the Office of Administrative Hearing and a telephone prehearing conference was scheduled to begin the appeals process.

CAP reviewed the VR agency's policy regarding funding for room and board for individuals attending a training program. This issue was discussed with the agency's administration before the prehearing conference to see if a resolution could be agreed upon. In light of this individual's circumstances and medical documentation supporting this request for room and board, the VR agency agreed to support the consumer's request for room and board for the previous semester, as well as future semesters.

- In Maine, a male consumer was actively engaged in VR services and had an agreed upon vocational goal to become an attorney. Out of necessity, the consumer obtained part-time employment as a delivery driver. His VR counselor wanted to close his case successful since he had, on his own, obtained employment and seemed happy with this job.

The consumer contacted CAP because he did not agree to the potential closure of his case. CAP staff successfully advocated for a change of his VR counselor and the VR agency agreed to continue providing services as outlined in the IPE. As the case progressed, the VR agency also declined to provide disability related services to overcome the consumer's barriers to employment as an attorney. Through CAP's advocacy and negotiation, the necessary services were supported by the VR agency and the consumer achieved his vocational goal.

- In Louisiana, a male consumer was interested in pursuing his vocational goal as a Ph.D. candidate in bioengineering. The consumer is visually impaired and uses reader services provided by the VR agency. The Ph.D. program is highly technical and requires mastery of complex math and graphing. The consumer was informed by the VR agency that his reader's hours would be reduced in half and suggested the consumer get his books brailled. The consumer explained to his VR counselor that current braille technology has not yet reached the capacity to translate complex math and graphs into understandable Braille.

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The consumer and CAP provided the VR agency a portfolio of his Ph.D. program, achievements, awards and additional information that supported his request that the VR agency reinstate his reader services. CAP also informed the VR agency of its willingness to take the case to a fair hearing if the decision was overturned. The VR agency reviewed the request and portfolio and immediately reinstated the reader services. The consumer completed his Ph.D. in 2013 and sought work as a professor.

- In California, a young female adult who has a vocational interest in becoming a toy designer was found eligible for VR services as a high school student. Her initial IPE was developed with a goal of customer service representative. While the consumer expressed an interest in working in customer service as a summer job, the VR agency failed to explain to her that she had the right to select a longer term vocational goal consistent with her unique strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice. The consumer requested a revision to her IPE and after several months of dispute regarding her goal and necessary training, she contacted CAP for assistance. CAP represented the consumer at two IPE meetings and negotiated with the VR agency to develop a mutually agreed-upon IPE with an employment goal of commercial and industrial designer. As a result, the consumer's IPE included reimbursement for the spring 2012 semester at her community college, ongoing training services for a Bachelor's degree, transportation services, counseling and guidance, books and supplies, and employment services. The consumer was pleased with the new IPE and looking forward to pursuing a meaningful career with the support of the VR agency.

PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

<u>Measures</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
Information inquiries/referrals	48,700	48,700	48,700
Individuals provided case services	6,700	6,700	6,700

NOTE: Data for fiscal years 2014 through 2016 are projected from actual data collected for fiscal year 2013 in which CAPs responded to 48,723 requests for information and provided extensive services to 6,698 individuals. Data for fiscal year 2014 will be available in December of 2015.

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 2016 and future years, as well as the resources and efforts invested by those served by this program.

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Client assistance State grants

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
2011	65%	87%
2012	70	80
2013	70	73
2014	72	
2015	74	
2016	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.

During fiscal years 2009 through 2012, performance on this measure was significantly higher as compared to previous years. In fiscal year 2011, 87 percent of the CAP agencies (49 of 56 agencies) reported that their systemic advocacy resulted in changes in policy or practice. In fiscal year 2012, performance decreased to 80 percent and in 2013, performance dropped further to 73 percent (40 of 56 agencies). However, performance for both years was still above the 2010 level of 64 percent and the targets were met. It is not clear what factor or factors may account for these large variations in performance. However, overall, CAP performance on this measure has increased over time, as the baseline established in 1999 was 43 percent (24 of 56 agencies). Performance data for fiscal year 2014 will be available in December 2015.

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Client assistance State grants

Objective: *Resolve cases at lowest possible level.*

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

Year	Target	Actual
2011	93%	97%
2012	93	98
2013	98	98
2014	98	
2015	98	
2016	98	

Additional information: Since fiscal year 2007, the percentage of cases being resolved through the use of ADR has ranged from about 97 to 98 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 2014 will be available in December 2015.

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Training

(Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title III, Section 302)

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2016 Authorization: \$36,257

Budget Authority:

<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>Change</u>
\$30,188	\$30,188	0

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.

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

	(dollars in thousands)
2011.....	\$35,582
2012.....	35,515
2013.....	33,657
2014.....	33,657
2015.....	30,188

FY 2016 BUDGET REQUEST

The Administration requests \$30.188 million for the Training program in fiscal year 2016, the same as the fiscal year 2015 level. In fiscal year 2016, 80 percent of the funds requested would be used to support continuation costs.

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 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 Department 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 Department 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, 75 percent of the funds awarded to universities under the Long-Term Training (LTT) program goes 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 Administration believes it is the best mechanism for recruiting new graduates into the field of rehabilitation.

Further, the Administration made significant revisions to the way the program supports IHEs in the preparation of VR counselors beginning in fiscal year 2014. The program now focuses on evidence-based practices and competency-based skills necessary to promote employment of individuals with disabilities; emerging labor market trends; internships; working with business; evaluations of effectiveness; and the use of technology to support employment of people with disabilities.

In fiscal year 2016, the Administration would also continue support for technical assistance to State VR agency personnel and their partners to improve their knowledge and use of promising practices that have the potential to improve the performance of the VR program. Beginning in fiscal year 2014, the Administration shifted its approach to technical assistance supported under this program from a network of comprehensive, regionally-based centers to supporting a series of targeted, topical centers that focused on providing a wide range of support to State VR

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agency personnel nationwide on a specific set of issues. In 2014, the Administration funded the Job-Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center to help support State VR agency personnel in implementing job-driven strategies for employer-engagement and training for VR consumers. The Administration plans to expand this approach in 2015 through the support of additional content-specific centers. The majority of funds requested for fiscal year 2016 would be used to support these awards and those in the Long-Term Training program.

PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES (dollars in thousands)

<u>Program Funding:</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
Long-Term Training:			
New	\$11,246	\$9,047	TBD
Continuations	<u>5,829</u> ¹	<u>9,108</u>	<u>\$13,996</u>
Subtotal	17,075	18,155	TBD
Technical Assistance:			
New	3,000	9,000	TBD
Continuations	<u>6,000</u> ²	<u>0</u>	<u>9,000</u>
Subtotal	9,000	9,000	TBD
Short-Term Training:			
New	0	200	TBD
Continuations	<u>200</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>200</u>
Subtotal	200	200	TBD
Training for Interpreters for Individuals who are Deaf and Deaf-Blind:			
New	0	0	TBD
Continuations	<u>1,900</u>	<u>1,900</u>	<u>0</u>
Subtotal	1,900	1,900	TBD
Unit In-Service Training: ³			
New	0	0	0
Continuations	<u>5,049</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Subtotal	5,049	0	0
Other Activities:			
New	395	200	TBD
Continuations	<u>0</u>	<u>396</u>	<u>850</u>
Subtotal	395	596	TBD
<u>Program Totals:</u>			
New	14,641	18,447	5,805
Continuations	18,978	11,404	24,046
Peer review of new award applications	38	35	35
Minority Outreach ⁴	<u>0</u>	<u>302</u>	<u>302</u>
Total	33,657	30,188	30,188

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NOTE: Amounts listed as "TBD" in FY 2016 reflect topical areas for which decisions on FY 2016 competitions have not been made.

¹ The FY 2014 awards total includes approximately \$3,351 thousand in FY 2014 funds used to support FY 2015 continuation costs.

² The FY 2014 awards total includes approximately \$6,000 thousand in FY 2014 funds used to support FY 2015 continuation costs.

³ Pursuant to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, support for these activities was no longer authorized beginning in FY 2015.

⁴ 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 fiscal year 2016 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.*

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 Department 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
2011	53%	37%
2012	53	35
2013	55	33
2014	45	
2015	47	
2016	47	

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Additional Information: The Department annually collects data about scholars through the Payback Reporting Form, which grantees submit by November 30th of each year. The proportion of Masters-level counseling graduates fulfilling their payback requirements through employment in State VR agencies has decreased consistently since 2005. While program graduates are not mandated to meet their service obligation by working in State VR agencies, the Department 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 graduates, 75 percent were fulfilling their service obligation in some form of acceptable employment in 2013, with roughly 56 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. Data for 2014 are expected to be available in fall 2015.

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

Year	Target	Actual
2011	87%	83%
2012	87	81
2013	87	81
2014	85	
2015	80	
2016	83	

Additional Information: Using the annual Payback Reporting Form, grantees are required to report the number of Rehabilitation Services Department (RSA)-supported graduates fulfilling their payback requirements through acceptable employment. This measure captures all Masters-level program graduates who received RSA-supported scholarships. 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. Among all program graduates, including those receiving undergraduate and graduate degrees and certificates, 75 percent were fulfilling their payback requirements through acceptable employment in 2013. It is possible that some portion

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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
2011	76%	86%
2012	77	N/A
2013	78	87
2014	78	
2015	80	
2016	80	

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, did not collect data on this measure for 2012. Data for 2014 will be available in fall 2015.

Additionally, the Department is in the process of analyzing the impacts of amendments to section 101(a)(7)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act on this measure. Generally, these amendments made a wider range of education and work experience acceptable for meeting States' CSPD standards. While it is likely that those amendments may increase performance on this measure, actual data will not be available for several years.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Training

Efficiency Measures

The Administration 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
2011	\$10,702	\$23,721
2012	10,702	20,275
2013	24,000	28,351
2014	24,000	
2015	24,000	
2016	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. The targets for 2011 and 2012 are based on the previous methodology. The higher Federal cost per RSA-supported graduate under the new methodology is in line with 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 2014 are expected to be available in fall 2015.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Demonstration and training programs

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

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2016 Authorization: \$6,244

Budget Authority:

<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>Change</u>
\$5,796	\$5,796	0

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 are also 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.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Demonstration and training programs

Funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years were:

	(dollars in thousands)
2011.....	\$6,459
2012.....	5,325
2013.....	5,046
2014.....	5,796
2015.....	5,796

FY 2016 BUDGET REQUEST

The Administration requests \$5.796 million for the Demonstration and Training programs in fiscal year 2016, the same as the fiscal year 2015 level. The request includes funds to support continuation costs for awards that began in previous fiscal years, including \$3.6 million to support career pathway model demonstration projects to be awarded in fiscal year 2015. There are no funds requested for new awards in fiscal year 2016.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), reports that a significant portion of adults with low literacy and numeracy skills are individuals with disabilities. Too often our systems for preparing low-skilled individuals with disabilities with marketable and in-demand skills can be complex and difficult to navigate for students, job seekers and employers. Career pathways approaches can offer an efficient and customer-centered approach to training and education by successfully articulating the necessary adult basic education, occupational training, postsecondary education, career and academic advising, and support services to enter and progress in a career. Career pathways generally refer to a series of connected education and training strategies and support services that enable individuals to secure industry relevant certification, obtain employment within an occupational area, and to advance to higher levels of future education and employment in that area.

In fiscal year 2015, the Department plans to conduct a new competition to award approximately four 5-year career pathways model projects intended to help individuals with disabilities enter into competitive integrated employment. The projects would demonstrate a well-defined strategy to help youth and adults with disabilities acquire marketable skills and industry-recognized credentials through better alignment of education, training, employment, and human and social services among public agencies and with employers. Eligible applicants would include State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies or a consortium of State VR agencies in partnership with other key entities such as State and local educational agencies, community rehabilitation providers, two-year and four-year postsecondary educational institutions (including vocational and technical schools), and employers.

Fiscal year 2016 funds would also be used to support the second year of a planned two-year contract to develop voluntary comprehensive model standards for initial and continuing training for employees under the Federal Randolph-Sheppard program. The Randolph-Sheppard program provides persons who are blind with remunerative employment and self-support through the operation of vending facilities on Federal and other property. Sites covered by the

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Demonstration and training programs

program include military mess halls, cafeterias, snack bars, miscellaneous shops, and facilities comprised of vending machines. Currently there are approximately 2,200 vendors participating in the Randolph-Sheppard program. State VR agencies, serving as the State licensing agency, recruit qualified individuals who are blind, train such individuals on the management and operation of small business enterprises, and license qualified blind vendors to operate the facilities. In addition, there are no standards for either training that is provided to potential vendors or for the training to improve the skills of current vendors. Standards are needed to ensure that employees under the Federal Randolph-Sheppard program receive training that will enable them to effectively acquire and operate a vending facility, maintain their skills, learn of best practices, and to keep employees knowledgeable about evolving technologies.

PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES (dollars in thousands)

Program funding and number of awards:	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
<u>Program funding:</u>			
<i>Demonstration projects</i>			
_ Career Pathways	0	\$3,637	\$3,642
_ SSDI/SSI Continuation	\$4,025	0	0
<i>Technical assistance activities</i>			
_ Continuation award	0	400 ¹	400 ¹
_ New award	<u>400</u> ¹	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
_ Subtotal	400	400	400
<i>Braille training</i>			
_ Continuation awards	0	330	330
_ New awards	<u>330</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
_ Subtotal	330	330	330
<i>Parent information and training</i>			
_ Continuation awards	0	1,166	1,166
_ New awards ²	<u>1,036</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
_ Subtotal	1,036	1,166	1,166
<i>Randolph-Sheppard contract</i>			
	0	200	200
<i>Peer review of new award applications</i>			
	5	5	0
<i>Minority Outreach</i>			
	<u>0</u> ²	<u>58</u>	<u>58</u>
Total---Program funding	5,796	5,796	5,796
<u>Number of awards:</u>			
Continuation awards	1	11	17
New awards	<u>11</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>0</u>
Total---Number of awards	12	17	17

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Demonstration and training programs

¹ These funds are used to jointly support the National Technical Assistance Center on Improving Transition to Postsecondary Education and Employment for Students with Disabilities with the Office of Special Education Programs.

² 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 2014, Demonstration and Training funds were not used to meet this requirement.

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 grantees under this program are accomplishing the objectives of their projects for which they were awarded funding through the competitive process.

Transition Model Demonstrations

In fiscal year 2007, the Department awarded six grants to demonstrate the use of promising practices of collaborative transition planning and service delivery to improve the postsecondary education and employment outcomes of youth with disabilities. These 5-year grants were implemented in Maryland, Massachusetts, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina. The six projects used various models to provide services and address the needs of transitioning youth. The projects ranged in scope from targeted services at a small number of sites to statewide capacity building. All projects, with the exception of South Carolina, received no-cost, one-year extensions for fiscal year 2013 to complete project activities. All grantees met their goals and objectives as established in their original applications. Examples of project outcomes include:

- South Carolina is replicating their model in multiple school districts within the State;
- Oregon is replicating their model in four other school districts and implementing their model in four Native American tribes within the State; and
- Maryland intends to expand their model outside their current service area.

Improving Outcomes of Individuals with Disabilities who are Social Security Beneficiaries Disability Insurance (SSDI)

The purpose of this 5-year model project is to demonstrate how State VR agencies can improve employment outcomes for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Social Security Income recipients. Specific measures were developed for this model demonstration, awarded in fiscal year 2010, to assess the effectiveness of the grantee's performance. After the project has concluded, data from the grantee's final performance report will be used to assess performance in the following areas:

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- 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

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

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2016 Authorization: \$19,013

Budget Authority:

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>Change</u>
	\$17,650	\$17,650	0

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 2014 State distributions were based on the July 1, 2012 estimates published in December 2012. The fiscal year 2015 State distributions are based on the July 1, 2013 estimates published on December 20, 2013. The fiscal year 2016 State distributions will be based on the July 1, 2014 estimates published on December 23, 2014.

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 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.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Protection and advocacy of individual rights

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

	(dollars in thousands)
2011.....	\$18,065
2012.....	18,031
2013.....	17,088
2014.....	17,650
2015.....	17,650

FY 2016 BUDGET REQUEST

The Administration requests \$17.650 million for the PAIR program for fiscal year 2016, the same as the fiscal year 2015 appropriation 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. Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act of 2014 reauthorized the PAIR program, setting specific authorization levels for fiscal year 2015 through 2020, but did not make substantive changes to program provisions.

During fiscal year 2013, PAIR programs reported handling 13,675 cases and responded to 46,908 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 (21 percent), education (15 percent), employment (12 percent), housing (12 percent) and health care (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 2013, 52 out of the 57 PAIR programs (91 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 2013 illustrate how PAIR programs assist individuals and, in some cases, bring about systemic change:

- Disability Rights Iowa assisted a 29-year old woman who is partially blind and had not received her requested accommodations when taking the graduate entrance exams. The P&A contacted the testing service, explained her onsite and testing experience, and recommended accommodations to the testing process for individuals with disabilities. As a result, the testing service modified its policy to improve access to the exam for individuals with disabilities, including those who are blind.

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Protection and advocacy of individual rights

- Disability Rights New Mexico (DRNM) assisted a 77-year old veteran to transition from a nursing home, where he had lived for one year, to the community. He had been placed in the home by his legal guardian under the authority of a power of attorney (POA), though he had the ability to live independently. The veteran sought guidance and services from DRNM after the nursing home took the position that he lacked capacity to revoke the POA. The P&A advocated for the veteran by clarifying that, when a POA is revoked by an individual of sound mind, this decision must be upheld. Consequently, the nursing home acquiesced to the veteran's decision and he is currently living independently within the community.
- The Georgia Advocacy Office advocated for an individual with deafness after he was refused a sign language interpreter by the hospital during a post-operative procedure. The P&A successfully negotiated with the hospital's attorney to ensure that this individual would have a qualified sign language interpreter for the entire duration of future visits. In addition, the P&A provided the hospital with technical assistance, including policy and legal decisions, to improve its communication policy. The P&A also addressed this issue by training staff of another hospital on effective communication with persons who are both deaf and blind.

PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

<u>Measures</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
Information inquiries/referrals	46,500	46,500	46,500
Individuals provided case services	13,600	13,600	13,600

NOTE: Data for fiscal years 2014 through 2016 are projected from actual data collected for fiscal year 2013. Data for fiscal year 2014 will be available in April 2015.

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 2016 and future years, and 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.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Protection and advocacy of individual rights

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

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

Year	Target	Actual
2011	89%	89%
2012	91	96
2013	91	91
2014	91	
2015	92	
2016	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 results from their intervention. The target was met in fiscal year 2013 with 52 out of the 57 (91 percent) PAIR programs reporting success.

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Supported employment State grants

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

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2016 Authorization: \$29,676

Budget Authority:

<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>Change</u>
\$27,548	\$30,548	+3,000

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 integrated employment and working on a short-term basis toward competitive integrated employment. Supported employment enables individuals with the most significant disabilities who, because of the nature and severity of their disability, need ongoing support, including intensive supported employment services followed by extended services after the individual’s ability to perform the job with support has stabilized, in order to maintain competitive integrated employment.

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 VR State Grants program and the 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. On an aggregate level, VR consumers who had a goal of supported employment represented about 12 percent of the total individuals whose cases were closed after receiving VR services in fiscal year 2013 (about 39,300 individuals). Of those individuals, about 60 percent had their supported employment services paid solely with VR State Grant funds and about 40 percent received at least some support for their supported employment services from Supported Employment State Grant funds.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) made a number of significant changes to the SE State Grants program. These changes include:

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- Permitting States to provide SE services for up to 24 months, rather than the current 18 months. This change was made by a revision of the definition of the term “supported employment services” in section 7 of the Rehabilitation Act;
- Requiring States to use half of their SE allotment to provide SE and extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities and to provide a match of 10 percent for the SE allotment portion used to serve such youth; and
- Permitting States to use SE funds to provide extended services for up to 4 years to eligible youth with the most significant disabilities.

Before enactment of WIOA, State VR agencies were prohibited from using the Federal funds they receive under these programs for extended services, and other State and local agencies and nonprofit private organizations were expected to pay for such services. State VR agencies were required to identify the State, Federal, or other resources that would provide the extended services at the time the IPE was developed, including the basis for determining that there was reasonable expectation that those services would become available. With the change in the provision of extended services under WIOA, this language has been eliminated and State VR agencies must only demonstrate evidence of the efforts of the designated State agency to identify and make arrangements with other public or nonprofit agencies or organizations within the State, employers, natural supports, and other entities with respect to the provision of extended services.

Supported employment funds are distributed on the basis of population with no State receiving less than \$300,000, or one-third of 1 percent of the sums appropriated, whichever is greater. The minimum allotment for Territories remains one-eighth of 1 percent of the sums appropriated. The fiscal year 2014 State allotments were based on the July 1, 2012 estimates published in December 2012. The fiscal year 2015 allotments are based on the July 1, 2013 estimates published in December 2013. The fiscal year 2016 allotments will be based on the July 1, 2014 estimates published in December 2014.

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

	(dollars in thousands)
2011	\$29,123
2012	29,068
2013	27,548
2014	27,548
2015	27,548

FY 2016 BUDGET REQUEST

The Administration requests \$30.548 million for Supported Employment (SE) State Grants program, an increase of \$3 million over the 2015 level. Supported employment is recognized as an effective strategy in assisting individuals with the most significant disabilities to obtain competitive employment in integrated settings. The amendments Congress made to this program under WIOA reflect supported employment’s important role in increasing competitive

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employment opportunities for such individuals, particularly youth with the most significant disabilities. While each of the changes outlined in the Program Description are significant; together, they will have a major impact on the provision of supported employment services under both the VR and SE State Grant programs.

Under WIOA, State VR agencies may provide SE services for a longer period of time and may provide extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities with either VR or SE funds for up to 4 years. While in the long-term we expect the benefit to outweigh the costs; in the short-term, providing additional services for a longer period of time will likely increase the average cost of an individual served in supported employment. Without additional resources, fewer individuals may be served by State VR agencies. In addition, the new requirement that a State use half of its SE allotment to provide services to eligible youth may change who receives SE services from the State VR agency. While the new 10 percent match required of the funds reserved for youth with the most significant disabilities is intended to help increase resources for such services, it may not be sufficient enough to offset the demand for and cost of services. The requested increase would help State agencies offset the increased costs associated with meeting the new challenges and opportunities resulting from WIOA.

Data from the *FY 2013 RSA-911 Case Service Report* (RSA-911) show that approximately 39,300 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. These numbers do not include those individuals who were still receiving supported employment services at the close of the fiscal year. Fiscal year 2014 data on individuals receiving supported employment services will not be available until the spring of 2015. However, annual aggregate 2014 data for the VR State Grants program indicate a reduction in the total number of individuals receiving VR services and the number of individuals whose cases were closed in 2014 as compared to previous years. Based on this information, we assume that there will be similar reductions in the total number of individuals with a supported employment IPE goal who received services and exited the program in 2014.

Because the WIOA amendments only recently went into effect, we do not expect significant changes in the 2015 program output estimates as compared to 2014. The Department anticipates that the amendments will begin to have an impact on output measures in fiscal year 2016. However, the Department does not have the information necessary on which to base estimates for 2016 at this time and is, therefore, showing outputs for 2015 and 2016 at the same level as estimated for 2014.

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PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES (dollars in thousands)

<u>Measures</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
Individuals with a supported employment IPE goal who received services and exited the program.	38,000	38,000	38,000
Employment outcomes: ¹	19,600	19,600	19,600
Supported employment outcomes ²	17,500	17,600	17,700
Employment without supports in an integrated setting ³	2,000	1,915	1,830
Other employment outcomes ⁴	100	85	70
<u>Minority outreach</u>	<u>\$275</u>	<u>\$275</u>	<u>\$305</u>

Note: Estimates for FYs 2014, 2015, and 2016 are based on actual 2011, 2012, and 2013 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).

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

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

³ 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.

⁴ 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, and those requested in fiscal year 2016 and future 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.

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

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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
2011	94%	93%
2012	94	94
2013	94	95
2014	94	
2015	95	
2016	95	

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 2013, 21,257 individuals, or 54 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. Fiscal year 2013 RSA 911 Case Service Report data show that the total number of individuals with a supported employment goal who achieved an employment outcome increased from 18,613 to 21,257, or about 14 percent over the prior year. Of those who achieved an employment outcome, 94.5 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.

The percentage of individuals with a supported employment goal achieving an employment outcome who obtained a supported employment outcome (employment in the integrated labor market and receiving ongoing supports) was 81 percent in fiscal year 2013. Data for fiscal year 2014 are expected to be available in May 2015.

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

Year	Target	Actual
2011	\$203	\$205
2012	203	211
2013	205	207
2014	208	
2015	208	
2016	210	

Additional information: Individuals with significant disabilities in supported employment may be working in competitive employment or may be working in an integrated setting toward the

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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.

For the performance group, fiscal year 2013 data show that the average weekly earnings of individuals with significant disabilities who achieved a supported employment outcome was \$207, a decrease from 2012, but slightly higher than 2011. However, the performance target was still met.

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
2011	70%	79%
2012	75	75
2013	75	75
2014	75	
2015	77	
2016	77	

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 four territories because they receive less than \$100,000 in SE Grants funds. In 2013, the average number of supported employment outcomes per \$100,000 remained at 75, the same in fiscal year 2012, with a median of 55 supported employment outcomes per \$100,000. However it should be noted that there is significant variation among agencies in the performance group, with the supported employment outcomes per \$100,000 in fiscal year 2013 ranging from 3 (Hawaii) to 269 (New Jersey).

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Supported employment State grants

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 funds from the SE State Grants Program in conjunction with VR State Grant funds to pay for services provided to individuals with disabilities. RSA-911 2013 State data indicate there is variation among State agencies in the percentage of individuals who have supported employment (SE) as an employment goal. 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.

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.

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.
- Thirty-two agencies limited the use of supported employment funds to specific services, including on-site job coaching, job development, job placement, and supplemental assessments.

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- 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, 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.

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 and State VR agencies will report fiscal year 2014 data on the revised collection. WIOA will require additional data on individuals receiving supported employment services under both the VR State Grants and SE State Grants programs.

In 2010, funds appropriated under RSA's Evaluation program were used to support a sub-study focusing on supported employment 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 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

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Supported employment State grants

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 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

Independent living services for older individuals who are blind (Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VII, Chapter 2)

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2016 Authorization: \$35,890

Budget Authority:

<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>Change</u>
33,317	33,317	0

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The purpose of 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. 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.

In 2013, 60,551 individuals received services under the Independent Living Services for Older Individuals who are Blind program, over half of whom were over 80 years of age. Additionally, approximately 35,000 of those individuals were either legally blind or totally blind; one fourth of individuals receiving services under this program also suffered from some degree of hearing impairment. Approximately 82% were still living in a private residence.

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 2014 allotments were based on the July 1, 2012 estimates of the population of individuals age 55 and older published by the Census Bureau in December 2012. The fiscal year 2015 State allotments are based on the July 1, 2013 population estimates released in June 2014. The fiscal year 2016 allotments will be revised when new population estimates by age group become available (currently estimated to be June 2015).

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Independent living

Funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years were:

	(dollars in thousands)
2011	\$34,083
2012	34,018
2013	32,239
2014	33,317
2015	33,317

FY 2016 BUDGET REQUEST

The Administration requests \$33.32 million for the Independent Living Services for Older Individuals who are Blind program for fiscal year 2016, the same as the fiscal year 2015 level. 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. 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 newly authorized Grants for Independent Living program.

At the requested level, the Administration would be able to continue to support independent living services, including the provision of assistive technology and aids, orientation and mobility training, and daily living skills, to over 60,000 older individuals who are blind.

The Administration's request does not include funds for the Independent Living State Grants or Centers for Independent Living programs for fiscal year 2016 in this account, as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 transferred authority for those programs to the Department of Health and Human Services.

PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES (dollars in thousands)

<u>Measures:</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
Number of Grantees	56	56	56
Minimum State award	\$225	\$225	\$225
Average State award	\$631	\$631	\$631
Minority outreach	\$333	\$333	\$333

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Independent living

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 2016 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 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.*

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

Year	Target	Actual
2011	58%	52%
2012	58	50
2013	58	55
2014	58	
2015	58	
2016	58	

Additional information: The percentage of consumers reporting access to previously unavailable assistive technology in 2013 increased from the prior year but still fell below the target level for the third 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 ($33,421 / 60,551 = 55\%$). Data for 2014 are expected by fall 2015.

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Independent living

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

Year	Target	Actual
2011	59%	52%
2012	59	51
2013	60	54
2014	60	
2015	58	
2016	58	

Additional information: The percentage of consumers reporting improvement in their daily living skills for 2013 increased from the prior year but still below the target level for the third 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 ($32,563 / 60,551 = 54\%$). 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 2014 are expected by fall 2015.

Efficiency Measures

The Department has not established efficiency measures for the Older Blind 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 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 grantees 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.

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Helen Keller National Center

(Helen Keller National Center Act)

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2016 Authorization: 0 ¹

Budget Authority:

<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>Change</u>
\$9,127	\$9,840	+\$713

¹ The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2004; the Department proposes to continue funding this program in FY 2016 through appropriations language.

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 youths and adults who are deaf-blind, their families, and service providers through three programs: a national headquarters center located in Sands Point, New York, with a residential training and rehabilitation facility where deaf-blind individuals receive intensive specialized services; a network of 10 regional field offices that provide referral, counseling, advocacy, and transition assistance to deaf-blind individuals and technical assistance to service providers; and an Information, Research and Professional Development (IRPD) component. The IRPD, in collaboration with universities, personnel preparation programs, and research projects throughout the country, identifies effective practices for working with youths and adults who are deaf-blind and disseminates these effective/best practices nationally via professional training initiatives in collaboration with HKNC Direct Services and Field Service staff.

The purpose of the program at the national headquarters center is to provide comprehensive vocational rehabilitation (VR) 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, supports, and adaptive skill training leading to enhanced mobility, improved and accessible means of communication including the use of adaptive technology, constructive participation in the home and community, leadership and advocacy training through mentoring, and ongoing social and professional opportunities, increased employability, and other improvements to their personal development and quality of life. The headquarters program also offers training and consultation to other programs serving individuals who are deaf-blind. The IRPD, in collaboration with HKNC's multi-disciplinary team, offers on campus workshops and seminars in a myriad of disciplines such as Train-the-Trainer seminars for Adaptive Technology Instructors working to support the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program, training for sign language interpreters working with individuals who are deaf-blind, Support Service Providers (SSP) services, and training for VR Counselors. The Center has increased the number of qualified professionals working with individuals who

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Helen Keller National Center

are deaf-blind by utilizing technology and distance learning opportunities such as instructional videos, webinars, and online courses. Through these means, HKNC provides technical knowledge, expertise, training, and services to its partners across the United States.

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

HKNC's mission is to enable each person who is deaf-blind to live, work and thrive in his or her community of choice. This includes having access to local resources for community living and employment opportunities. Regional representatives collaborate with States to increase local capacity in the areas of implementing SSP programs, professional development training for VR and blind/visually impaired counselors, developing VR case sharing models, identifying deaf-blind leaders for representation on task forces/advisory councils and program planning/training, development of online and webinar training, and expanding the vocational access service provider model.

HKNC also operates a number of special projects related to deaf-blindness and partners with other national organizations. These include service projects for deaf-blind individuals who are elderly and for transition age youth. HKNC provides financial support to the National Family Association for Deaf-Blind, CHARGE Foundation and DeafBlind Citizens in Action. HKNC has participated in research conducted by Mississippi State University, the National Institute of Health, Virginia Commonwealth University, and in collaboration with VR in the States of Georgia, Missouri, Arizona, and Oregon. The research portfolio has expanded with several focus areas on assistive technology, Congenital Rubella Syndrome, Ushers Syndrome, mental health, Services for Senior Citizens, SSP services, and statewide needs of individuals who are deaf-blind. In addition, the Center operates an internship program for undergraduate and graduate students studying and practicing in a variety of disciplines such as orientation and mobility, art therapy, rehabilitation counseling, and interpreting in the field of deaf-blindness. The center partners with university-based personnel preparation programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels to ensure that they include a focus on the needs of individuals with combined vision and hearing loss.

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Funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years were:

	(dollars in thousands)
2011.....	\$9,163
2012.....	9,145
2013.....	8,667
2014.....	9,127
2015.....	9,127

FY 2016 BUDGET REQUEST

The Administration request for the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) is \$9.840 million, an increase of \$713,000 over the fiscal year 2015 level. The funds requested would provide direct services for approximately 65 clients at the Center's residential training and rehabilitation program, and serve an estimated 1,500 consumers, 350 families, and 800 agencies and organizations through its regional offices. The \$713,000 increase requested for fiscal year 2016 would support one-time renovation projects to address safety and infrastructure needs and help to upgrade facilities to comply with the American with Disabilities Act. While other modernization needs were found in a recent external facilities improvement survey, the Administration's request includes funding for what we believe to be the most crucial and time-sensitive needs at this time.

The fiscal year 2016 Request would support the Center's educational and vocational rehabilitation training programs that expand independent living and employment opportunities for individuals who are deaf-blind. Currently most of the Center's budget supports operations and programs associated with serving clients in the HKNC headquarters, however HKNC recognizes the need to expand its field services component and also restore the national affiliate network. In 2014, the Center served 57 adult clients in the intensive training program and 14 short-term clients at HKNC headquarters, 55 clients through its Community Services Program, and 1,859 consumers through its regional offices.

During fiscal year 2016, HKNC would use federal funding to strengthen a national infrastructure to address the unmet needs of individuals with combined vision and hearing loss by cultivating and maintaining a collaborative affiliate in each State. In addition, funds will be used 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 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. The experts from these departments contribute to professional development activities offered by the Center to other service providers who work with individuals who are deaf-blind.

At the request level, the Center estimates that it would serve approximately 65 adult clients with deaf-blindness at the HKNC 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. The comprehensive

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vocational rehabilitation program is an active adult learning community whereby promising and best practices emerge and the co-construction of knowledge is the result of collaboration among members of the deaf-blind community. HKNC's current focus is participatory leadership among individuals in the deaf-blind community with anticipated outcomes of deaf-blind community members playing a pivotal role in the design and implementation of services and organizational strategy.

HKNC would devote approximately 30 percent of the amount requested to its field services, community education and professional development programs, including the activities of HKNC's 10 regional offices and the Information, Research and Professional Development Department (IRPD). These programs help reach consumers in their home communities and assist personnel at State agencies and other organizations to serve or develop 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 personnel such as teachers and vocational rehabilitation counselors, rehabilitation teachers, orientation and mobility specialists, adaptive technology instructors and interpreters.

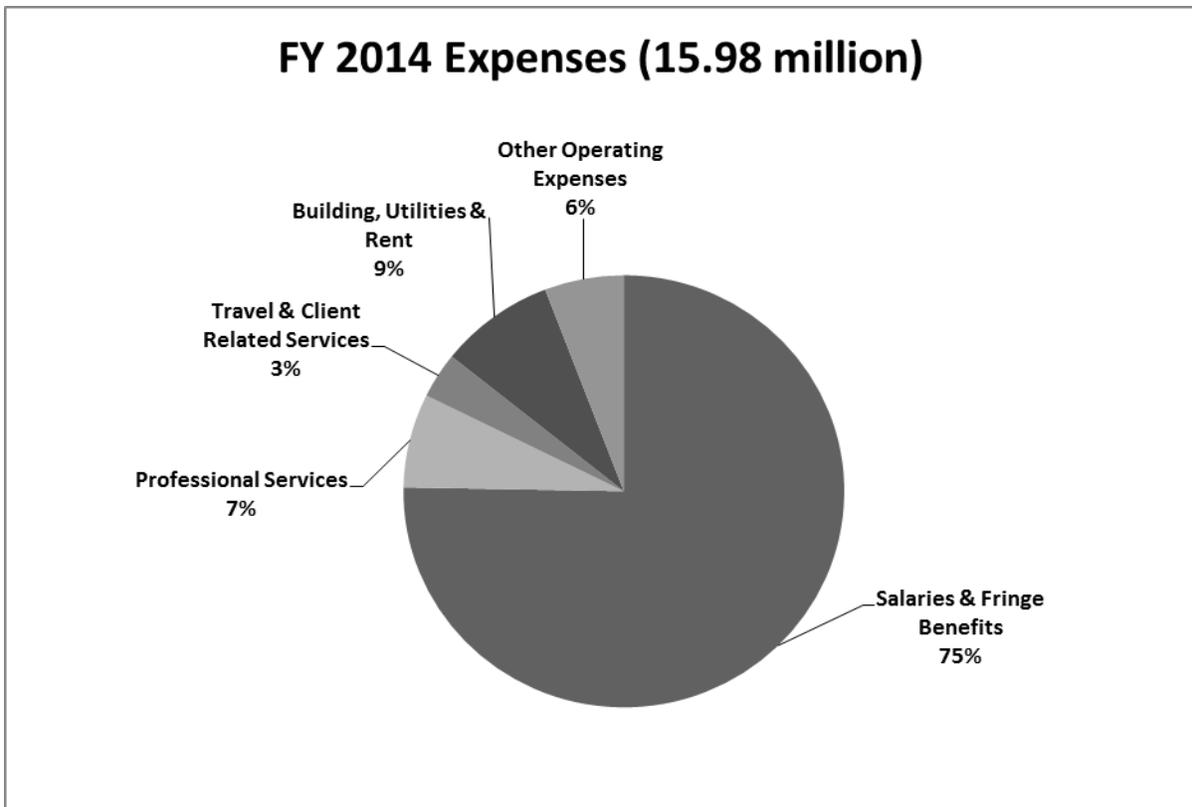
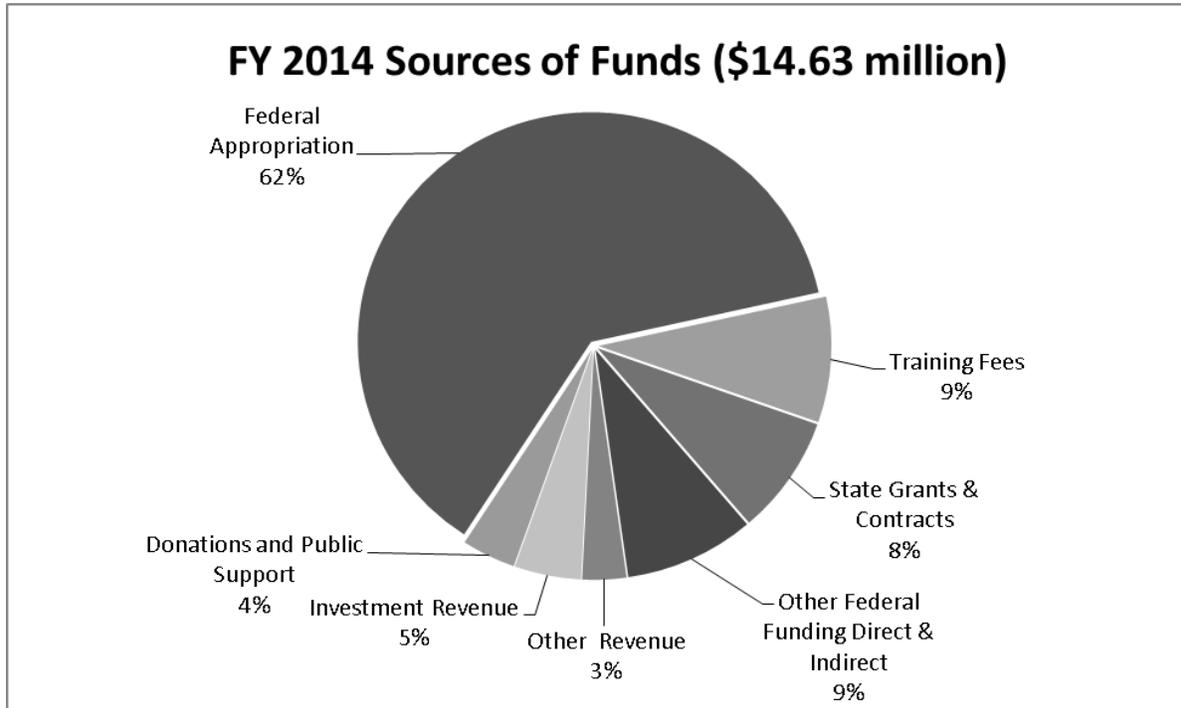
Other Sources of Funding: In addition to the funds appropriated to HKNC through the Rehabilitation Services account, the Center receives funding from a variety of State, private, and other Federal sources. For example, as a member on the National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness, HKNC received \$583,000 in fiscal year 2014 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. In fiscal year 2014, HKNC received \$1,084,000 as part of a 5-year grant from the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities 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.

HKNC has been identified by the Federal Communication Commission as the certified entity in the State of New York responsible to administer the New York Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program. HKNC received \$265,000 in fiscal year 2014 to provide assessment training and telecommunications equipment to residents of New York States who are deaf-blind. During the first two years of the three-year pilot project HKNC served 133 individuals.

The following charts show HKNC's revenues and expenses for fiscal year 2014. The Center reported total public support and revenues of \$14,362,000 and incurred total operating expenses of \$16,000,000 resulting in a net loss of \$1,377,000. While, the Center has sought to increase other sources of funding, the Federal appropriation remains its primary source of support. Salaries and fringe benefits account for most of the Center's expenses, 92 percent of which are to support staff that are responsible for providing program services.

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PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
Number of individuals served at headquarters:			
Adult training program clients	57	65	65
Specialized training services:			
Transition for high school students	11	11	11
Senior citizens	3	3	3
Targeted skills training	2	2	2
Community Services Program (CSP)	2	2	2
Number of individuals served through regional representatives:			
Consumers	1,500	1,500	1,500
Families	350	350	350
Agencies/organizations	800	800	800
HKNC FTE staff	144	144	144

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 2016 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.*

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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
2011	90	85 ¹	75%	81%	90%	94%	45%	43%
2012	90	52	75	89	90	89	45	38
2013	68	52	85	83	95	96	46	36
2014	70	57 ²	86	83	95	91	47	42
2015	71		87		95		48	
2016	71		87		95		48	

¹ Program year change-statistic includes period from July 2010 – September 2011.

² An additional 38 consumers (unduplicated) were off-campus consumers.

Additional information: The number of adult clients attending the HKNC on-campus rehabilitation training center in fiscal year 2014, 57, was below the target of 70. 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 and nine homemakers. 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 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 the HKNC 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 2014, 91 percent of adult consumers achieved their training goals.

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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 2014, 83 percent of clients moved into, or remained in, less restrictive settings, which was slightly below the target set for this measure.

In fiscal year 2014, twelve (12) of the fifty-seven (57) individuals who terminated training had a desire to achieve a vocational outcome. Of this twelve (12), five (5) or 42% achieved this goal, seven (7) are home seeking competitive or supportive employment. Among the forty five (45) individuals not seeking a vocational outcome, seven (7) are continuing their education and eight (8) were homemakers. Five (5) did not complete the program and/or took a leave of absence. Five (5) consumers received short-term training and ten (10) were senior adults; two (2) are in day habilitation programs. In addition HKNC served eight (8) high school consumers.

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
2011		239
2012		300
2013	245	898
2014	265	575
2015	285	
2016	285	

Additional information: In fiscal year 2014, HKNC's regional offices referred 575 individuals to State or local agencies or service providers. In recent years, regional offices have significantly increased the number of individuals referred to other entities for assistance 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). While regional representatives' continued their involvement in the NDBEDP in 2014, the number of individuals referred to other agencies or service providers through these efforts was lower than in the previous fiscal year and we expect that performance in fiscal years 2015 and 2016 to return to levels prior to the fiscal year 2013 performance.

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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
2011		63%
2012		74
2013	66%	66
2014	67	95
2015	68	
2016	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.

Fiscal year 2014 data reported by HKNC for this measure show a significant increase in the percentage of consumers participating in service programs (other than HKNC programs) as a result of a regional office referral. RSA is reviewing the data reported for fiscal year 2014, and will work with HKNC to assess whether fiscal year 2014 performance represents a one-time anomaly or whether this higher rate of performance is expected to continue in future years. If this rate is expected to continue, RSA will review the performance measure and determining if revisions need to be made.

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
2011		32
2012		57
2013	84	62
2014	88	65
2015	92	
2016	92	

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Helen Keller National Center

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
2011		28%
2012		45
2013	28%	32
2014	30	55
2015	32	
2016	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 providing 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 fiscal year 2014, 55 percent of individuals achieved successful employment outcomes in which HKNC's regional offices played a collaborative role providing training, advocacy and/or support to the consumer or job training agency, and exceeded the target for this measure.

REHABILITATION SERVICES
