

Department of Education
REHABILITATION SERVICES
Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Request

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State tables reflecting final 2020 allocations and 2021 and 2022 estimates are posted on the Department's webpage at: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/statetables/index.html>

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For carrying out, to the extent not otherwise provided, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Helen Keller National Center Act, [\$3,814,220,000] \$3,894,820,000, of which [\$3,675,021,000] \$3,719,121,000 shall be for grants for vocational rehabilitation services under title I of the Rehabilitation Act¹: *Provided*, 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 increasing competitive integrated employment as defined in section 7 of such Act for youth and other individuals with disabilities²: *Provided further*, That States may award subgrants for a portion of the funds to other public and private, nonprofit entities³: *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, [2022] 2023.⁴ (*Department of Education Appropriations Act, 2021*.)

NOTE

Each language provision that is followed by a footnote reference is explained in the “Analysis of Language Provisions and Changes” table, which follows the appropriations language.

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Analysis of Language Provisions and Changes

Language Provision	Explanation
<p>¹ ...of which [\$3,675,021,000] <u>\$3,719,121,000</u> shall be for grants for vocational rehabilitation services under title I of the Rehabilitation Act:</p>	<p>This language earmarks funds provided for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) State Grants program.</p>
<p>² <i>Provided</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 increasing competitive integrated employment as defined in section 7 of such Act for youth and other individuals with disabilities:</p>	<p>This language allows 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 aimed to increase competitive integrative employment for youth and other individuals with disabilities. The inclusion of this language ensures that unused funds remain available to improve the outcomes of individuals with disabilities, instead of being returned to the Treasury.</p>
<p>³ <i>Provided further</i>, That States may award subgrants for a portion of the funds to other public and private, nonprofit entities:</p>	<p>This language permits States to use a portion of their project funds to make subgrants to other public and private, nonprofit entities for carrying out innovative activities aimed at increasing competitive integrated employment for youth and other individuals with disabilities.</p>
<p>⁴ <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, <u>[2022] 2023</u>.</p>	<p>This language permits the funds made available subsequent to reallocation of VR State Grant funds for activities aimed at increasing competitive integrated employment for youth and other individuals with disabilities to remain available for two years.</p>

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Appropriation, Adjustments, and Transfers
(dollars in thousands)

Appropriation/Adjustments/Transfers	2020	2021	2022
Discretionary:			
Appropriation.....	<u>\$137,699</u>	<u>\$139,199</u>	<u>\$175,699</u>
Total, discretionary appropriation	137,699	139,199	175,699
Mandatory:			
Appropriation.....	3,610,040	3,675,021	3,719,121
Sequester (P.L. 112-25).....	<u>-212,992</u>	<u>-209,476</u>	<u>-211,990</u>
Total, adjusted mandatory appropriation.	3,397,048	3,465,545	3,507,131
Total, discretionary and adjusted mandatory appropriation	3,534,747	3,604,744	3,682,830

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Summary of Changes (dollars in thousands)

2021	\$3,814,220 ¹
2022	<u>3,894,820</u> ²
Net change	+80,600

¹ Excludes the 5.7 percent reduction of mandatory VR State Grant funds pursuant to the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25) that went into effect on October 1, 2020. The reduced level for 2021 subsequent to the 5.7 percent sequester is \$3,604,744 thousand, a reduction of \$209,476 thousand.

² Excludes the 5.7 percent reduction of mandatory VR State Grant funds pursuant to the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25) that went into effect on October 1, 2020. The reduced level for 2022 subsequent to the 5.7 percent sequester is \$3,682,830 thousand, a reduction of \$211,990 thousand.

Increases:	<u>2021 base</u>	<u>Change from base</u>
<u>Built in</u>		
Increase in funding for Vocational rehabilitation (VR) State grants, consistent with the inflation increase specified in the authorizing statute.	\$3,675,021	+\$44,100
<u>Program:</u>		
Increase in funding for Demonstration and training programs to support new grants focused on competitive integrated employment and to provide additional support for the Parent Information and Training program.	5,796	+35,000
Increase in funding for Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults to cover increased operational costs.	17,000	<u>+1,500</u>
Net change		+80,600

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Authorizing Legislation

(dollars in thousands)

Activity	2021 Authorized	2021 Estimate	2022 Authorized	2022 Request
Vocational rehabilitation (VR) State grants:				
Grants to States (RA-I A, B-110 and 111)	\$3,675,021 ¹	\$3,414,895 ²	0 ³	\$3,667,318
Grants for Indians (RA-I-C)	(1, 4)	50,650 ²	(3,4)	51,803
Client assistance State grants (RA-I-112)	14,098 ⁵	13,000	0 ⁶	13,000
Supported employment State grants (RA-VI)	32,363 ⁵	22,548	0 ⁶	22,548
Training (RA-III-302)	39,540 ⁵	29,388	0 ⁶	29,388
Demonstration and training programs (RA-III-303)	6,809 ⁵	5,796	0 ⁶	40,796
Services for older blind individuals (RA-VII-2)	39,141 ⁵	33,317	0 ⁶	33,317
Protection and advocacy of individual rights (RA-V-509)	20,735 ⁵	18,150	0 ⁶	18,150
Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults (HKNCA)	0 ⁷	17,000	0 ⁷	18,500
Total definite authorization	<u>3,827,707</u>		<u>0</u>	
Total discretionary appropriation		139,199		175,699
Total mandatory appropriation		3,675,021		3,719,121
Total appropriation		3,814,220		3,894,820
Portion of request not authorized		17,000		3,894,820
Total appropriation including required mandatory reduction		3,604,744 ²		

¹ Section 100(d) of the Rehabilitation Act and GEPA extend the authorization of appropriations for this program through fiscal year 2021. 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 Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers (CPIU).

² The amount reflects the 5.7 percent reduction of mandatory programs that went into effect on October 1, 2020, pursuant to the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25).

³ The Sec. 100(d) of the Rehabilitation Act and GEPA extensions expire September 30, 2021; continued funding is proposed for this program in fiscal year 2022 through appropriations language. 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 Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers (CPIU).

⁴ 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.

⁵ The GEPA extension applies through September 30, 2021.

⁶ The GEPA extension expires September 30, 2021; continued funding is proposed for this program in fiscal year 2022 through appropriations language.

⁷ The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2004; continued funding is proposed for this program in fiscal year 2022 through appropriations language.

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Appropriations History (dollars in thousands)

Year	Budget Estimate to Congress	House Allowance	Senate Allowance	Appropriation
2013	\$3,517,710	\$3,511,281 ¹	\$3,626,380 ¹	\$3,622,925
2014	3,655,577	N/A ²	3,698,174 ³	3,680,497
2015	3,683,335	N/A ²	3,722,853 ³	3,709,853
2016	3,532,109	3,529,605 ⁴	3,487,864 ⁴	3,529,605
2017	3,541,389	3,534,027 ⁵	3,536,389 ⁵	3,535,589 ⁵
2018	3,563,008	3,562,582 ⁶	3,562,418 ⁶	3,361,143 ⁶
2019	3,634,977	3,657,689 ⁷	3,656,189 ⁷	3,657,189 ⁷
2020	3,719,527	3,752,076 ⁸	3,745,239 ⁸	3,747,739 ⁸
2021	3,782,952	3,827,500 ⁹	3,805,500 ⁹	3,814,220 ⁹
2022	3,894,820			

¹ 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.

² The House allowance is shown as N/A because there was no Subcommittee action.

³ The level for the Senate allowance reflects Senate Subcommittee action only.

⁴ The levels for House and Senate allowances reflect action on the regular annual 2016 appropriations bill, which proceeded in the 114th Congress only through the House Committee and Senate Committee.

⁵ The levels for House and Senate allowances reflect Committee action on the regular annual 2017 appropriations bill; the Appropriation reflects the Consolidated Appropriation Act, 2017.

⁶ The levels for the House reflect floor action on an Omnibus appropriation bill; Senate allowances reflect Committee action on the regular annual 2018 appropriations bill; the Appropriation reflects the annualized Continuing Resolution level.

⁷ The levels for the House and Senate allowances reflect Committee action on the regular annual 2019 appropriations bill; the Appropriation reflects enactment of the Department of Defense and Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Act, 2019 (P.L. 115-245).

⁸ The Senate allowance reflects the Chairman's mark; the Appropriation reflects the Further Consolidated Appropriation Act, 2020 (P.L. 116-94).

⁹ The level for the House allowance reflects subcommittee action. The level for the Senate Allowance reflects the Chairman's mark; the Appropriation reflects Division H of the FY 2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 116-260).

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FISCAL YEAR 2022 PRESIDENT'S BUDGET
(in thousands of dollars)

	Cat Code	2020 Appropriation	2021 Appropriation	2022 Request	2022 Request Compared to 2021 Appropriation	
					Amount	Percent
Rehabilitation Services						
1. Vocational rehabilitation State grants:						
(a) Grants to States (RA Title I-A, sections 110 and 111)	M	3,351,798	3,414,895	3,455,328	40,433	1.18%
(b) Grants to Indians (RA Title I-C)	M	45,250	50,650	51,803	1,153	2.28%
Subtotal	M	3,397,048	3,465,545	3,507,131	41,586	1.20%
Mandatory baseline	M	3,610,040	3,675,021	3,719,121	44,100	1.20%
2. Client assistance State grants (RA section 112)	D	13,000	13,000	13,000	0	0.00%
3. Training (RA section 302)	D	29,388	29,388	29,388	0	0.00%
4. Demonstration and training programs (RA section 303)	D	5,796	5,796	40,796	35,000	603.86%
5. Protection and advocacy of individual rights (RA section 509)	D	17,650	18,150	18,150	0	0.00%
6. Supported employment State grants (RA VI)	D	22,548	22,548	22,548	0	0.00%
7. Independent living services for older blind individuals (RA VII, Chapter 2)	D	33,317	33,317	33,317	0	0.00%
8. Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults (HKNCA)	D	16,000	17,000	18,500	1,500	8.82%
Subtotal		137,699	139,199	175,699	36,500	26.22%
Total		3,534,747	3,604,744	3,682,830	78,086	2.17%
Discretionary	D	137,699	139,199	175,699	36,500	26.22%
Mandatory	M	3,397,048	3,465,545	3,507,131	41,586	1.20%

NOTES: D = discretionary program; M = mandatory program
Detail may not add to totals due to rounding.

Note: Pursuant to the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25), for most mandatory programs, with the exception of Pell Grants, Credit Liquidating, and Credit Reestimates the levels shown in the 2020 Appropriation column reflect the 5.9 percent reduction that went into effect on October 1, 2019; the levels shown in the 2021 Appropriation column reflect the 5.7 percent reduction that went into effect on October 1, 2020; and the levels shown in the 2022 Appropriation column reflect the 5.7 percent reduction that, under current law, will go into effect on October 1, 2021.

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 for 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 Rehabilitation Act was reauthorized in 2014 under Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which supports the Nation's workforce development system through programs and investments in employment services, workforce development, adult education, and vocational rehabilitation. WIOA expired in fiscal year 2020 and the one-year GEPA extension ended in fiscal year 2021; authorization for all programs within the Rehabilitation Services account for FY 2022 is requested through appropriations language.

The Administration's 2022 request for the Rehabilitation Services account provides \$3.9 billion to support comprehensive and coordinated vocational rehabilitation for individuals with disabilities through direct services, training and technical assistance, and model demonstrations, as well as direct services to help older individuals who are blind live more independently.

The \$3.7 billion request for the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) State Grants program includes an increase of \$44.1 million over the fiscal year 2021 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 promote a coordinated and streamlined 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.

The request includes an increase of \$35 million over the fiscal year 2021 level for the Demonstration and training program to support model demonstration projects and related technical assistance focused on helping consumers transition from subminimum wage employment or education to competitive integrated employment, and to provide additional support through the Parent Information and Training program.

The request also includes an increase of \$1.5 million over the fiscal year 2021 level for the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults to provide services to deaf-blind individuals and their families, as well as technical assistance to local service providers.

The request would maintain support for all other programs in the Rehabilitation Services account at the 2021 appropriation level.

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Vocational rehabilitation State grants

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

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2022 Authorization: 0¹

Budget Authority:

	<u>2021</u> <u>Appropriation</u>	<u>2022</u> <u>Request</u>	<u>Change from</u> <u>2021 to 2022</u>
State grants	\$3,624,371	\$3,667,318	+\$42,947
Set-aside for American Indian	<u>50,650</u>	<u>51,803</u>	<u>1,153</u>
Vocational Rehabilitation Services			
Total	3,675,021 ²	3,719,121 ²	+44,100

¹ The Sec. 100(d) of the Rehabilitation Act and GEPA extensions expire September 30, 2021; continued funding is proposed for this program in fiscal year 2022 through appropriations language. 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). 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 VR State Grants be set aside for Grants for American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

² The levels shown in the 2021 column are the mandatory amounts for the VR State Grants program and do not include the sequester reduction for mandatory programs pursuant to the Budget Control Act of 2011. The reduced level for fiscal year 2021 subsequent to the 5.7 percent sequester that went into effect on October 1, 2020 is \$3,465,544,803, a reduction of \$209.5 million from the mandatory level. The reduced level for fiscal year 2022, subsequent to the 5.7 percent sequester that went into effect on October 1, 2020 is \$3,507,131,103, a reduction of \$211.9 million from the mandatory level.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) State Grants program supports formula grants to 56 States, including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, to provide individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, the services they need to obtain competitive integrated employment. Grant funds are administered by VR agencies designated by each State. There is currently a total of 78 State VR agencies. Thirty-four States and Territories operate a “combined” agency serving all disability categories. Twenty-two States operate a separate agency for individuals who are blind or visually impaired and a “general” agency for all other disability categories. The authorizing legislation requires the program to be funded at no less than the prior year level, increased by the percentage change in the Consumer Price Index for Urban Consumers.

Workforce Development System

The VR State Grants program was reauthorized in July 2014 in Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which supports a comprehensive, accessible, high-

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Vocational rehabilitation State grants

quality workforce development system that includes programs and investments in employment services, workforce development, adult education, and vocational rehabilitation and is aligned with regional economic development strategies to meet the needs of local and regional employers. WIOA's one-stop system, established under Section 121(e) of WIOA, 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 in meeting their needs for qualified personnel.

The VR State Grants program is a core program and a required partner in the one-stop service delivery system, and is governed by provisions in both the Rehabilitation Act (Title IV of WIOA) and Title I of WIOA. For a State to be eligible to receive Federal funds for the core programs of WIOA (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Formula programs (Title I of WIOA), Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) program (Title II of WIOA), Wagner-Peyser Employment Service program (Title III of WIOA), and VR program (Title IV of WIOA)), 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.

VR 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 who are eligible for assistance include those with a physical or mental impairment that results in a substantial impediment to employment and who require and can benefit from VR services to achieve and maximize employment and career goals. Program services are tailored to the specific needs of the individual through an individualized plan for employment (IPE). The VR program provides a variety of services, such as vocational evaluation, counseling, education, vocational training, job placement, rehabilitation technology, supported employment services, and treatment of mental or physical conditions, that may reasonably be expected to reduce or eliminate one or more barriers to employment. Priority is given to serving individuals with the most significant disabilities. Pre-employment transition services may be provided to students with disabilities who are in a secondary, postsecondary, or other recognized education program and are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services.

VR State Grants help cover the cost of direct services and program administration. The State matching requirement is 21.3 percent, except for the cost of construction of a facility for community rehabilitation program purposes, in which case the non-Federal share is 50 percent. 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 must also maintain non-Federal expenditures at no less than the level spent during the second preceding fiscal year. 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.

The Department allocates funds to States through a formula that takes into account population and per capita income. Each State is required to reserve and expend at least 15 percent of its Federal VR State Grant allotment to support pre-employment transition services to all students with disabilities in need of such services who are eligible or potentially eligible for services under Section 113 of the Rehabilitation Act. Each State is also required to reserve and use a portion of

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Vocational rehabilitation State grants

the Federal funds received under the VR State Grants program for innovation and expansion activities authorized in Section 101(a)(18).

Disability Innovation Fund

Beginning with the fiscal year 2012 appropriation, Congress provided authority to use amounts that remained available following the reallocation of funds to States under Section 110(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act 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. The Department funded a variety of DIF projects in prior years, including projects to: improve the education and employment outcomes of children receiving Supplemental Security Income and their families; ensure that individuals with disabilities can access web-based computer information with personalized accommodations at home, school, or the workplace; and develop work-based learning transition demonstrations for students with disabilities.

In fiscal year 2020, \$130.1 million remained available following the reallocation of funds to States. Section 318 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, directed the Department to use \$20 million of the remaining fiscal year 2020 funds for one-time financial relief and restoration grants consistent with the purposes of the Randolph Sheppard Act. The Randolph Sheppard Act authorizes the Vending Facility program, which provides persons who are blind with remunerative employment and self-support through the operation of vending facilities on federal and other property. These funds will be used primarily to offset losses of blind vendors in fiscal year 2020.

The Department plans to use the remaining fiscal year 2020 funds to provide \$59,000 in supplemental awards to Transition Work-Based Learning DIF projects and approximately \$110 million in new awards through the Career Advancement Initiative Model Demonstration DIF competition. This competition will fund a multi-site model demonstration project designed to assist State VR agencies, in partnership with other entities, to develop career pathways that are aimed at helping individuals with disabilities advance in their careers or change to high-demand, high-quality careers.

Additional information about these projects is provided in the Program Performance Information section of this request.

American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services

The Rehabilitation Act requires the Department to reserve between 1.0 percent and 1.5 percent of the funds appropriated for the VR State grants program for the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS) program (Section 121 of the Act), which pays part of the costs of VR services for American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing on or near a reservation. The Department also must use between 1.8 percent and 2.0 percent of AIVRS funds to provide training and technical assistance to governing bodies of Indian tribes located on Federal and State reservations.

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Vocational rehabilitation State grants

Funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years for Vocational Rehabilitation State Grants were as follows:

Fiscal Year	(dollars in thousands)
2017	\$3,164,054 ¹
2018	3,225,038 ¹
2019	3,303,627 ¹
2020	3,397,048 ¹
2021	3,465,545 ¹

¹ The amounts shown for 2017 through 2021 reflect the sequester reduction for mandatory programs pursuant to the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25). The mandatory appropriation was reduced by 6.9 percent in 2017, 6.6 percent in 2018, 6.2 percent in 2019, 5.9 percent in 2020, and 5.7 percent in 2021.

FY 2022 BUDGET REQUEST

For fiscal year 2022, the Administration requests \$3.7 billion for the VR State Grants programs, \$44.1 million more than the fiscal year 2021 appropriation, to help States and Tribal governments increase the participation of individuals with disabilities in the workforce. The fiscal year 2022 request reflects the current estimate of the mandatory amount required by the authorizing statute. Of the amount requested, \$51.8 million, or 1.4% of the funds requested for the VR State Grants program, will be set aside to support grants under the AIVRS program.

Individuals with disabilities are a vital and integral part of American society; however, some face particular barriers to obtaining employment. Although many people with disabilities find and retain jobs, the overall unemployment rate for people with disabilities is very high. For example, 2020 employment data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show that of those aged 16-64 (i.e., U.S. working age population), people with sensory, physical, mental, and/or self-care disabilities were significantly less likely to be employed (either full-time or part-time) than people without such disabilities (29.1 percent versus 70.0 percent, respectively). Of those people with disabilities who were employed, 29 percent usually worked part-time (less than 35 hours per week) compared to 16 percent of people without such disabilities.²

The VR State Grants program is a critical component of the WIOA workforce development system and continues to be the primary Federal vehicle for assisting individuals with disabilities—particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities—to obtain competitive integrated employment. Nationally, there are approximately 1.5 million individuals with disabilities, including students with disabilities, in various phases of the vocational rehabilitation process, about three-quarters of whom received VR services under an individualized plan for employment (IPE) during fiscal year 2020. Approximately 94 percent of these individuals were individuals with significant disabilities.

² <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/disabl.htm>

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Vocational rehabilitation State grants

Examples of VR services include support for work-based learning experiences and postsecondary training that offer youth and adults with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities, a pathway to the achievement of competitive integrated employment. These VR services ensure that individuals with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate in the workforce in both traditional and high-growth industries.

State VR agencies play an important role in ensuring that individuals with disabilities can successfully access and participate in such programs. For example, State VR agencies can provide a variety of services and supports that are beneficial to both eligible individuals with disabilities and employers including vocational assessment, career exploration, job readiness training, assistive technology services and devices, job accommodations, tuition support, job coaching, job restructuring, and/or post-employment services, as necessary.

Disability Innovation Fund

The fiscal year 2021 appropriation provides the Department with authority to use amounts that remain available following the reallocation of funds to States under Section 110(b) of the Rehabilitation Act for innovative activities aimed at increasing competitive integrated employment for youth and other individuals with disabilities. If fiscal year 2021 funds remain available following reallocation, the Department may run an additional competition in fiscal year 2022 under this authority.

American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services

The request would provide \$51.8 million for grants under the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS) program, allowing the Department to continue to support 95 tribal VR projects. These funds enable Tribal governments to provide a program of VR services in a culturally relevant manner to American Indians with disabilities residing on or near reservations. The Department plans to reserve 2.0 percent of these funds to support training and technical assistance to governing bodies of Indian tribes located on Federal and State reservations.

In early spring 2020, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic began to be felt in the United States. American Indian reservations experienced a high rate of COVID-19 infections and had limited medical resources to treat those who were infected. Many AIVRS grantees took actions to limit the spread of COVID-19 by requiring their nonessential personnel to work from home. As a result, many potential AIVRS applicants expressed concern about their ability to access information needed to apply for a grant. To ensure that there would be sufficient competition for new AIVRS grants and to avoid any potential discontinuity that would result from the transition to new grantees, the Department extended the AIVRS projects that were in their fifth year of operation, as well the AIVRS Training and Technical Assistance Center, for one additional year, through fiscal year 2021. The Department will hold a competition for new awards under the AIVRS program and a new AIVRS Training and Technical Assistance Center in fiscal year 2021.

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Vocational rehabilitation State grants

PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

Vocational rehabilitation State grants

<u>Output Measures</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021¹</u>	<u>2022¹</u>
Individuals receiving VR services under an IPE	844,426	840,000	850,000
Individuals with significant disabilities as a percent of all individuals receiving services	94%	94%	94%
Eligible individuals whose case files were closed	400,000	400,000	425,000
Individuals whose cases were closed and received VR services	300,000	300,000	325,000
Individuals achieving an employment outcome	116,524	115,000	120,000
Individuals with significant disabilities as a percent of individuals achieving employment outcomes	94%	94%	94%

American Indian vocational rehabilitation services

(dollars in thousands)

<u>Output Measures</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
Project funding:			
New awards	0	\$27,086	0
Continuation awards	\$44,345	22,515	\$50,790
Technical assistance	905	1,013	1,013
Peer review of new awards' applications	<u>0</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	45,250	50,650	51,803
Number of AIVRS projects:			
New projects	0	52	0
Continuation projects	<u>87</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>96</u>
Total projects	87	96	96

¹The 2021 and 2022 output measures data for Vocational rehabilitation State grants are estimates.

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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. Achievement of program results is based on the cumulative effect of the resources provided in previous years, and those requested in fiscal year 2022 and future years, as well as the resources and efforts invested by those served by this program. The Department will be reviewing GPRA program performance goals, objectives, and measures for Vocational rehabilitation State grants for possible revision in future years to ensure alignment with Administration policy.

VR State Grants

WIOA requires the core programs of the workforce development system, including the State VR Services program, to meet common performance accountability requirements, including the submission of common performance data to demonstrate that specified performance levels are achieved. Required data for the core programs include those related to the primary performance indicators, participant counts and costs, and participants' barriers to employment. Data definitions were changed by WIOA, limiting the validity of comparisons to performance data reported under the prior law. For fiscal years 2015 through 2020, the Department developed and reported interim measures that were aligned with the WIOA performance indicators as State VR agencies continued to collect and report WIOA data.

The Department has developed new performance measures that mirror three of the WIOA performance indicators. Program year 2020 data on the new measures will be reported in the fiscal year 2023 Congressional Justification.

For the purposes of the interim measures, a VR participant is an eligible individual who has an approved and signed IPE and has begun to receive services. A VR participant is reported to have exited the program when the participant's record of service is closed. Competitive integrated employment is 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 rate paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by other individuals who are not disabled and who are similarly situated in similar occupations by the same employer and who have similar training, experience, and skills, including eligibility for the same level of benefits. (See 34 CFR 361.5(c)(9)).

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Interim VR Performance Measures

Fiscal year 2020 is the last year the Department will report on the interim VR performance measures.

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 competitive integrated employment consistent with their particular strengths, resources, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.*

Measure: Percentage of participants who exited the VR program in competitive integrated employment.

Year	Target	Actual
2017	50%	48%
2018	50	47
2019	50	46
2020	50	44

Additional Information: State performance varies considerably on this measure, ranging from a low of 24.5 percent to a high of 62.5 percent in fiscal year 2020. Among those individuals who exited the VR program in FY 2020 with an employment outcome, 100 percent obtained competitive integrated employment.

Measure: Median weekly earnings for participants who exited the VR program with a competitive integrated employment outcome.

Year	Target	Actual
2017	\$325	\$320
2018	330	325
2019	335	338
2020	340	360

Additional Information: Median weekly earnings at exit ranged from \$238 to \$600 in fiscal year 2020, as compared with \$218 to \$680 in fiscal year 2019.

Objective: *Ensure that youth with disabilities who are served by the Vocational Rehabilitation State Grant program receive the education and training needed to achieve competitive integrated employment.*

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Measure: Percent of youth participants who exit the VR program who received at least one of seven specified training services.

Year	Target	Actual
2017	35%	32%
2018	35	16
2019	35	15
2020	35	11

Additional Information: For the purpose of this measure, youth participants are youth with a disability between the ages of 14 and 24 at the time of application to the VR program. Training services, for the purpose of this measure, include: (1) graduate college or university training; (2) 4-year college or university training; (3) junior or community college training; (4) occupational or vocational training; (5) apprenticeship training; (6) basic academic remedial or literacy training; or (7) miscellaneous training.

State performance varies considerably on this measure; excluding the four territories, performance ranged from a high of about 65.8 percent to a low of about 1.5 percent in fiscal year 2020. Of the seven training services, the most frequently received was miscellaneous training followed by four-year college training. The Department notes the downward trend in the receipt of these services, which is likely the result of States providing more pre-employment transition services to more students with disabilities.

New VR Performance Measures

Goal: Individuals with disabilities served by the VR program will achieve high quality employment outcomes and continue to work following their exit from the program.

Objective: *Ensure that individuals with disabilities, who are participating in an education or training program, are making progress towards earning a recognized postsecondary credential or achieving employment.*

Measure: The percentage of VR program participants who achieved measurable skill gains, in accordance with WIOA, during the program year.

Objective: *Ensure that individuals with disabilities who exit the VR program with competitive integrated employment will be capable of maintaining employment as a result of the VR services they received.*

Measure: The percentage of VR program participants who were employed during the second quarter after exit from the program.

Measure: The percentage of VR program participants who were employed during the fourth quarter after exit from the program.

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American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services

WIOA does not require the use of common performance measures and data for the AIVRS program, and the Department continues to use previously established performance and efficiency measures for this program.

During fiscal year 2019, the economy and labor markets on American Indian reservations began a significant decline that reduced viable employment opportunities for American Indians with disabilities. As a result of this decline, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic that began during fiscal year 2020, the Department anticipates that AIVRS program performance data will continue to show a downward trend in fiscal years 2020, 2021, and 2022.

The fiscal year 2019 data do not include data from two grantees that were unable to submit their data in a timely manner. In both situations, the Tribes did not receive new grant awards in the fiscal year 2019 competition; while both Tribes received a one-year no-cost extension, they released all of their AIVRS project staff from employment. As a result, the RSA Program Officer worked with the Tribal administrative staff to submit the fiscal year project data and performance reports. The Department will update the fiscal year 2019 data to include these grantees in the fiscal year 2023 Congressional Justification.

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 an employment outcome, after receiving services under an individualized plan for employment.

Year	Target	Actual
2017	67%	68%
2018	67	68
2019	67	58
2020	68	
2021	68	
2022	68	

Additional information: Data for fiscal year 2019 show that 2,067, or 58.4 percent, of the 3,539 individuals with disabilities who exited the program after receiving services in that year achieved an employment outcome. Fiscal year 2020 data will be available in summer 2021.

Efficiency Measures

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

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

Year	Target	Actual
2017	76%	77%
2018	76	84
2019	76	59
2020	76	
2021	76	
2022	76	

Additional information: The cost per employment outcome varied significantly across projects, ranging from \$7,167 to \$192,294.

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

Year	Target	Actual
2017	80%	74%
2018	80	73
2019	75	66
2020	75	
2021	75	
2022	75	

Additional information: The median annual cost per participant for the 86 projects reporting data was \$6,472 in fiscal year 2019, \$683 more than the median cost in fiscal year 2018 of \$5,789, while the mean annual cost per participant in fiscal year 2019 was \$7,301 due to a small number of project outliers. Targets beginning in fiscal year 2019 are lower than prior years to reflect increased costs in serving American Indians with disabilities.

Disability Innovation Fund

Promoting Readiness of Minors in Social Security Income

In fiscal year 2013, VR funds remaining from the 2012 appropriation were used to award 5-year grants to five States and a consortium of six States for model demonstration projects (MDPs) under the Promoting Readiness of Minors in Social Security Income (PROMISE) program. PROMISE was a joint initiative with the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Labor. Under the PROMISE program, States developed partnerships and implemented interventions designed to improve the provision and coordination of services and supports for children who received SSI and their

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families, and achieve outcomes leading to increased economic self-sufficiency and a reduction in their dependence on SSI payments.

In fiscal year 2014, the Department used \$92.5 million in unobligated VR funds that became available from the fiscal year 2013 appropriation to cover continuation costs of the PROMISE MDPs, as well as the costs of the PROMISE technical assistance center grant. The Department provided an additional \$17.2 million in supplemental awards in fiscal year 2015 using unobligated fiscal year 2014 VR funds.

By the end of the recruitment period in April 2016, all six projects met their project recruitment goals, with a total of 13,444 participants enrolled across the six projects. Approximately one-half of the children and families enrolled were placed in the treatment group and received project services. Program participants in the intervention group received services including paid competitive employment opportunities. Additional information can be found on the PROMISE technical assistance center's website.¹

SSA, in collaboration with the Department, has contracted for a rigorously designed national evaluation of PROMISE. A 2019 interim services and impact report presents the estimated impacts of the six PROMISE programs on outcomes related to service receipt, education, employment, expectations, health insurance coverage, income, and youth self-determination, and on participation in SSA and other public assistance programs for youth and their families. The impacts on the primary outcomes were measured at 18 months after youth enrolled in the PROMISE evaluation. This report and others are available on SSA's website.² Key findings, in addition to the report, are provided on Mathematica Policy Research's website.³ Specifically, the interim services and impact report found:

- Each of the six programs increased youth's receipt of transition services, youth's paid employment, and family member receipt of support services.
- None of the programs had an impact on the number of hours of key services that youth and families received, but four programs increased the likelihood that youth applied for VR services.
- Each program had a positive impact on youth's receipt of job-related training or training credentials.
- Four of the programs had positive impacts on youth's total income from earnings and SSA payments.
- Only one of the programs reduced youth's receipt of any SSA payments and increased parents' education and job-related training.
- None of the programs had a desirable impact on youth's self-determination and expectations or youth's reliance on Medicaid, nor on parents' total income.

A final impact report is due to be released in fiscal year 2022. The evaluation contractor has published multiple PROMISE special topics reports and articles, including most recently,

¹ <http://www.promisetacenter.org/>.

² Reports documenting PROMISE program implementation and service delivery experiences are available at <https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/promise.htm>.

³ These reports will be available at <https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/projects/evaluate-the-promoting-readiness-of-minors-in-supplemental-security-income-promise-grants>.

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Insights About the Transition System for SSI Youth from the National Evaluation of Promoting Readiness of Minors in SSI¹ and the Family Service Use and Its Relationship with Youth Outcomes.²

Automated Personalization Computing Project

In fiscal year 2015, the Department used approximately \$20 million of unobligated fiscal year 2014 VR funds to fund an innovative Automated Personalization Computing Project (APCP). The goal of the APCP 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. Examples of such personalization could include font size or color, line-spacing, text-to-speech functionality, overall cognitive access (such as site simplification, or simple language), and volume levels of audio features. The project is developing an information technology infrastructure on which Internet-capable computers automatically run assistive technology solutions customized for individual users with disabilities according to their preferences. The Department has partnered with the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research which is administered by the Administration for Community Living in HHS, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the Access Board, among others, in overseeing this initiative.

During fiscal year 2018, the APCP began transitioning from pre-pilot testing to pilot work with selected American Job Centers; in fiscal year 2019, the APCP pilot tested the capabilities of the software's automatic transfer of preference settings to determine the role it can play in supporting transition of individuals from high school to the community college, and from the community college to job settings.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the grantee's plans to implement many final year activities in fiscal year 2020, such as testing and disseminating its software. Section 153 of the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act extended the availability of funds for APCP through September 30, 2021, and the grantee is expected to complete accessibility testing on multiple computer platforms and conduct disability sector outreach and dissemination during fiscal year 2021.

Transition Work-Based Learning Demonstrations

Students with disabilities often have lower high school graduation rates, lower postsecondary enrollment rates, and higher unemployment rates than peers without disabilities.³ To help address this problem, WIOA expanded the available services as well as the population of students with disabilities who may receive these services under the VR program. In particular,

¹ <https://www.mathematica.org/our-publications-and-findings/publications/insights-about-the-transition-system-for-ssi-youth-from-the-national-evaluation-of-promoting>

² <https://www.mathematica.org/our-publications-and-findings/publications/promoting-readiness-of-minors-in-supplemental-security-income-family-service-use>

³ Luecking, D.M., & Luecking, R.G. (2015, May). Translating Research Into a Seamless Transition Model. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 38(1), 4-13.

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States are required to reserve 15 percent of their VR allotment to provide pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services. These pre-employment transition services include job exploration counseling, workplace readiness training, work-based learning experiences, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education, and instruction in self-advocacy. Research indicates that work experiences for youth with disabilities, especially paid employment, can be effective in influencing post-school employment. However, strategies and interventions that are based on the most promising evidence of effectiveness in providing work-based learning experiences are needed.

In fiscal year 2016, the Department awarded 5-year demonstration projects to five State VR agencies using unobligated fiscal year 2015 VR funds. The goal of these projects is to identify and demonstrate work-based learning interventions for students with disabilities that are supported by research and are rigorously evaluated.

A brief description of the five projects is provided below.

- *The Maryland Work-Based Learning Collaborative (Way2Work Maryland)* project is improving career outcomes for youth with disabilities by incorporating early referral to the VR agency, work-based learning experiences, integrated employment, and collaboration among the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services, local educational agencies, community rehabilitation programs, America's job centers, and employers. The model includes a randomized control design implemented across eight diverse school districts. (<https://www.way2workmd.net>)
- *Vermont's Linking Learning to Careers* project is assisting students with disabilities to transition to early career success by connecting community college career consultants with VR services and school programming. These connections are enhanced by the provision of a targeted continuum of work-based learning opportunities, statewide assistive technology specialists, college mentors, expanded postsecondary college courses during high school, and additional transportation funding and training. This model includes a quasi-experimental design. (<https://vocrehab.vermont.gov/linking-learning-careers-llc>)
- *The Massachusetts Transition Pathway Services* project provides a coordinated set of services to improve career and academic planning skills so that high school students with disabilities will be successful in achieving competitive integrated employment and post-secondary outcomes upon completion of their secondary education. The project and its community partners, including more than a dozen local education agencies, are providing work-based learning experiences and a menu of services to students. Through a person-centered collaborative team-based approach, students' career goals will be thoughtfully planned and supported. The model includes a quasi-experimental design. (<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/transition-pathway-services>)
- *Maine's Transition Work-Based Learning Model* project is partnering with Jobs for Maine Graduates (JMG), the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston, American Institutes for Research, and the Council for Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation to evaluate two innovative interventions using a progressive employment model. The project plans to expand employer relationships and align its dual customer

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community-based strategy with enhanced JMG programs for students with disabilities. The model includes a quasi-experimental design. (<https://www.explorevr.org/progressive-employment-maine-transition-work-based-learning-model>)

- The *California Career Innovations* project incorporates a career-relevant focus in the attainment of competitive integrated employment (CIE) and post-secondary education for students with disabilities with the goal of increasing economic self-sufficiency, work-based learning experiences, and CIE for students with disabilities. The program provides paid and volunteer career-focused work experiences in four California regions to help students with disabilities gain entrance into post-secondary education and/or competitive integrated employment. The program also includes basic life skills training to assist with job readiness, such as computer literacy, and organization and communication skills. The model includes a randomized control design. (<https://www.ci-california.org>)

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these projects had to pivot from face-to-face work-based learning experiences to virtual work-based learning experiences, which required additional staff time and resources. To help offset these costs, the Department is providing three of the projects with a total of \$59,000 in supplemental funding in fiscal year 2021 from the unobligated fiscal year 2020 VR funds, which can be used to complete the final performance and financial reports, thereby allowing the three grantees additional time and resources to carry out the work of the grants.

Career Advancement Initiative Model Demonstration Project

In fiscal year 2021, VR funds remaining from the 2020 appropriation will be used to award 5-year grants to fund a multi-site model demonstration project designed to assist State VR agencies, in partnership with other entities—such as employers, community colleges and postsecondary institutions, entities that make up the workforce development systems, entities that provide apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships, comprehensive rehabilitation centers, local or State educational agencies, and providers or other Federal or State agencies—to develop career pathways that are aimed at helping individuals with disabilities advance in their careers or change to high-demand, high-quality careers. Projects funded under this competition will help VR-eligible individuals with disabilities, including previously served VR participants in employment who re-enter the VR program, to:

- Advance in high-demand, high-quality careers such as science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields, including computer science;
- Enter career pathways in industry-driven sectors through pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeship programs;
- Improve and maximize competitive integrated employment outcomes, economic self-sufficiency, independence, and inclusion in society; and
- Reduce reliance on public benefits (e.g., Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), and/or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and State or local benefits).

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

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(dollars in thousands)

FY 2022 Authorization: 0¹

Budget Authority:

	2021	2022	Change from
	<u>Appropriation</u>	<u>Request</u>	<u>2021 to 2022</u>
	\$13,000	\$13,000	0

¹ The GEPA extension expires September 30, 2021; continued funding is proposed for this program in fiscal year 2022 through appropriations language.

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). CAP focuses on promoting understanding of the rehabilitation services and benefits available under the Act, and advising eligible individuals of their rights and responsibilities in connection with those benefits. The program also offers eligible individuals and applicants a variety of other kinds of assistance, including individual or systemic advocacy, pursuit of legal and administrative remedies, and assistance and advocacy in pursuing legal and administrative remedies to ensure the protection of their rights. State VR agencies must operate a CAP in order to receive VR State grant funds, and are required to inform VR consumers about the services available from the CAP and how to contact the CAP.

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 such services under the Act. If one of these “grandfathered” agencies should be restructured, the Governor is required to re-designate the CAP to an agency that does not provide services under the Act. Currently 42 CAPs are operated by independent private or non-profit organizations, 8 are operated by external State agencies, and 7 are operated by the State VR agency.

Allocations are based on population (using the most recent estimates published by the U.S. Census Bureau), 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 Department to increase the minimum allotments for States and outlying areas by an amount not greater than the percentage increase in the appropriation.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act also requires that funds be set aside under this program for two activities before awarding grants to eligible States and outlying areas with the

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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 rises to at least \$14 million, the Department 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. The Department currently provides such technical assistance to CAPs through the Rehabilitation Training program.

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

Fiscal Year	(dollars in thousands)
2017	\$13,000
2018	13,000
2019	13,000
2020	13,000
2021	13,000

FY 2022 BUDGET REQUEST

For fiscal year 2022, the Administration requests \$13 million for CAP, level with the fiscal year 2021 appropriation. CAPs promote understanding of the rehabilitation services and benefits available under the Rehabilitation Act and advise applicants and individuals who have been determined eligible for such services of their rights and responsibilities. The request will help ensure that individuals with disabilities who are applying for or receiving services funded under the Rehabilitation Act receive appropriate services and have access to administrative, legal, and other appropriate remedies needed to protect their rights.

Data collected by the Department's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) for fiscal year 2020 from the most recently available RSA Annual Client Assistance Program Report (RSA-227) show that, nationwide, CAPs responded to 18,681 requests for information and referral (I&R). While the average number of I&R requests that States responded to was 328, the median number was 60 because of the significant range in the number of I&R requests reported by CAPs. Approximately 35 percent of all I&R requests were for information regarding the VR program. The remaining requests were in reference to independent living programs, the Americans with Disabilities Act, CAP, and other related programs.

In addition, CAPs provided extensive services, such as assisting and advocating on behalf of a client, to 3,533 individuals in fiscal year 2020. Approximately 94 percent of the cases in which extensive services were provided by the CAP involved applicants for, or recipients of, services from the VR program who needed assistance related to the VR process or delivery of VR services. Of the 2,840 cases closed in fiscal year 2020, 1,194 cases (or 42 percent) were resolved by explaining the controlling policies to the individual; 547 cases (19 percent) resulted in the development or implementation of an individualized plan for employment (IPE); and 431 cases (15 percent) resulted in the reestablishment of communication between the individuals and other parties. The remaining closed cases focused on outcomes such as completing an application for services, expediting an eligibility determination, helping the individual participate in evaluation, assigning a new counselor or office to the individual, identifying alternative

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resources for the individual, or filing a complaint. Of the cases closed, 79 percent were resolved in the individual's favor.

Specific examples of CAP activities are described below. Funds requested in fiscal year 2022 would support similar activities.

- In Illinois, a client had participated in a Division of Rehabilitative Services-supported high school transition program and was ready to transition to adult VR services. However, the VR counselor discouraged the legal guardian and client from pursuing VR services due to the client's significant disabilities. The legal guardian and client contacted CAP. CAP investigated the complaint and contacted the VR counselor to discuss the parent's concerns and explore types of VR services from which the client could benefit. As a result of the discussion, the VR counselor scheduled a meeting with the legal guardian and client and determined the client would be a good fit for customized employment. The customer was found eligible for VR services and an IPE was developed. The client was referred to a community rehabilitation provider for services and is currently working towards employment.
- In New Jersey, CAP intervened on behalf of a 28-year-old female diagnosed with a hearing impairment. The client contacted CAP and reported experiencing significant difficulties accessing a range of VR services, including communication technology, vocational training, and supported employment services. CAP investigated the concerns reported by reviewing documentation and attending meetings with the client at the VR agency. Despite CAP's advocacy, the VR agency continued to delay the provision of appropriate services. Based on these delays, CAP represented the client at an administrative review. As a result of the administrative review, the VR agency agreed to provide the client with a specialized assessment to determine technological communication needs and sponsor the client to attend a computer training course. The VR agency also agreed to provide the client with job search services after she completed computer training.

PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

<u>Output Measures</u>	<u>2020</u> ¹	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
Information inquiries/referrals	18,681	30,200	30,200
Individuals provided case services	3,533	4,300	4,300

NOTE: Data for fiscal years 2021 and 2022 are projected from actual final data reported for fiscal years 2016 through 2020 on requests for information and the provision of extensive service through the RSA Annual Client Assistance Program Report (RSA-227).

¹The number of inquiries and referrals dropped significantly from 28,709 in 2019 to 18,681 in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, the number of individuals provided case services declined from 4,359 in 2019 to 3,533 in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these declines, the Department expects the number of inquiries and referrals, and individuals provided case services, to return to more typical levels in coming years.

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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. Achievement of program results is based on the cumulative effect of the resources provided in previous years, and those requested in fiscal year 2022 and future years, as well as the resources and efforts invested by those served by this program. The Department will be reviewing GPRA program performance goals, objectives, and measures for Client assistance State grants for possible revision in future years to ensure alignment with Administration policy.

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
2017	74%	63%
2018	72	72
2019	68	65
2020	68	
2021	68	
2022	73	

Additional information: While performance on this measure was trending downward from fiscal year 2014 through 2017, the Department learned that some CAPs were using a higher reporting standard than necessary. The Department has provided technical assistance to grantees to ensure that the reporting standards are being implemented consistently across CAPs. As a result of the technical assistance and an increased focus on relationship-building and outreach among CAPs and VR agencies, we expect that performance on this measure will improve over time.

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Objective: *Resolve cases at lowest possible level.*

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

Year	Target	Actual
2017	98%	98%
2018	98	98
2019	98	98
2020	98	
2021	98	
2022	98	

Additional information: The percentage of cases being resolved through the use of ADR strategies, such as technical assistance, negotiation and mediation, has consistently ranged from about 97 to 99 percent. The use of such intervention strategies to resolve consumer complaints reduces the need for lengthy and costly interventions such as formal hearings and litigation.

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Training

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

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2022 Authorization: 0¹

Budget Authority:

	2021	2022	Change from
	<u>Appropriation</u>	<u>Request</u>	<u>2021 to 2022</u>
	\$29,388	\$29,388	0

¹ The GEPA extension expires September 30, 2021; continued funding is proposed for this program in fiscal year 2022 through appropriations language.

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 other vocational rehabilitation (VR) 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 (IHEs), to pay all or part of the cost of conducting training programs.

Awards may be made in any of 30 rehabilitation long-term training fields, in addition to awards for rehabilitation short-term training, innovative rehabilitation 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.

The rehabilitation long-term training program supports academic training grants that must direct at least 65 percent of the funds to trainee scholarships, which may include student stipends, tuition and fees, books and supplies, and student travel in conjunction with training assignments. Students who receive financial assistance from projects funded under the program are required to either work in public or private non-profit rehabilitation agencies for a period of time after they complete their training or repay the cost of their training.

The rehabilitation short-term training program supports special seminars, institutes, workshops, and other short-term courses in technical matters relating to the vocational, medical, social, and psychological rehabilitation programs, supported employment programs, independent living services programs, and client assistance programs. These training projects may be of regional or national scope. In contrast, the innovative rehabilitation training program supports grants that develop new types of training programs or new and improved methods of training for rehabilitation personnel, and demonstrate the effectiveness of such training programs. This program supports time-limited pilot projects through which new types of rehabilitation workers

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Training

may be trained or through which innovative methods of training rehabilitation personnel may be demonstrated.

The training of interpreters program supports interpreter training programs and provides financial assistance to establish interpreter training programs or for ongoing interpreter programs to train a sufficient number of qualified interpreters throughout the country in order to meet the communication needs of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and individuals who are deaf-blind. The program focuses on training interpreters to effectively interpret and transliterate between spoken language and sign language and to transliterate between spoken language and oral or tactile modes of communication, as well as maintaining and improving the skills of qualified interpreters.

Awards may also be made for technical assistance centers. These awards are made to pay part of the costs of projects that provide State VR agency personnel with training and technical assistance designed to assist in increasing the numbers of, and upgrading the skills of qualified personnel, including rehabilitation counselors. The National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials is contracted to establish a central clearinghouse for information and resource availability for individuals with disabilities.

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

Fiscal Year	(dollars in thousands)
2017.....	\$29,388
2018.....	29,388
2019.....	29,388
2020.....	29,388
2021.....	29,388

FY 2022 BUDGET REQUEST

For fiscal year 2022, the Administration requests \$29.4 million for the Training program, level with the fiscal year 2021 appropriation. In fiscal year 2022, approximately \$28.1 million would be used to support continuation awards, approximately \$1.0 million would be used to support contracts, and \$294,000 would be used for the Traditionally underserved populations program under section 21 of the Rehabilitation Act.

The Training program supports projects that provide training to new VR staff or upgrade the qualifications of existing staff. In recent years, in response to dramatic turnover at State VR agencies created by the retirement of a large number of qualified counselors, the Department has targeted funding for long-term training (LTT) programs on training new counselors. Similar shortages, though not as severe, have also been affecting other VR providers. The Department believes that the LTT program, in concert with the Innovative Training program, which is designed to develop new types of training programs and new and improved methods of training rehabilitation personnel, are the best mechanisms for recruiting new graduates into the rehabilitation field and ensuring they have access to the most effective training.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Training

The Department plans to award approximately \$15.5 million in continuation LTT grants, \$3.4 million in continuation Innovative Training grants, and \$442,000 in new contracts to support this work in fiscal year 2022.

The Rehabilitation Act requires the Department to reserve 1 percent of the funds appropriated under the Training, Demonstration and training, Supported employment, and Independent living services for older blind individuals programs for the Traditionally underserved populations program (section 21 of the Rehabilitation Act). The request includes \$294,000 to meet this requirement. These funds will be used to support continuation costs for a Capacity Building Center focused on improving the delivery of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to, and the employment outcomes of, individuals of color with disabilities by providing cultural competency training to VR leadership and staff, collecting and analyzing relevant data, and disseminating evidence-based practices.

PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

(dollars in thousands)

<u>Output Measures</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
Program Funding:			
Long-Term Training:			
New awards	\$5,617 ¹	0	\$442
Continuation awards	<u>9,258</u>	<u>\$15,624</u>	<u>15,502</u>
Subtotal	14,875	15,624	15,944
Technical Assistance:			
New awards	6,000	0	0
Continuation awards	<u>0</u>	<u>6,000</u>	<u>6,000</u>
Subtotal	6,000	6,000	6,000
Short-Term Training:			
New awards	0	347	0
Continuation awards	<u>200</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>308</u>
Subtotal	200	347	308

¹ An additional \$744 thousand of traditionally underserved populations (section 21 of the Rehabilitation Act) funding was also used toward new LTT awards, for a total of \$6,361 thousand used for new LTT awards in FY 2020.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Training

<u>Output Measures</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
Training for Interpreters for Individuals who are Deaf and Deaf-Blind:			
New awards	0	3,300	0
Continuation awards	<u>2,400</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2,850</u>
Subtotal	2,400	3,300	2,850
Innovative Rehabilitation Training:			
New awards	720	0	0
Continuation awards	<u>4,409</u>	<u>3,049</u>	<u>3,392</u>
Subtotal	5,129	3,049	3,392
National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials:			
New awards	0	761	0
Continuation awards	<u>454</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>600</u>
Subtotal	454	761	600
Other Activities:			
Peer review of new award applications	\$37	\$13	0
Traditionally underserved populations	<u>293</u>	<u>294</u>	<u>\$294</u>
Subtotal	330	307	294
Program Totals:			
New awards	12,337	4,408	442
Continuation awards	16,721	24,673	28,652
Other Activities	<u>330</u>	<u>307</u>	<u>294</u>
Total	29,388	29,388	29,388

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Performance Measures

This section presents selected program performance information, including, for example, GPRA goals, objectives, measures, and performance targets and data. Achievement of program results is based on the cumulative effect of the resources provided in previous years, and those requested in fiscal year 2022 and future years, as well as the resources and efforts invested by those served by this program. The Department will be reviewing GPRA program performance goals, objectives, and measures for Training for possible revision in future years to ensure alignment with Administration policy.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Training

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

Measure: The percentage of Master's level counseling graduates fulfilling their payback requirements through employment in State vocational rehabilitation agencies.

Year	Target	Actual
2017	45%	29%
2018	45	36
2019	40	35
2020	40	39
2021	40	
2022	40	

Measure: The percentage of Master's level counseling graduates fulfilling their payback requirements through qualifying employment.

Year	Target	Actual
2017	85%	71%
2018	85	88
2019	85	94
2020	85	88
2021	85	
2022	85	

Additional Information: Qualifying employment includes employment in a State vocational rehabilitation agency or related agency in the field of study for which the training was received.

Efficiency Measures

Measure: The Federal cost per Master's level RSA-supported rehabilitation counseling graduate.

Year	Target	Actual
2017	\$24,000	\$48,823
2018	24,000	---
2019	24,000	\$36,771
2020	24,000	\$41,780
2021	24,000	
2022	24,000	

Additional Information: This measure is calculated for individual cohorts of grantees by dividing the total funding given to each grant over the life of the grant by the number of Master's

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Training

level scholars who successfully completed funded training programs ending in that year. Only those grants with at least 90 percent of the scholars in a Master's program are included. One grant with only five completers closed in fiscal year 2017, leading to the high Federal cost per RSA-supported graduate in fiscal year 2017. No grants closed in fiscal year 2018 so no data are available for fiscal year 2018. The fiscal year 2019 data includes 47 closed grants with 1,101 completers. The fiscal year 2020 data includes 45 closed grants with 993 completers.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Demonstration and training programs

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

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2022 Authorization: 0¹

Budget Authority:

	2021	2022	Change from
	<u>Appropriation</u>	<u>Request</u>	<u>2021 to 2022</u>
	\$5,796	\$40,796	+\$35,000

¹ The GEPA extension expires September 30, 2021; continued funding is proposed for this program in fiscal year 2022 through appropriations language.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Demonstration and Training programs are designed to provide competitive grants to, or enter into contracts with, eligible entities to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation (VR) and other services authorized under the Rehabilitation Act (the Act), or to further the purposes of the Act by supporting activities that increase the provision, extent, availability, scope, and quality of rehabilitation services under the Act, including related research and evaluation activities.

Specific activities include:

- Section 303(b) of the Act authorizes activities to demonstrate methods of service delivery to individuals with disabilities, as well as activities such as technical assistance, systems change, studies and evaluation, and dissemination and utilization of project findings. Eligible entities include State 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.
- Section 303(c) of the Act authorizes a parent information and training program to enable individuals with disabilities and their parents, family members, guardians, advocates, or other authorized representatives to participate more effectively with professionals in meeting the vocational, independent living, and rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities.
- Section 303(d) of the Act authorizes a Braille training program to support the cost of training in the use of braille for personnel providing vocational rehabilitation services or educational services to youth and adults who are blind.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Demonstration and training programs

Funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years were:

Fiscal Year	(dollars in thousands)
2017	\$5,796
2018	5,796
2019	5,796
2020	5,796
2021	5,796

FY 2022 BUDGET REQUEST

The Administration requests \$40.8 million for the Demonstration and Training programs, \$35.0 million more than the fiscal year 2021 appropriation to support new model demonstration projects and related technical assistance, and to provide supplemental funding for the Parent Information and Training program.

Approximately \$31.3 million of the funding increase would be used to support model demonstration projects and technical assistance focused on supporting consumers to transition from subminimum wage employment and education to competitive integrated employment (CIE). Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, which allows for subminimum wage certificates for employers, was written prior to modern disability rights, civil rights, and workforce laws. Disability rights laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities and promote full participation in employment and community life.¹ The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) include provisions focused on employment in integrated settings and competitive wages for individuals with disabilities.² The United States Civil Rights Commission Report, *Subminimum Wages: Impacts on the Civil Rights of People with Disabilities*, strongly supports transitioning individuals with disabilities from subminimum wage employment to CIE, and recommends increased funding to help facilitate a smooth transition and to reduce barriers.³ In alignment with these findings, this funding will support opportunities for individuals with disabilities to achieve CIE and address barriers to serving all individuals with disabilities in the program.

Approximately \$3.3 million of the funding increase would be used to supplement funding for the National Parent Training and Information Center (National PTI), as well as its eight Regional Parent Training and Information Centers (Regional PTIs). Prior to fiscal year 2020, 10 States received services through RSA's PTI funding. Beginning in fiscal year 2020, RSA shifted to a regional model to provide services in all states. Based on the existing funding level, each of these centers receives approximately \$300,000 annually, for a total of \$2.7 million invested annually in the National Center and regional centers. This increase would provide the National PTI with approximately \$400,000 in supplemental funding to provide much needed guidance, support, and coordination to the Regional PTIs, including critical support needed as a result of

¹ 42 U.S.C. 12101(b)

² Section 7(5) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. § 705(5)) and 29 U.S.C. § 701(b)(2)

³ <https://www.usccr.gov/files/2020-09-17-Subminimum-Wages-Report.pdf>

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Demonstration and training programs

the COVID-19 pandemic. This increase would also provide the Regional PTIs with approximately \$2.9 million in supplemental funding to substantially increase collaboration among the Regional PTIs, develop new materials, and provide significantly more support to consumers in their regions, including those who were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Rehabilitation Act requires the Department to reserve 1 percent of the funds appropriated under the Training, Demonstration and training, Supported employment, and Independent living services for older blind individuals programs for the Traditionally underserved populations program (section 21 of the Rehabilitation Act). Approximately \$350,000 of the funding increase would be used to cover the related increase to meet this requirement, for a total contribution of \$408,000 from the Demonstration and training programs.

Approximately \$3.5 million of funding would be used for continuation awards for the Braille Training program and the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition, and supporting evaluation activities for two technical assistance centers focused on improving outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

(dollars in thousands)

<u>Output measures</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
Program funding:			
Model demonstrations			
New awards	0	0	\$31,329
Continuation awards	0	0	0
Technical assistance			
New awards	\$2,689 ¹	0	0
Continuation awards	0	\$2,689	2,689
Braille training			
New awards	0	0	0
Continuation awards	342	342	342
Parent information and training			
New awards	2,700	0	0
Continuation awards	0	2,707	2,707
Supplemental awards	0	0	3,300

¹ The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition is jointly funded with the Office of Special Education programs.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

<u>Output measures</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
Peer review of new award applications	7	0	21
Traditionally underserved populations	<u>58</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>408</u>
Total, Program funding	5,796	5,796	40,796
Number of awards:			
New awards	12	0	10
Continuation awards	<u>3</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>15</u>
Total, Number of awards	15	15	25

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Performance Measures

This section presents selected program performance information, including, for example, GPRA goals, objectives, measures, and performance targets and data. Achievement of program results is based on the cumulative effect of the resources provided in previous years, and those requested in fiscal year 2022 and future years, as well as the resources and efforts invested by those served by this program. The Department will be reviewing GPRA program performance goals, objectives, and measures for Demonstration and training programs for possible revision in future years to ensure alignment with Administration policy.

In prior years, approximately 60 percent of the funds provided for the Demonstration and Training program were used to support model demonstration projects; therefore, the Department's GPRA measures for this program focused on these projects. With the shift from model demonstration projects to providing more robust support for the Parent Information and Training (PTI) programs and the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT), the Department is proposing new performance measures that more accurately reflect the impact of the bulk of the Demonstration and Training program funds. Fiscal year 2020 is the last year the Department will report on the current performance measures. Beginning with fiscal year 2021, the Department will report on the new performance measures.

Vocational Rehabilitation Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities (CPID) Demonstration Projects

Goal: To develop replicable promising practices in the use of career pathways by VR State agencies to assist eligible individuals with disabilities, including youth with disabilities, to acquire marketable skills and recognized postsecondary credentials, and thus secure competitive integrated employment in high-demand, high-quality occupations.

***Objective:** Increase the number of career pathways accessible to individuals with disabilities, the number of individuals who obtain competitive employment through those career pathways, and the weekly earnings and benefits of those who obtain competitive employment through CPID-funded activities.*

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Demonstration and training programs

Measure: The total number of distinct career pathways accessed or created through CPID.

Year	Target	Actual
2017	72	78
2018	114	103
2019	121	107
2020	131	111

Measure: The total number of VR-eligible individuals who achieve competitive integrated employment through CPID-accessed or created career pathways.

Year	Target	Actual
2017	50	70
2018	150	201
2019	200	277
2020	250	292

Measure: The average weekly wages of VR-eligible CPID participants who obtained competitive integrated employment.

Year	Target	Actual
2017	\$600	\$543
2018	600	650
2019	630	680
2020	680	685

Other VR-CPID Measures

VR-CPID grantees reported on two additional measures: (1) the numbers of competitive integrated employment and employer-provided benefits obtained by CPID participants compared to those obtained by VR consumers in their State outside of CPID; (2) the average weekly earnings of CPID participants who obtained competitive integrated employment compared to the average weekly earnings of VR consumers in their State who obtained competitive integrated employment outside of the CPID project. All four grantees reported higher results for CPID participants compared to non-CPID participants on both measures.

New Performance Measures

National Technical Assistance Center on Transition

Goal: To increase the number of students with disabilities who receive the VR services needed to prepare them for competitive integrated employment.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Demonstration and training programs

Objective: *To provide VR State agencies with training and technical assistance that ensures that staff are well-trained in providing services for students with disabilities that lead to competitive integrated employment.*

Measure: Of VR agencies that receive targeted and/or intensive technical assistance from NTACT, the percentage that show an increase in the percentage of potentially eligible students receiving pre-employment transition services.

Measure: Of VR agencies that receive targeted and/or intensive technical assistance NTACT, the percentage that show an increase in the percentage of potentially eligible students who become VR program participants.

Measure: Of the VR agencies that receive TA from NTACT to strengthen their SEA agreements, the percentage of those VR agencies that show an increase in the percentage of students with disabilities who receive VR services.

Parent Information and Training Programs

Goal: **To ensure that individuals with disabilities and their families have the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively advocate for vocational, independent living, and other rehabilitation needs.**

Objective: *Individuals with disabilities and their families who are served by the Rehabilitation Services Parent Information Centers will be knowledgeable about their rights and available services.*

Measure: The percentage of individuals with disabilities and their families receiving PTI services who report enhanced knowledge and understanding of VR services.

Objective: *Improve the quality of parent training and information products and services.*

Measure: The percentage of all products and services developed to improve VR service utilization deemed to be useful by individuals with disabilities and their families receiving PTI services.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Protection and advocacy of individual rights

(Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title V, Section 509)

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2022 Authorization: 0¹

Budget Authority:

	2021	2022	Change from
	<u>Appropriation</u>	<u>Request</u>	<u>2021 to 2022</u>
	\$18,150	\$18,150	0

¹ The GEPA extension expires September 30, 2021; continued funding is proposed for this program in fiscal year 2022 through appropriations language.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Protection and Advocacy of Individual Rights (PAIR) program supports statewide systems that provide assistance and information to eligible individuals with disabilities and conduct advocacy to ensure the protection of their rights under Federal law. These systems 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. 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.

The program also requires the Department to reserve 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 Department 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. Remaining funds are allocated to eligible systems within the States and outlying areas based on population estimates (using the most recent estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau).

The Rehabilitation Act establishes a minimum allotment of \$100,000 for States, or one-third of 1 percent of funds remaining after the technical assistance set-side 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:

Fiscal Year	(dollars in thousands)
2017	\$17,650
2018	17,650
2019	17,650
2020	17,650
2021	18,150

FY 2022 BUDGET REQUEST

For fiscal year 2022, the Administration requests \$18.2 million for the PAIR program, level with the fiscal year 2021 appropriation, to help provide information and P&A services to over 39,000 individuals with disabilities in fiscal year 2022. The Department plans to reserve 1.8 percent of the funds requested (\$326,700) to provide training and technical assistance to eligible statewide systems established under this program, as required by the authorizing statute.

During fiscal year 2020, PAIR programs nationwide reported handling 9,428 cases and responded to 24,665 requests for information or referral. Of the individual cases handled by PAIR programs in that year, most were related to housing (17 percent), employment (16 percent), and education (15 percent). The most frequent primary disability categories (i.e., the ones directly related to the issues/complaints raised) reported for such individuals were orthopedic impairments (24 percent), neurological impairments (15 percent), and other disabilities (11 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 2020, 42 out of the 57 PAIR programs (74 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 2020 illustrate how PAIR programs assist individuals and, in some cases, bring about systemic change. Funds requested in fiscal year 2022 would support similar activities.

- Disability Law Colorado (DLC) received multiple reports of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients with disabilities who were unable to get groceries delivered during the COVID-19 pandemic. Adults with disabilities are three times more likely than adults without disabilities to have heart disease, diabetes, cancer, or a stroke, placing them at greater risk once they contract COVID-19. They may also experience mobility issues, making it more difficult for them to physically distance themselves from others. Through some research and discussions with the state, DLC learned that Colorado was not approved for grocery delivery under the SNAP. DLC and its partners then successfully advocated for the admission of Colorado to participate in the SNAP Online Purchasing Pilot, which permits the use of SNAP benefits on grocery delivery.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Protection and advocacy of individual rights

- The Minnesota Disability Law Center (MDLC) represented four clients who are deaf in a discrimination lawsuit against the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC), which addressed several different communication barriers in Minnesota prisons. A fifth plaintiff was represented by a private attorney who was co-counsel with MDLC on the case. Four of the plaintiffs were prisoners held in Minnesota prisons. The other plaintiff, who is deaf, is partnered with one of the prisoners and was not able to effectively communicate with her partner while he was in prison.

The plaintiffs encountered several communication barriers in the prisons, including unequal and ineffective access to the following programs and services provided by the DOC to prisoners who are hearing: telephone service (No Videophone and malfunctioning TTY); confidential communication with attorneys; educational and therapeutic programs (frequent lack of interpreters); educational and recreational programming on tablets made available to prisoners (no captioning for the programs); and prison announcements (made using the PA system—pagers were ineffective because guards did not make announcements on the pagers).

The DOC agreed to settle the client’s complaint after extensive pre-trial discovery. The settlement agreement requires the Department to take appropriate actions to remedy the situation and provide equal access to programs and services the DOC provides for prisoners who are hearing. The DOC also paid statutory attorney’s fees to the MDLC. The settlement of this case will benefit all current and future prisoners who are deaf in the Minnesota prison system.

PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

<u>Output Measures</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
Information inquiries/referrals	24,665	29,500	29,500
Individuals provided case services	9,428	9,500	9,500

NOTE: Output data for 2022 are projected from actual data reported by PAIRs for fiscal years 2018, 2019, and 2020 on the number of requests for information and provision of case services to individuals with disabilities.

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Performance Measures

This section presents selected program performance information, including, for example, GPRA goals, objectives, measures, and performance targets and data. Achievement of program results is based on the cumulative effect of the resources provided in previous years, and those requested in fiscal year 2022 and future years, as well as the resources and efforts invested by those served by this program. The Department will be reviewing GPRA program performance

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Protection and advocacy of individual rights

goals, objectives, and measures for the PAIR program for possible revision in future years to ensure alignment with Administration policy.

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

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

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

Year	Target	Actual
2017	91%	89%
2018	89	77
2019	89	95
2020	89	74
2021	89	
2022	89	

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. Based on a review of past data and other program information, RSA has reduced the targets in fiscal year 2018 and beyond to 89 percent (51 of 57 PAIR programs).

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Supported employment State grants

(Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VI)

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2022 Authorization: 0¹

Budget Authority:

	2021	2022	Change from
	<u>Appropriation</u>	<u>Request</u>	<u>2021 to 2022</u>
	\$22,548	\$22,548	0

¹ The GEPA extension expires September 30, 2021; continued funding is proposed for this program in fiscal year 2022 through appropriations language.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Supported Employment (SE) State Grants program assists States in developing collaborative programs with appropriate public and private non-profit organizations to provide supported employment services for individuals with the most significant disabilities. More specifically, the program provides formula-based supplemental funding to State vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies to assist VR consumers with the most significant disabilities in achieving the employment outcome of supported employment.

Supported employment uses a “place-train” model in which individuals with the most significant disabilities are placed in a job and provided intensive services and supports. These services are typically provided by a job coach in conjunction with supports provided by the employer to train the individual on the job site, followed by extended services after the individual’s ability to perform the job with support has stabilized. These services and supports enable individuals with the most significant disabilities who, because of the nature and severity of their disability, need ongoing support to engage in and maintain competitive integrated employment.

An individual’s potential for supported employment must be considered as part of the assessment to determine if an individual is eligible for the Title I VR State Grants program. VR funds are used to pay the costs associated with assessment and the determination of eligibility, as well as other needed VR services prior to placement in supported employment. Ongoing services are provided by the VR agency, using funds under the SE State Grants program and/or the VR State Grants program, from the time of job placement until the transition to extended services, and thereafter by one or more extended services providers. A State VR agency may support an individual’s supported employment services solely with VR State grant funds, or it may support these services in whole or in part with funds under the SE State Grants program.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Supported employment State grants

In addition, States are required to use one-half of their SE program funding allotment to provide supported employment and extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities and to provide a state dollar match of 10 percent for the SE allotment portion used to serve such youth.

Supported employment funds are distributed on the basis of population, using the most recent estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, with no State receiving less than \$300,000, or one-third of 1 percent of the amount appropriated, whichever is greater. The minimum allotment for territories remains one-eighth of 1 percent of the appropriation.

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

Fiscal Year	(dollars in thousands)
2017	\$27,548
2018	22,548
2019	22,548
2020	22,548
2021	22,548

FY 2022 BUDGET REQUEST

For fiscal year 2022, the Administration requests \$22.5 million for SE State Grants, level with the fiscal year 2021 appropriation, to continue to provide a dedicated source of funding for supported employment services, including additional support for services to youth with disabilities.

When the SE State Grants program was first authorized in 1986, supported employment was a new promising practice in employing individuals who traditionally would not have achieved employment in the integrated labor market, and the program provided a critical incentive for State VR agencies to adopt this practice. State VR agencies now recognize supported employment as a viable employment option for individuals with the most significant disabilities, and an individual's potential for supported employment must be considered as part of the assessment to determine if an individual is eligible for the Title I VR State Grants program.

One issue of concern is that States have struggled to meet the requirement to use one-half of their SE allocations—along with a 10 percent state dollar match—to provide supported employment and extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, as required by the amendments to Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act made by WIOA.

The challenges of meeting these requirements are demonstrated by recent SE State grant expenditure patterns. In fiscal year 2020, 23 grantees did not provide any matching funds for their SE grant awards, and 14 grantees had failed to spend any of their fiscal year 2020 SE funds as of May 5, 2021. Additionally, States relinquished more than \$1.2 million in SE funds during the fiscal year 2020 reallocation period. Furthermore, these data do not include agencies that may have only partially matched their award, agencies that may have already spent funds they provided no match for, or any SE State grant funds that should have been relinquished

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Supported employment State grants

based on the State's plans to not use the funds. Funds that are not expended or relinquished for reallocation are lost to the program and return to the Treasury.

For these reasons, the Department will be exploring, in consultation with Congress, potential reforms to the program to address these challenges while ensuring that States continue to provide this critical option for services for individuals and youth with the most significant disabilities.

The Rehabilitation Act requires the Department to reserve 1 percent of the funds appropriated under the Training, Demonstration and training, Supported employment, and Independent living services for older blind individuals programs for the Traditionally underserved populations program (section 21 of the Rehabilitation Act). The request includes \$225,000 to meet this requirement. These funds will be used to support continuation costs for a Capacity Building Center focused on improving the delivery of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to, and the employment outcomes of, individuals of color with disabilities by providing cultural competency training to VR leadership and staff, collecting and analyzing relevant data, and disseminating evidence-based practices.

PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

(dollars in thousands)

<u>Output Measures</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
Individuals with a supported employment Individualized Plan for Employment goal when they exited the program	43,262	40,000	40,000
Employment outcomes:	19,275 ¹	18,000 ¹	18,000 ¹
Supported employment outcomes	12,940 ²	12,000 ²	12,000 ²
Employment without supports in an integrated setting	6,290 ³	5,950 ³	5,950 ³
Other employment outcomes	45 ⁴	50 ⁴	50 ⁴
Traditionally underserved populations	\$225	\$225	\$225

¹ Includes employment outcomes for all VR consumers funded with both VR and SE State Grants who had a supported employment goal at exit.

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

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

⁴ Of the individuals who had a supported employment goal at exit, the number who met the employment outcome criteria for the VR State Grants program who were either self-employed or employed in a Business Enterprise Program.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Supported employment State grants

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Performance Measures

This section presents selected program performance information, including, for example, GPRA goals, objectives, measures, and performance targets and data. Achievement of program results is based on the cumulative effect of the resources provided for the program and the VR State grants program in previous years, and those requested in fiscal year 2022 and future years, as well as the resources and efforts invested by those served by this program. The Department will be reviewing GPRA program performance goals, objectives, and measures for Supported employment State grants for possible revision in future years to ensure alignment with Administration policy.

Data reported for these measures include outcomes for individuals who received supported employment services and exited the VR program with a supported employment outcome in competitive integrated employment, whether such services were paid for with VR State Grants or SE State Grants. Consequently, the measures do not permit independent assessment of the performance of the SE State Grants program.

The Department has established three new performance measures, including two measures that mirror the WIOA performance indicators, to replace the current performance measures. The new measures are designed to more effectively assess the role of supported employment services in the outcomes that participants with the most significant disabilities achieve.

Performance data beginning in 2018 are based on data collected under the RSA-911 by program years (i.e., 2018 is based on data from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019).

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.*

Measure: Of those individuals with most significant disabilities who had a supported employment goal and achieved an employment outcome, the percentage who exited with

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Supported employment State grants

competitive employment, including individuals who receive supported employment services funded under the VR State Grants program and/or the SE State Grants program.

Year	Target	Actual
2017	95.0%	97.3%
2018	96.0	99.8
2019	96.0	99.6
2020	99.0	99.9
2021	99.0	
2022		

Additional information: The Department has not established targets for program year 2022 because program year 2021 is the last year that the Department will report data on this measure.

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

Year	Target	Actual
2017	\$210	\$226
2018	215	230
2019	215	222
2020	222	244
2021	222	
2022		

Additional information: The data reported for this measure include data on all individuals who obtained a supported employment outcome with earnings. The average weekly earnings calculation does not include data for Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, or the Virgin Islands. The Department has not established targets for program year 2022 because program year 2021 is the last year that the Department will report data on this measure.

New Performance Measures

Program year 2020 results for all three measures will be available at the beginning of fiscal year 2022. The Department will report baseline data for program years 2020 and 2021 under the new measures in fiscal years 2022 and 2023.

Goal: Individuals with the most significant disabilities who receive supported employment services will achieve high-quality employment outcomes and continue to work following their exit from the program.

Objective: *Ensure that individuals with the most significant disabilities, who exit the VR program with supported employment outcomes in competitive integrated employment, will be capable of*

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Supported employment State grants

maintaining employment as a result of the supported employment services they received and that, consistent with their informed choice, they will have opportunities to maximize the number of hours they work each week.

Measure: Of those individuals who received supported employment services, the median hours worked per week at the time they exit from the program with supported employment outcomes in competitive integrated employment.

Measure: Of those individuals who received supported employment services, the percentage who were employed during the second quarter after exit from the program.

Measure: Of those individuals who received supported employment services, the percentage who were employed during the fourth quarter after exit from the program.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Independent living services for older blind individuals

(Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VII, Chapter 2)

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2022 Authorization: 0¹

Budget Authority:

	2021	2022	Change from
	<u>Appropriation</u>	<u>Request</u>	<u>2021 to 2022</u>
	\$33,317	\$33,317	0

¹ The GEPA extension expires September 30, 2021; continued funding is proposed for this program in fiscal year 2022 through appropriations language.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who Are Blind (ILOIB) program assists individuals aged 55 or older who have severe visual impairment making competitive employment extremely difficult to obtain, but for whom independent living goals are feasible. Funds are used to provide independent living services, improve or expand services for these individuals, and improve public understanding of the challenges they face. ILOIB services are designed to help eligible persons adjust to their blindness by increasing their ability to care for their individual needs. Services under this program are not typically covered under private insurance or Medicaid.

Grantees are State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies for persons who are blind and visually impaired or, in States with no separate agency for persons who are blind, State combined VR agencies. States participating in the ILOIB 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. Awards are distributed to States according to a formula based on the population of individuals who are 55 years of age or older (using the most recent estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau). The minimum allotment for each of the 50 States, D.C., and Puerto Rico is \$225,000, with each of the territories receiving a minimum allotment of \$40,000.

Independent living services are typically provided through contracts with local providers administered by State VR agencies. The services most frequently provided to program participants in fiscal year 2020 were technical aids and devices (provided to 54 percent of participants), daily living skills (52 percent) and low vision assessments (31 percent), with some participants receiving more than one service. These services allow older individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired to be more independent at home and in the community. Service providers are knowledgeable about blindness and other visual impairments, as well as the needs of older individuals with such impairments, including adaptive strategies that can assist these individuals to adjust to their impairments and increase their ability to function more independently.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Independent living for older blind individuals

The Department also reserves 1.8 percent of the funds appropriated to the ILOIB program, consistent with the requirements of WIOA, to provide training and technical assistance to Designated State Agencies or other providers of ILOIB services.

Funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years were:

Fiscal Year	(dollars in thousands)
2017	\$33,317
2018	33,317
2019	33,317
2020	33,317
2021	33,317

FY 2022 BUDGET REQUEST

For fiscal year 2022, the Administration requests \$33.3 million for the ILOIB program, level with the fiscal year 2021 appropriation. These funds will assist States in meeting the need for independent living services by older individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired. The Department would use nearly \$600,000 to provide training and technical assistance to ILOIB grantees and service providers.

In fiscal year 2020, 47,764 individuals received services under the ILOIB program, 49 percent of whom were over 80 years of age and about 81 percent of whom were still living in a private residence. Approximately 54 percent of these individuals were either legally blind or totally blind, and 20 percent also had some degree of hearing impairment. Macular degeneration continues to be the most commonly reported eye condition, followed by glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy.

The prevalence of disability increases with age, and the occurrence of a sensory disability is 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 as nearly 75 million Americans who make up the baby-boomer generation continue to age. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates), 6.0 percent of individuals 65 and older (about 3.2 million people) have a vision-related disability. In addition, the percentage of individuals who have a disability that affects their independent living status (including vision-related disabilities) increases with age, with a dramatic increase for individuals in the 75 years and over category, where 23.1 percent report having a disability that affects their independent living status.

The Rehabilitation Act requires the Department to reserve 1 percent of the funds appropriated under the Training, Demonstration and training, Supported employment, and Independent living services for older blind individuals programs for the Traditionally underserved populations program (section 21 of the Rehabilitation Act). The request includes \$333,000 to meet this requirement. These funds will be used to support continuation costs for a Capacity Building Center focused on improving the delivery of VR services to, and the employment outcomes of,

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Independent living for older blind individuals

individuals of color with disabilities by providing cultural competency training to VR leadership and staff, collecting and analyzing relevant data, and disseminating evidence-based practices.

PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

(dollars in thousands)

<u>Output Measures:</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
Minimum State award	\$225	\$225	\$225
Number of States at minimum	17	17	17
Average State award	\$620	\$620	\$620
Traditionally underserved populations	\$333	\$333	\$333
Training and technical assistance	\$600	\$600	\$600

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Performance Measures

This section presents selected program performance information, including, for example, GPRA goals, objectives, measures, and performance targets and data. Achievement of program results is based on the cumulative effect of the resources provided in previous years, and those requested in fiscal year 2022 and future years, as well as the resources and efforts invested by those served by this program. The Department will be reviewing GPRA program performance goals, objectives, and measures for Independent living for older blind individuals for possible revision in future years to ensure alignment with Administration policy.

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.*

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Independent living for older blind individuals

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

Year	Target	Actual
2017	57%	58%
2018	57	58
2019	58	57
2020	58	
2021		
2022		

Additional information: Data for 2020 are expected by summer of 2021. The Department has not established targets for fiscal years 2021 and 2022 because fiscal year 2020 is the last year that the Department will collect data on this measure.

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

Year	Target	Actual
2017	61%	60%
2018	61	65
2019	61	55
2020	61	
2021		
2022		

Additional information: Daily living skills include activities such as bathing, moving around the home, getting out of bed or a chair, and eating a meal. Data for 2020 are expected by summer of 2021. The Department has not established targets for fiscal years 2021 and 2022 because fiscal year 2020 is the last year that the Department will collect data on this measure.

New Performance Measures

Due to concerns about the precision of the current performance measures, the Department established five new performance measures designed to more accurately measure the performance of the ILOIB program. Grantees will report baseline data under the new measures beginning in fiscal year 2021 (using the revised RSA-7-OB data collection).

Objective: *To restore, improve, or maintain the independence of older individuals whose functional capabilities have been lost or diminished as a result of vision loss or blindness.*

Measure: The percentage of individuals receiving assistive technology devices and services who demonstrated improvement in one or more functional capabilities during the reported federal fiscal year consistent with the objectives for receiving such devices and services.

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Independent living for older blind individuals

Measure: The percentage of individuals receiving one or more independent living and adjustment training services who demonstrated improvement in functional capabilities during the reported federal fiscal year.

Measure: The percentage of individuals completing a plan of services who reported feeling that they are more confident in their ability to maintain their current living situation.

Measure: The percentage of individuals completing a plan of services who reported an increased ability to engage in their customary daily life activities in the home and community.

Objective: *To provide cost effective supports and services to increase the independence of older individuals who are blind so that they may remain in the community and to prevent or delay the need for an increasing level of care, particularly for those individuals who are at risk of entering institutions.*

Measure: The average annual cost per individual served through the program during the reported federal fiscal year.

Helen Keller National Center

(Helen Keller National Center Act)

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2022 Authorization: 0¹

Budget Authority:

	2021	2022	Change from
	<u>Appropriation</u>	<u>Request</u>	<u>2021 to 2022</u>
	\$17,000	\$18,500	+\$1,500

¹ The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2004; continued funding is proposed for this program in fiscal year 2022 through appropriations language.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults (HKNC) was created by Congress in 1967 and operates under the auspices of Helen Keller Services. The HKNC provides services on a national basis to youth and adults who are deaf-blind, their families, and service providers through on- and off-campus services, professional learning, and information on combined vision and hearing loss. HKNC's mission is to enable each person who is deaf-blind to live, work, and thrive in their community of choice. This includes having access to local resources for community living and employment opportunities.

HKNC provides direct services through a residential training facility at its national headquarters center (Center) located in Sands Point, New York, where deaf-blind individuals receive intensive specialized services. The Center provides comprehensive services for individuals with deaf-blindness to enhance their potential for employment and help them live independently in their home communities. The Center's residential programs provide consumers with an array of services, and supports, including adaptive skills training to help them achieve their vocational and independent living goals. The Center's programs emphasize a number of areas such as enhanced mobility; improved and accessible communication (including the use of adaptive technology); constructive participation in home and community settings; leadership and advocacy training through mentoring, ongoing social and professional opportunities, and employment.

HKNC also provides services through a network of 10 regional field offices staffed by 10 regional representatives and eight deaf blind specialists. Through this network, HKNC provides assistance to deaf-blind individuals and their families as well as technical assistance to local service providers. The regional network offices provide counseling, information, transition assistance, and referral services for individuals who are deaf-blind and their families to assist them to achieve successful participation in their community and employment.

The HKNC Community Services Program (CSP), a model collaboration between the Center and the New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB), provides comprehensive rehabilitation, vocational, and support services to eligible persons who are deaf-blind in their homes, worksites, and communities. CSP is staffed by credentialed professionals in the fields of blindness and deafness, including orientation and

mobility specialists, low vision specialists, vision rehabilitation teachers, and vocational specialists. All CSP staff are proficient in American Sign Language and other alternative modes of communication.

In addition, HKNC has developed a Deaf-Blind National Community of Practice (NCOP), a 69-member collaborative of professional organizations working together to improve the quality of services to individuals who are deaf-blind through shared learning, research, and practice. These organizations consist of three national organizations, vocational rehabilitation agencies for both deaf and hard of hearing and blind consumers, many State deaf-blind projects, two schools for the deaf and blind, and agencies that provide support services (such as Support Service Provider (SSP) and interpreting services) to deaf-blind individuals.

HKNC also offers a program called the Deaf-Blind Immersion Experience (DBIE), now in its fourth year, which provides consumers who are deaf-blind with intellectual disabilities, and their support teams, a 5-day training experience that includes participation in work experiences that match their interests, gifts, and abilities.

HKNC also provides professional development, training and technical assistance, and consultation to other organizations, programs, and providers serving individuals who are deaf-blind.

Transformation during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Due to COVID-19, HKNC transformed the in-person vocational rehabilitation program into a virtual program approximately halfway through fiscal year 2020. Four-week virtual assessments were offered to match each consumer's schedule and goals. Remote training programs were designed on a part-time and full-time basis and focused on goals that would have an impact on a person's current life situation or would help to develop a foundation upon which to build, especially when in-person services resume. The HKNC field staff joined with the Center staff to support consumers with obtaining and setting up the necessary equipment and technology needed to access Zoom and Google Docs training sessions, support groups, and peer learning opportunities. Staff utilized a transdisciplinary approach and partnered with consumers and vocational rehabilitation counselors to provide services remotely. In total, 27 consumers participated in virtual assessments and training.

Revenue and Expenses

For fiscal year 2020, HKNC reported total public support and revenues of \$20.2 million. Funds from the Federal government (\$16 million) made up 79 percent of its total revenue. Funding from State grants and contracts amounted to \$3 million (15 percent). HKNC received approximately \$560,000 in donations and public support (3 percent) and reported an approximately \$770,000 increase in HKNC operations and investment income (3 percent). While the Center has sought to increase other sources of funding, the Federal appropriation remains its primary source of support.

For fiscal year 2020, HKNC incurred total operating expenses of \$18.5 million. Because most of the specialized services required by this population are provided by HKNC staff, salaries and fringe benefits (approximately \$14.3 million) account for most expenses (77 percent). Other expenses include: building, utilities, and rent (approximately \$1.2 million, or 7 percent); professional services (approximately \$1.1 million, or 6 percent); client related services (approximately \$760,000, or 4 percent); and other operating expenses (approximately \$1.2 million, or 6 percent).

Funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years were:

Fiscal Year	(dollars in thousands)
2017	\$10,336
2018	12,500
2019	13,500
2020	16,000
2021	17,000

FY 2022 BUDGET REQUEST

For fiscal year 2022, the Administration requests \$18.5 million for HKNC, \$1.5 million more than the fiscal year 2021 appropriation, to expand regional office support for an estimated 2,200 individual consumers, 700 families, and 1,600 agencies and organizations, while also strengthening direct intensive services to approximately 85 consumers at HKNC’s residential training and rehabilitation program.

While most of the request would support core activities at HKNC headquarters, approximately 30 percent of the funds requested would provide support to the HKNC for field services, community education, and professional development programs, including the activities of HKNC’s 10 regional offices and the Information, Research, and Professional Development (IRPD) department. 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. These relative levels of support remain largely unchanged from fiscal year 2020.

PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

<u>Output measures</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
Number of individuals served at headquarters:			
Adult training program clients	85	85	85
Specialized training services:			
Transition for high school students	20	20	20
Senior citizens	10	10	10
Individuals with intellectual disabilities	36	36	36
Targeted skills training	10	10	10
Community Services Program	120	120	155
Number of individuals served through regional representatives and deaf-blind specialists:			
Consumers	1,660	1,660	2,200
Families	650	650	700
Agencies/organizations	1,500	1,500	1,600
HKNC FTE staff	184	184	190

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Performance Measures

This section presents selected program performance information, including, for example, GPRA goals, objectives, measures, and performance targets and data. Achievement of program results is based on the cumulative effect of the resources provided in previous years, and those requested in fiscal year 2022 and future years, as well as the resources and efforts invested by those served by this program. The Department will be reviewing GPRA program performance goals, objectives, and measures for the HKNC for possible revision in future years to ensure alignment with Administration policy.

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

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

Measure: The percentage of: (1) training goals set and achieved by adult consumers (both on and off campus); (2) adult consumers seeking employment who are placed in employment (both on and off campus); and (3) adult consumers seeking to maintain their ability to live independently or move to less restrictive settings who achieve their goals.

Year	Target # of Adult Con- sumers	Actual # of Adult Con- sumers	Target % of Training goals met	Actual % of Training goals met	Target % Placed in Employ- ment	Actual % Placed in Employ- ment	Target % in Less Restrictive Settings	Actual % in Less Restrictive Settings
2017	75	60/36	95%	89%	48%	47/78%	86%	87%
2018	75	76/40	95	90	48	50/71	86	91
2019	80	59/38	95	89	48	63/67	86	87
2020	80	86/92	95	87	60	33/50	86	93
2021	80		95		60		86	
2022	80		95		60		86	

Additional information: In fiscal year 2020, HKNC served 86 consumers in the on-campus rehabilitation training programs and 92 additional off-campus consumers through its Community Services Program. HKNC points out that the number of consumers served may fluctuate from year to year due to multiple 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 varying levels of training intensity and differing individual needs.

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.

In fiscal year 2020, 33 percent of consumers in on-campus programs and 50 percent of off-campus consumers participating in the N.Y. Community Services Program with an employment goal were placed in employment.

The “less restrictive settings” measure refers to consumers 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.

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
2017	500	472
2018	600	573
2019	600	505
2020	600	372
2021	600	
2022	600	

Additional information: These referrals help deaf-blind consumers access resources within their home community that improve their ability to function independently.

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

Year	Target	Actual
2017	66%	94%
2018	75	74
2019	75	68
2020	75	75
2021	75	
2022	75	

Additional information: This measure provides information on the activities of the field services programs, including the 10 regional representatives and 8 deployed deaf-blind specialists. The referrals provided by regional representatives often are the gateway to finding appropriate and individualized supports from various agencies and organizations.

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

Measure: The number of referrals by HKNC’s regional offices to VR or related employment programs.

Year	Target	Actual
2017	65	33
2018	65	71
2019	65	55
2020	65	79
2021	65	
2022	65	

Additional information: HKNC field staff frequently facilitate interactions between consumers and VR agencies, including assistance for consumers who are returning to their State’s VR system after attending intensive training at HKNC headquarters. The number of referrals to VR agencies fluctuates depending on whether the consumers served by HKNC field staff have vocational goals.

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
2017	40%	39%
2018	45	41
2019	45	47
2020	45	35
2021	45	
2022	45	

Additional information: 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 consumers served by HKNC regional representatives who achieved employment outcomes.