

**Department of Education**  
**REHABILITATION SERVICES**  
**Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Request**

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

**Appropriations Language**  
**REHABILITATION SERVICES**

For carrying out, to the extent not otherwise provided, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Helen Keller National Center Act, [~~\$4,092,906,000~~] \$4,405,533,000, of which [~~\$3,949,707,000~~] \$4,253,834,000 shall be for grants for vocational rehabilitation services under title I of the Rehabilitation Act<sup>1</sup>: *Provided*, That the Secretary may use amounts provided in this Act [and unobligated balances from title III of the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2022, (division H of Public Law 117-103),] 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, including related Federal administrative expenses, [and] for improving monitoring and oversight of grants for vocational rehabilitation services under title I of the Rehabilitation Act, [including] and for information technology [modernization] needs under section 15 and titles I, III, VI, and VII of the Rehabilitation Act<sup>2</sup>: *Provided further*, That up to 15 percent of the amounts available subsequent to reallocation for the activities described in the first proviso from funds provided under this paragraph in this Act, may be used for evaluation and technical assistance related to such activities<sup>3</sup>: *Provided further*, That States may award subgrants for a portion of the funds to other public and private, nonprofit entities<sup>4</sup>: *Provided further*, That any funds provided in this Act and made available subsequent to reallocation for the purposes described in the first proviso shall remain available until September 30, [2024] 2025<sup>5</sup>: *Provided further*, That the Secretary may transfer funds provided in this Act and made available subsequent to the reallocation of funds to States pursuant to section 110(b) of the Rehabilitation Act to “Institute of Education Sciences” for the evaluation of outcomes for students receiving services and supports under IDEA and under title I, section 504 of title V, and title VI of the

Rehabilitation Act<sup>6</sup>: Provided further, That the transfer authority in the preceding proviso is in addition to any other transfer authority in this Act.<sup>7</sup> (Department of Education Appropriations Act, 2023.)

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.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES AND DISABILITY RESEARCH

### Analysis of Language Provisions and Changes

Language Provision	Explanation
<p><sup>1</sup> ... of which <u>\$4,253,834,000</u> shall be for grants for vocational rehabilitation services under title I of the Rehabilitation Act:</p>	<p>This language earmarks funds provided for the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) State Grants program.</p>
<p><sup>2</sup> Provided, That the Secretary may use amounts provided in this Act [and unobligated balances from title III of the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2022, (division H of Public Law 117-103),] 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, including related Federal administrative expenses, [and] for improving monitoring and oversight of grants for vocational rehabilitation services under title I of the Rehabilitation Act, [including] <u>and for information technology [modernization] needs under section 15 and titles I, III, VI, and VII of the Rehabilitation Act:</u></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 and for related administrative expenses, such as salaries or training costs for the Federal staff overseeing the use of these funds. This language also allows funds to be used for activities that will improve the effectiveness of monitoring and oversight of the VR State Grants program. In addition, this language allows funds to be used for RSA's information technology needs, such as supporting the online portals used by States and grantees to submit required data to RSA. 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><sup>3</sup> Provided further, That up to 15 percent of the amounts available subsequent to reallocation for the activities described in the first proviso from funds provided under this paragraph in this Act, may be used for evaluation and technical assistance related to such activities:</p>	<p>This language allows the Secretary to use up to 15 percent of the amounts that remain available subsequent to the reallocation of funds to States under the VR State Grants program to be used to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the project activities aimed at increasing competitive integrated employment for youth and other individuals with disabilities, and provide technical assistance to support grantees in this work.</p>

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

Language Provision	Explanation
<p><sup>4</sup> Provided further, 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><sup>5</sup> Provided further, That any funds provided in this Act and made available subsequent to reallocation for the purposes described in the first proviso shall remain available until September 30, [2024] <u>2025</u>:</p>	<p>This language permits the funds made available subsequent to reallocation of VR State Grant funds to remain available for two years.</p>
<p><sup>6</sup> Provided further, That the Secretary may transfer funds provided in this Act and made available subsequent to the reallocation of funds to States pursuant to section 110(b) of the Rehabilitation Act to “Institute of Education Sciences” for the evaluation of outcomes for students receiving services and supports under IDEA and under title I, section 504 of title V, and title VI of the Rehabilitation Act:</p>	<p>This language allows the Secretary to transfer funds made available subsequent to reallocation of VR State Grant funds to the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) for an evaluation of student outcomes.</p>
<p><sup>7</sup> Provided further, That the transfer authority in the preceding proviso is in addition to any other transfer authority in this Act.</p>	<p>This language clarifies that the authority to transfer funds to IES is separate from and in addition to any other transfer authority provided.</p>

**REHABILITATION SERVICES**

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

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Appropriation/Adjustments/Transfers	2022	2023	2024
<b>Discretionary:</b>			
Appropriation	\$143,524	\$143,199	\$151,699
Total, discretionary appropriation	143,524	143,199	151,699
<b>Mandatory:</b>			
Appropriation	3,719,121	3,949,707	4,253,834
Sequester (P.L. 112-25)	-211,990	-225,133	-242,469
Total, adjusted mandatory appropriation	3,507,131	3,724,574	4,011,365
Total, discretionary and adjusted mandatory appropriation	3,650,655	3,867,773	4,163,064

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## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Summary of Changes (dollars in thousands)

	2023	\$4,092,906 <sup>1</sup>
	2024	4,405,533 <sup>2</sup>
Net change		+267,586

<b>Increases:</b>	2023 base	Change from base
<u>Built in</u>		
Increase in funding for Vocational rehabilitation (VR) State grants, consistent with the inflation increase specified in the authorizing statute.	\$3,949,707	+\$304,127
<u>Program:</u>		
Increase in funding for Client assistance State grants to cover increased operational costs.	13,000	+2,000
Increase in funding for Demonstration and training programs to support supplemental funding for the Parent Information and Training program.	5,796	+1,500
Increase in funding for Independent living services for older blind individuals to cover increased operational costs.	33,317	+5,000
Net change		+312,627

<sup>1</sup> 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, 2022. The reduced level for 2023 subsequent to the 5.7 percent sequester is \$3,867,773 thousand, a reduction of \$225,133 thousand.

<sup>2</sup> 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 goes into effect on October 1, 2023. The reduced level for 2024 subsequent to the 5.7 percent sequester is \$4,163,064 thousand, a reduction of \$242,469 thousand.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Authorizing Legislation

(dollars in thousands)

Activity	2023 Authorized	2023 Appropriation	2024 Authorized	2024 Request
Vocational rehabilitation (VR) State grants:				
Grants to States ( <i>RA-I A, B (110, 111 and 113), and C</i> )	0 <sup>1</sup>	\$3,673,924 <sup>2</sup>	0 <sup>1</sup>	\$3,960,210
Grants for Indians ( <i>RA-I-C</i> )	(1,3)	50,650 <sup>2</sup>	(1,3)	51,155
Client assistance State grants ( <i>RA-I-112</i> )	0 <sup>4</sup>	13,000	0 <sup>4</sup>	15,000
Supported employment State grants ( <i>RA-VI</i> )	0 <sup>4</sup>	22,548	0 <sup>4</sup>	22,548
Training ( <i>RA-III-302</i> )	0 <sup>4</sup>	29,388	0 <sup>4</sup>	29,388
Demonstration and training programs ( <i>RA-III-303</i> )	0 <sup>4</sup>	5,796	0 <sup>4</sup>	7,296
Services for older blind individuals ( <i>RA-VII-2</i> )	0 <sup>4</sup>	33,317	0 <sup>4</sup>	38,317
Protection and advocacy of individual rights ( <i>RA-V-509</i> )	0 <sup>4</sup>	20,150	0 <sup>4</sup>	20,150
Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults ( <i>HKNCA</i> )	0 <sup>5</sup>	19,000	0 <sup>5</sup>	19,000
Total definite authorization	0		0	
Total discretionary appropriation		143,199		151,699
Total mandatory appropriation		3,949,707		4,253,834
Total appropriation		4,092,906		4,405,533
Portion of request not authorized		4,092,906		4,405,533
Total appropriation including required mandatory reduction		3,867,773 <sup>2</sup>		

<sup>1</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2021. Reauthorization for FY 2024 is expected through appropriations action. 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).

<sup>2</sup> The amount reflects the 5.7 percent reduction of mandatory programs that went into effect on October 1, 2022, pursuant to the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25).

<sup>3</sup> The Rehabilitation Act requires that 1.0 percent to 1.5 percent of the appropriation for Vocational Rehabilitation State grants be set aside for Grants to Indians.

<sup>4</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2021. Reauthorization for FY 2024 is expected through appropriations action.

<sup>5</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2004. Reauthorization for FY 2024 is expected through appropriations action.



## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Appropriations History (dollars in thousands)

Year	Budget Estimate to Congress	House Allowance	Senate Allowance	Appropriation
2015 <sup>1</sup>	\$3,683,335	N/A	\$3,722,853	\$3,709,853
2016 <sup>2</sup>	3,532,109	\$3,529,605	3,487,864	3,529,605
2017 <sup>3</sup>	3,541,389	3,534,027	3,536,389	3,535,589
2018 <sup>4</sup>	3,563,008	3,562,582	3,562,418	3,361,143
2019 <sup>5</sup>	3,634,977	3,657,689	3,656,189	3,657,189
2020 <sup>6</sup>	3,719,527	3,752,076	3,745,239	3,747,739
2021 <sup>7</sup>	3,782,952	3,827,500	3,805,500	3,814,220
2022 <sup>8</sup>	3,894,820	3,896,820	3,874,145	3,858,320
2023 <sup>9</sup>	4,125,906	4,104,906	4,093,406	4,092,906
2024	4,405,533			

<sup>1</sup> The House allowance is shown as N/A because there was no Subcommittee action. The level for the Senate allowance reflects Senate Subcommittee action only.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> The level for the House allowance reflects floor action on the Omnibus appropriations bill; the Senate allowance reflects Committee action on the regular annual 2018 appropriations bill; the Appropriation reflects the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (P.L. 115-141).

<sup>5</sup> 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).

<sup>6</sup> The Senate allowance reflects the Chairman's mark; the Appropriation reflects the Further Consolidated Appropriation Act, 2020 (P.L. 116-94).

<sup>7</sup> 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).

<sup>8</sup> The House allowance reflects floor action; the Senate allowance reflects the Chairman's mark; and the Appropriation reflects Division H of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022 (P.L. 117-103).

<sup>9</sup> The House allowance reflects the regular annual FY 2023 appropriation, which was introduced on the floor; the Senate allowance reflects the Chairman's mark; and the Appropriation reflects the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328).

**REHABILITATION SERVICES**  
**Significant Items in FY 2023 Appropriations Reports**

**Item description**

Explanatory Statement: The agreement directs the Department to provide a briefing to the Committees no later than 90 days after enactment on the planned uses of funds that remain available for obligation subsequent to the reallocation of funds to States pursuant to section 110(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, and to provide semi-annual briefings thereafter.

Response: The Department will comply with this directive.

Explanatory Statement: The agreement directs the Department to use a portion of DIF funds for competitive grants, to be awarded in coordination with the Office of Disability Employment Policy, to non-governmental entities in partnership with State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies for innovative strategies that significantly increase employment of adults with disabilities. The agreement expects this will focus on adults with disabilities who are not currently in the workforce. Grants shall be awarded to partnerships that support disabled adults in obtaining competitive integrated employment and advance their career trajectories. Strategies for improving employment outcomes for adults with disabilities must have as their goal a significant effect on disability employment in the State or region. Funds should be used to develop new and innovative strategies for the recruitment, hiring, retention, and career advancement of disabled adults, spurring change in the State VR agency's strategies and ability to improve State disability employment outcomes.

Response: Subject to the availability of fiscal year 2023 Disability Innovation Funds (DIF) for obligation through fiscal year 2024, the Department will comply with this directive.

Explanatory Statement: The agreement directs the Department to notify the Committees at least 15 days prior to transferring any funds to IES under the authority provided under this heading.

Response: Subject to the availability of fiscal year 2023 Disability Innovation Funds (DIF) for obligation through fiscal year 2024, the Department will comply with this directive.

Explanatory Statement: The agreement directs the Department to provide participants in the Randolph-Sheppard Program with technical assistance and support in applying for funding opportunities for innovative activities aimed at increasing competitive integrated employment.

Response: The Department will comply with this directive.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Summary of Request

People with disabilities represent a vital and integral part of our society. Providing 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 fiscal year 2024 is requested through appropriations language.

The Administration's 2024 request for the Rehabilitation Services account provides \$4.4 billion in mandatory and discretionary funding 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 \$4.3 billion mandatory request for the **Vocational rehabilitation (VR) State grants** program includes an increase of \$304.1 million over the fiscal year 2023 appropriation, 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 \$2.0 million for the **Client assistance State grants** program to cover increased operational costs.

The request includes an increase of \$1.5 million for the **Demonstration and training** program to support supplemental funding for the Parent Information and Training program.

The request also includes an increase of \$5.0 million for the **Independent living services for older blind individuals** program to cover increased operational costs.

The request would maintain support for all other programs in the Rehabilitation Services account at the 2023 level.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Vocational rehabilitation State grants

(Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title I, Parts A, B (Sections 110, 111 and 113), and C)

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2024 Authorization: To be determined <sup>1</sup>

Budget Authority:

	2023 Appropriation	2024 Request	Change
State grants:			
Pre-sequester	\$3,899,057	\$4,202,679	+\$303,622
Post-sequester	3,673,924	3,960,210	+286,286
Set-aside for American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services	50,650 <sup>2</sup>	51,155	+505
Total pre-sequester	3,949,707	4,253,834	+304,127
Total post-sequester <sup>3</sup>	3,724,574	4,011,365	+286,791

### 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 All Urban Consumers.

<sup>1</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2021. Reauthorization for FY 2024 is expected through appropriations action. 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.

<sup>2</sup> The fiscal year 2023 President’s Budget proposed to reserve \$53,091 thousand for the AIVRS program, however based on actual program needs, the Department will be setting aside \$50,650 thousand.

<sup>3</sup> The post-sequester amounts reflect the 5.7 percent sequester reduction for mandatory programs that took effect on October 1, 2022 for the fiscal year 2023 appropriation and will go into effect on October 1, 2023 for the fiscal year 2024 appropriation, pursuant to the Budget Control Act of 2011.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Vocational rehabilitation State grants

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#### 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-quality workforce development system that includes programs and investments in employment services, workforce development, adult education, and vocational rehabilitation. The workforce development system 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; the goal of the one-stop system is to provide a variety of services to assist both individuals in meeting their employment and training needs, as well as employers in recruiting a qualified workforce.

The VR State Grants program is a core program and a required partner in the one-stop service delivery system. It 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); the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program (Title II of WIOA); the Wagner-Peyser Employment Service program (Title III of WIOA); and the 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 individuals with disabilities prepare for and engage in competitive integrated employment. In supporting individuals in achieving their career goals, VR agencies are encouraged to support the pursuit of postsecondary education and vocational training leading to recognized credentials to enable individuals with disabilities to advance in high-demand, high quality careers and maximize their self-sufficiency and independence. 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 for physical disabilities or mental health support, 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

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### **Vocational rehabilitation State grants**

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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 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. In addition, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022, authorized the Department to use up to 15 percent of fiscal year 2021 and fiscal year 2022 DIF funds for evaluation of, and technical assistance for, DIF activities. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, provided the same evaluation and technical assistance authority, while also allowing the Department to use DIF funds for Federal administrative expenses related to DIF, and for improving monitoring and oversight of grants for vocational rehabilitation services under title I of the Rehabilitation Act, including information technology modernization.

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 2021, \$298.8 million was relinquished by States, and \$121.4 million was redistributed through the reallocation process, leaving \$177.4 million available for DIF projects through fiscal year 2022. The Department used most of the fiscal year 2021 funds for new awards through the Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment Innovative Model Demonstration Project DIF competition. This competition funded multiple innovative model demonstration projects designed to assist individuals with disabilities currently employed in, or contemplating, subminimum wage employment to engage with State VR agencies so they may obtain competitive integrated employment. The competition encouraged projects that support employment models in economic sectors, including essential workers, the green economy, home and community-based services, the arts and related fields, and transportation and related industries, but also allowed for field-initiated topics. The Department used \$167.3 million to fully fund 13 awards and partially fund a 14th award under this competition. In addition, the Department awarded a five-year, \$10 million contract for an independent evaluation of the DIF projects funded in fiscal year 2022.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Vocational rehabilitation State grants

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In fiscal year 2022, approximately \$338.3 million was relinquished by States and \$13.1 million was made available due to maintenance of effort (MOE) penalties, resulting in \$351.4 million available for redistribution through the reallocation process. Approximately \$87.1 million was requested through reallocation, leaving \$264.3 million available for DIF projects through fiscal year 2023. Of the funds that were relinquished, \$4.5 million was reallocated to different State agencies within the same States that relinquished the funds. The Department used approximately \$10 million to fully fund the 14th award from the Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment Innovative Model Demonstration Project DIF competition run in fiscal year 2022, leaving \$254.3 million available for use through fiscal year 2023.

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.

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

Fiscal Year	Pre-Sequester (dollars in thousands)	Post-Sequester <sup>1</sup> (dollars in thousands)
2019	\$3,521,990	\$3,303,627
2020	3,610,040	3,397,048
2021	3,675,021	3,465,545
2022	3,719,121	3,507,131
2023	3,949,707	3,724,574

### FY 2024 BUDGET REQUEST

For fiscal year 2024, the Administration requests \$4.2 billion for the VR State Grants programs, \$304.1 million more than the fiscal year 2023 appropriation, to help States and Tribal governments increase the participation of individuals with disabilities in the workforce. The fiscal year 2024 request reflects the current estimate of the mandatory amount required by the authorizing statute. Of the amount requested, \$51.2 million, or 1.2%, of the funds for the VR State Grants program will be set aside to support grants under the AIVRS program.

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<sup>1</sup> The post-sequester amounts 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 6.2 percent in 2019, 5.9 percent in 2020, and 5.7 percent in 2021 through 2023.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Vocational rehabilitation State grants

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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 compared to individuals without disabilities. For example, 2021 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 disabilities were significantly less likely to be employed (either full-time or part-time) than people without such disabilities (31.4 percent versus 72.5 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.<sup>1</sup> VR program data demonstrate that receipt of VR services can significantly improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. In 2022, nearly half of all VR participants were employed in competitively integrated settings a year after exiting the program.

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 1.4 million individuals with disabilities, including students with disabilities, in various phases of the vocational rehabilitation process, about 60 percent of whom received VR services under an IPE during fiscal year 2022. Approximately 95.1 percent of these individuals were individuals with significant disabilities.

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.

### Supporting States to Fully Use Their VR State Grant Funds

For multiple years, a large number of States have relinquished a significant amount of funds during the reallocation process or have had a large balance of unused funds at the end of the program period in both the VR State grants program and the Supported Employment (SE) State grants program. In order to address the substantial amount of unused funds in these programs, the Department has updated its Monitoring and Technical Assistance Guide (MTAG)<sup>2</sup> in collaboration with six State VR agency directors and leaders representing the Council of State Administrators of Vocation Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB). The MTAG explains the process through which the Department will

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/disabl.htm>

<sup>2</sup> [https://rsa.ed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/vr/FFY%202023%20MTAG%20Final%20\(01.20.2023%20update\).pdf](https://rsa.ed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/vr/FFY%202023%20MTAG%20Final%20(01.20.2023%20update).pdf)



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conduct on-site monitoring and off-site reviews of, provide technical assistance to, and review the progress of, VR agencies in 1) maximizing the expenditure and use of Federal funds to improve the quality of services for, and employment outcomes achieved by, individuals with disabilities, and 2) complying with requirements under the Rehabilitation Act. In fiscal year 2023, the Department will monitor 12 VR agencies selected based on the amount of funds they returned through reallocation or at the end of the program period. Specific to the focus areas addressed during the fiscal year 2023 on-site monitoring and off-site reviews, the VR agency will develop and implement a strategic action plan (SAP) to demonstrate how it will reverse the return of unused funds and maximize the use and expenditure of Federal funds to improve performance and increase employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The SAP should—

- identify causes for unused Federal funds and strategies and activities the VR agency will undertake to increase and maximize its ability to expend Federal VR and Supported Employment program grant funds;
- provide a written workable plan for taking action, which contains a timeline for implementation that demonstrates results within a reasonable specified time;
- be supported by documentation (e.g., fiscal reports, data, policies) showing implementation of the actions and results achieved; and
- demonstrate a roadmap and commitment for continuous improvement.

The Department will also continue to analyze expenditure patterns, provide technical assistance, and work with all grantees to better understand their challenges with providing the state dollar match and using VR funds, in order to ensure States provide critical vocational rehabilitation services consistent with the intent of the authorizing statute.

### Disability Innovation Fund

The Administration continues to request authority to use funds that remain available following reallocation for innovative activities aimed at improving outcomes for individuals with disabilities, including related administrative expenses, and for improving monitoring and oversight of grants for vocational rehabilitation services under title I of the Rehabilitation Act. In addition, the Administration continues to request authority to reserve up to 15 percent of “DIF” funds for evaluation of, and technical assistance for, DIF projects.

The Administration is also requesting appropriations language that would provide RSA with authority to use DIF funds for RSA’s information technology (IT) needs. Subject to the availability of DIF funds in fiscal year 2024, this authority would allow RSA to fund approximately \$1.7 million of critical IT needs. These IT investments, detailed below, facilitate the reporting and sharing of data required by the Rehabilitation Act in a streamlined manner, provide grantees and the public with access to key resources and information, and enable RSA to analyze State data and provide the resultant analysis to States to support the effective and efficient use of formula funds provided under the Rehabilitation Act.

Over recent years, the costs for RSA’s IT systems have increased significantly as a result of changes to cybersecurity requirements, as well as an increased reliance on electronic submission, and the need for greater data analysis and digital access to information. RSA has

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met the need for increased funding through a combination of salaries and expenses (S&E) funds, program funds, and other Department administrative funds; however, drawing from these funding sources is unsustainable given rising IT costs and the need to use these funds for their primary purpose. For example, as further explained below, using VR Training funds on IT costs reduced the Department's ability to support the training of VR staff at a time when many VR agencies are experiencing significant shortages of qualified personnel (see the VR Training section of the Congressional Justification for additional information).

At the start of the COVID pandemic, RSA shifted approximately \$90,000 of S&E funds, primarily from its travel budget, to cover increased IT needs for the Rehabilitation Services Administration Management Information System (RSAMIS)<sup>1</sup> and the State Wage Interchange System<sup>2</sup> (SWIS). Now that travel has resumed for monitoring and technical assistance, it is critical that RSA identify an alternate source of funding for the RSAMIS and SWIS. Therefore, under the proposed appropriations language approximately \$90,000 of DIF funds would be used to fund the RSAMIS and SWIS.

Under the proposed appropriations language, approximately \$500,000 of DIF funds would be used in fiscal year 2024 for the Personnel Development Program Data Collection System (PDPDCS)<sup>3</sup> contract, which supports the payback requirements related to the Long-Term Training grants. These funds are currently taken from the Rehabilitation Training program and are used predominantly for IT needs. Unfortunately, as the costs for this contract have increased due to changes in cybersecurity requirements, it has caused the amount of funds available for Rehabilitation Training grants to decrease. This portion of the request would free up program funds so that additional Rehabilitation Training grants, which are needed to ensure a sufficient number of qualified VR professionals, may be awarded.

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<sup>1</sup> The RSAMIS serves as the IT system wherein RSA grantees report performance data, fiscal data, and other information. The RSAMIS collects data for OMB-approved information collections, including the Case Service Report (RSA-911), WIOA Annual Report (ETA-9169), Resolution of Applicant/Client Appeals (RSA-722), Vocational Rehabilitation Financial Report (RSA-17), Independent Living Services for Older Individuals who are Blind (RSA-7-OB), Annual Client Assistance Program Report (RSA-227), Protection and Advocacy of Individual Rights Report (RSA-509), Report of the Randolph-Sheppard Vending Facility Program (RSA-15), Grant Reallotment (RSA-692): Federal Formula Awards, and Federal Financial Report (SF-425): Federal Formula Awards.

<sup>2</sup> The SWIS allows States to exchange Wage Data on an interstate basis with other States needing the Wage Data for WIOA performance reporting, as well as for other permitted purposes specified in the SWIS Data Sharing Agreement. State VR agencies are permitted to access Wage Data, through the SWIS, for approved uses, including performance accountability provisions outlined in section 116 of WIOA. RSA transfers funds to the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) to administer the SWIS through a contract.

<sup>3</sup> The PDPDCS provides for the collection of data from grantees, scholars, and their employers to track the enrollment, eligible employment of scholars, and service obligation fulfillment of scholars who have received program funds, until their service obligations are fulfilled, or they are referred to the Accounts Receivable and Bank Management Division for repayment of part or all of the funds received. The PDPDCS also provides technical assistance to all users and generates performance data for reporting annually on program results. The PDPDCS serves RSA along with the Office of Special Education Programs the Office of Indian Education. A component of the PDPDCS, the Payback Information Management System (PIMS) collects and analyzes data on scholars funded by Rehabilitation Long-Term Training (RLTT) program grants to track the service obligation of scholars and for use in reporting program performance measures. The PIMS tracks the eligible employment of scholars who have been awarded scholarships from RLTT grants until their service obligations are fulfilled or they are referred to the Secretary for repayment of part or all of the funding received.

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While Department administrative funds have been used to pay for RSA's share of the WIOA State Plan Portal<sup>1</sup> in recent years, RSA's share of the cost to maintain this portal is expected to increase from approximately \$185,000 in fiscal year 2023 to between \$250,000 and \$370,000 per year beginning in fiscal year 2024. Therefore, in fiscal year 2024, approximately \$250,000 of DIF funds would be used to support the WIOA State Plan Portal under the proposed appropriations language.

In fiscal year 2024, approximately \$250,000 of DIF funds would be used to support development of a new SQL fiscal database for all RSA formula grant programs under the proposed appropriations language. RSA's existing Grants Management Database was initially built to run the formula allocations and very basic data analysis. However, recent fiscal challenges in RSA's programs have exposed the need for a database that will allow for faster and more complex tracking, reporting, and analysis of fiscal data, thereby allowing RSA to provide more timely technical assistance to State agencies to address unfavorable trends in their fiscal data. While RSA plans to begin development of the database in fiscal year 2023 using the fiscal year 2023 authority to use DIF funds for IT modernization, development will continue through fiscal year 2024. The cost for maintaining the database is expected to drop down to approximately \$150,000 per year after fiscal year 2024.

Under the proposed appropriations language, approximately \$599,000 of DIF funds would be used to support the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials (NCRTM), which does not currently receive an appropriation. The NCRTM contract provides a central clearinghouse for information and resource availability for individuals with disabilities pursuant to Section 15 of the Rehabilitation Act. RSA currently uses funds from the Rehabilitation Training program to support limited NCRTM activities, with the majority of these funds in most years going toward IT needs. This portion of the request would free up these program funds so that additional Training grants, which are needed to ensure a sufficient number of qualified VR professionals, may be awarded.

### **American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

The request would provide \$24.9 million for new awards, \$200,000 for peer review, and \$26.1 million for continuation awards under the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS) program, allowing the Department to support 95 tribal VR projects and one training and technical assistance center. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> The Department of Labor (DOL) and the Department of Education (ED) collaborate to administer the joint State Plan Requirements Information Collection Request (OMB No. 1205-0522). As outlined in the joint information collection, the WIOA State Plan Portal is the approved method by which States submit and modify their Unified or Combined State Plans. DOL and ED use the Portal to collaboratively review, provide feedback, and approve State Plans. The Portal also serves as the database for each State Plan and modification under WIOA. It is available to the public while State and Federal users are granted accounts to manage the process.

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#### **PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES**

### Vocational rehabilitation State grants

Output Measures <sup>1</sup>	2022	2023	2024
Individuals receiving VR services under an IPE	810,222	811,000	812,000
Individuals with significant disabilities as a percent of all individuals receiving services	95%	95%	95%
Eligible individuals whose case files were closed	330,769	331,000	332,000
Individuals whose cases were closed and received VR services	262,979	263,000	264,000
Individuals achieving an employment outcome	120,093	120,500	121,000
Individuals with significant disabilities as a percent of individuals achieving employment outcomes	93%	93%	93%

### American Indian vocational rehabilitation services

(dollars in thousands)

Output Measures	2022	2023	2024
Project funding:			
New awards	\$2,381	0	\$24,874
Continuation awards	47,253 <sup>2</sup>	\$49,637 <sup>3</sup>	25,050
Technical assistance	1,013	1,013	1,013
Peer review of new awards' applications	3	0	218
Total	50,650	50,650	51,155
Number of AIVRS projects:			
New projects	6	0	46
Continuation projects	89 <sup>4</sup>	94	50
Total projects	95	94	96

<sup>1</sup> The output measures data for 2023 and 2024 Vocational rehabilitation State grants are estimates based on prior fiscal year data.

<sup>2</sup> Includes \$3,130 thousand in frontloading awards.

<sup>3</sup> Includes \$1,780 thousand in frontloading awards.

<sup>4</sup> One grantee's award was discontinued, at the grantee's request, due to their inability to run the AIVRS program for the amount of funding they requested and had been awarded, resulting in 88 continuation awards at the close of fiscal year 2022.

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#### **PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION**

##### **Performance Measures**

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

##### **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 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 and will report baseline data for 2021, 2022 and 2023 before establishing targets. Performance data reported in 2021 are based on data collected under the RSA-911 from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. Performance data reported in 2022 are based on data collected under the RSA-911 from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022.

These performance measures do not include data for Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, or the Virgin Islands because the territories are not a part of the performance accountability system set forth in section 116 of WIOA.

**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.*

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

Year	Target	Actual
2021	Baseline	43.3%
2022	Baseline	43.0
2023	Baseline	
2024	TBD	

**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.

Year	Target	Actual
2021	Baseline	48.6%
2022	Baseline	52.5
2023	Baseline	
2024	TBD	

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

Year	Target	Actual
2021	Baseline	44.0%
2022	Baseline	48.0
2023	Baseline	
2024	TBD	

### 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 2021, 2022 and 2023.

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**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
2019	67%	58%
2020	68	57
2021	68	68
2022	68	
2023	68	
2024	68	

**Additional information:** Data for fiscal year 2021 show that 1,409, or 68.0 percent, of the 2,059 American Indians with disabilities who exited the program after receiving services in that year achieved an employment outcome. Although the target was achieved, fewer American Indians with disabilities received services as compared to previous years. Fiscal year 2022 data will be available in summer 2023.

### Efficiency Measures

**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
2019	76%	59%
2020	76	60
2021	76	53
2022	76	
2023	76	
2024	76	

**Additional information:** The cost per employment outcome varied significantly across projects, ranging from \$6,122 to \$407,500. The median annual cost per employment outcome for the 83 projects was \$33,793 in fiscal year 2021, while the mean annual cost per employment outcome was \$50,832 due to a small number of project outliers.

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**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
2019	75%	66%
2020	75	64
2021	75	42
2022	75	
2023	75	
2024	75	

**Additional information:** The cost per participant varied significantly across projects, ranging from \$3,226 to \$168,593. The median annual cost per participant for the 83 projects was \$9,419 in fiscal year 2021, while the mean annual cost per participant was \$11,321 due to a small number of project outliers.

### 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 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.<sup>1</sup>

SSA, in collaboration with the Department, contracted for a rigorously designed national evaluation of PROMISE. The evaluation included an interim services and impact report, as well

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.promisetacenter.org/>.



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as a final five-year impact and benefit-cost analysis report. These reports, as well as additional information about PROMISE, can be found on SSA's website.<sup>1</sup> The final report found:

- PROMISE improved only a few of the primary youth outcomes and the impacts varied by program. Two programs increased youth's employment rate and three programs increased their income. None reduced the amount of SSA payments youth received during the five-year evaluation period.
- With a few exceptions, the six programs did not affect parents' primary outcomes such as their employment rates, earnings, SSA payments, income, or Medicaid and Medicare expenditures. Only one program had a favorable impact for parents.
- There was variation in programs' impacts according to youth or family characteristics. For example, two programs had an impact on labor market outcomes for youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities but not for youth with other impairments. In addition, some programs improved labor market outcomes in families in which a parent was receiving SSA payments near the start of the program.
- Over the five-year evaluation period, none of the programs generated positive net benefits across all stakeholder groups. The net benefits per treatment group family ranged from -\$16,269 to -\$37,882. However, for all but two programs, youth and their families experienced a net benefit from participation in PROMISE.

### 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 was to ensure that individuals with disabilities could 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 developed 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 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. While 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, which enabled the

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<sup>1</sup> Reports documenting PROMISE program implementation and service delivery experiences are available at <https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/promise.htm>.

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grantee to complete accessibility testing on multiple computer platforms, conduct disability sector outreach and dissemination, and implement its sustainability plan to ensure that the project would continue to be available after the Federal award ended. Additional information about the final product, Morphic Basic, which is free to use, is available at <https://morphic.org/>.

### 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.<sup>1</sup> 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, 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 five-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 worked to improve 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 included a randomized control design implemented across eight diverse school districts. (<https://www.way2workmd.net>)
- *Vermont's Linking Learning to Careers* project assisted students with disabilities to transition to early career success by connecting community college career consultants with VR services and school programming. These connections were 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 included a quasi-experimental design. (<https://vocrehab.vermont.gov/linking-learning-careers-llc>)

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<sup>1</sup> 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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- The *Massachusetts Transition Pathway Services* project provided a coordinated set of services to improve career and academic planning skills so that high school students with disabilities would 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, provided work-based learning experiences and a menu of services to students. Through a person-centered collaborative team-based approach, students' career goals were planned and supported. The model included a quasi-experimental design. (<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/transition-pathway-services>)
- *Maine's Transition Work-Based Learning Model* project partnered 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 worked to expand employer relationships and align its dual customer community-based strategy with enhanced JMG programs for students with disabilities. The model included a quasi-experimental design. (<https://www.explorevr.org/progressive-employment-maine-transition-work-based-learning-model>)
- The *California Career Innovations* project incorporated 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 provided 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 included basic life skills training to assist with job readiness, such as computer literacy, and organization and communication skills. The model included 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 provided 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 were 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 were used to award five-year grants to eight multi-site model demonstration projects 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

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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).

### **Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment Innovative Model Demonstration Project**

In fiscal year 2022, the Department awarded five-year grants to 14 State VR agencies using unobligated fiscal year 2021 and fiscal year 2022 VR funds. The goal of these projects is to assist individuals with disabilities currently employed in, or contemplating, subminimum wage employment to engage with State VR agencies so they may obtain competitive integrated employment. In addition, the Department contracted for a five-year independent evaluation of the DIF demonstration projects awarded in fiscal year 2022. Additional information on the interim and final results of the evaluation will be shared as information becomes available.

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### **Client assistance State grants**

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

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2024 Authorization: To be determined <sup>1</sup>

Budget Authority:

2023 Appropriation	2024 Request	Change
\$13,000	\$15,000	+\$2,000

### **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 45 CAPs are operated by independent private or non-profit organizations, 8 are operated by external State agencies, and 4 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 in fiscal year 2023 of \$131,917 to each of the 50 States, D.C., and Puerto Rico and \$59,477 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 remaining funds. The first set-aside reserves funds, at the same amount as provided to outlying

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<sup>1</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2021. Reauthorization for FY 2024 is expected through appropriations action.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Client assistance State grants

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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)
2019	\$13,000
2020	13,000
2021	13,000
2022	13,000
2023	13,000

### FY 2024 BUDGET REQUEST

For fiscal year 2024, the Administration requests \$15.0 million for CAP, \$2.0 million more than the fiscal year 2023 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 CAP has been level funded at \$13 million since fiscal year 2015. At the same time, costs have steadily increased, forcing many CAPs to reduce staffing levels, which has resulted in fewer CAP services being provided and a decreased ability to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.

In fiscal year 2015, CAPs responded to 35,602 requests for information and referral (I&R) and provided 5,397 individual case services. In contrast, in fiscal year 2022, CAPs were only able to respond to 15,600 requests for I&R and provide 2,932 individual case services. This represents a 56 percent decrease in I&R and a 46 percent decrease in individual case services. For example, under New York's CAP program, the number of hours staff spent engaged in advocacy was cut by more than half from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021 due to staff reductions.

The requested increase to CAP would result in a minimum allotment of no more than \$152,206 to each of the 50 States, D.C., and Puerto Rico and \$68,625 to each of the outlying areas. In addition, the requested increase would trigger a statutory set-aside of between 1.8 and 2.2 percent of funds for a grant for training and technical assistance (TA) under CAP. RSA currently uses Rehabilitation Training funds for a Short-Term Training grant to provide training and TA to CAP professionals, so the funding for this activity would shift from the Rehabilitation Training program to the CAP program, thereby freeing up \$308,000 under Rehabilitation Training for other critical Training needs.

Data collected by the Department's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) for fiscal year 2022 from the most recently available RSA Annual Client Assistance Program Report (RSA-227) show that approximately 36 percent of all I&R requests were for information regarding the

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Client assistance State grants

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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 2,932 individuals in fiscal year 2022. Approximately 90 percent of the individual case services 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 2,256 cases closed in fiscal year 2022, 877 cases (or 39 percent) were resolved by explaining the controlling policies to the individual; 414 cases (18 percent) resulted in the development or implementation of an individualized plan for employment (IPE); and 304 cases (13 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 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 2024 would support similar activities.

- In Texas, a client sought to advance her employment opportunities by obtaining a graduate degree and contacted the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) for assistance. She was informed that DVR only helps with trade school or the last 30 hours of a bachelor's degree. The client contacted CAP for assistance. CAP shared information with the client regarding DVR's services, the application process, eligibility, assessments, and the Individualized Plan for Employment. CAP attended meetings with the client advocating that DVR follow Federal guidelines in completing the application, determining eligibility, and planning services. Ultimately, DVR agreed to support the client's goal to become a professor by assisting with tuition, books, and transportation.
- In New Mexico, CAP intervened on behalf of a 52-year-old client who is hard of hearing and has a mental illness. The client contacted CAP because she was having trouble getting DVR to complete her IPE and having ongoing issues with her job developer. The CAP advocate worked with the client and the DVR to meet all the requirements to finalize her IPE. The client and DVR discussed best practices to improve communication with her VR counselor and job developer. As a result of the CAP's work, the client obtained a new job developer and is in the process of applying for employment that best suits her skill sets.

### PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

Output Measures <sup>1</sup>	2022	2023	2024
Information inquiries/referrals	15,306	16,100	17,800
Individuals provided case services	2,932	3,432	3,900

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<sup>1</sup> Data for fiscal years 2023 and 2024 are projected from actual final data reported for fiscal years 2017 through 2022.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

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### PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

#### Performance Measures

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

As of February 16, 2023, Iowa has not submitted its fiscal year 2022 RSA-227 CAP report and is therefore not included in the actual 2022 data provided below.

**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
2019	68%	67%
2020	68	67
2021	68	65
2022	73	72
2023	73	
2024	73	

**Additional information:** The Department continues to support technical assistance and training to increase the capacity of CAP professionals to provide systemic advocacy. As a result of this technical assistance and training, 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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### Client assistance State grants

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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
2019	98%	98%
2020	98	97
2021	98	98
2022	98	98
2023	98	
2024	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.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

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### **Training**

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

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2024 Authorization: To be determined <sup>1</sup>

Budget Authority:

2023 Appropriation	2024 Request	Change
\$29,388	\$29,388	0

### **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

The purpose of the Training program is to ensure that skilled personnel are available to meet the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities assisted through 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 (LTT) 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.

The innovative rehabilitation training program supports grants that develop new types of training programs or new and improved methods of training for rehabilitation personnel, including stand-alone modules and instructional materials to be incorporated into an existing degree program or short-term training, and demonstrate the effectiveness of such training programs.

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<sup>1</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2021. Reauthorization for FY 2024 is expected through appropriations action.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Training

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The training of interpreters program supports programming 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. This includes providing financial assistance to establish interpreter training programs where they are needed and supporting established interpreter programs to train a sufficient number of qualified interpreters. The program focuses on training interpreters to effectively interpret and transliterate between spoken language and sign 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, such as the VR Technical Assistance Center on Quality Employment. 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. In addition, the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials is contracted to establish a central clearinghouse for information and resource availability for individuals with disabilities.

### Traditionally Underserved Populations

The Rehabilitation Act requires the Department to fund the Traditionally Underserved Populations program (section 21 of the Rehabilitation Act) through a reservation of 1 percent of the funds appropriated under the Training, Demonstration and Training, Supported Employment, and Independent Living Services for Older Blind Individuals programs. In fiscal year 2023, this provision made \$910,000 available for the Traditionally Underserved Populations program, which is designed to improve the quality, access, delivery of services, and outcomes of those services under the Rehabilitation Act, especially services provided to individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds. It also increased the capacity for minority entities and Indian Tribes to participate in activities funded under the Rehabilitation Act.

In fiscal year 2021, the Department ran a competition for a capacity-building center that was intended to improve the delivery of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to, and the employment outcomes of, individuals of color with disabilities. The Department aimed to provide awards to entities to provide cultural competency training to VR leadership and staff, collect and analyze relevant data, and disseminate evidence-based practices. The Department did not receive any applications for this competition, so the Department used the funds to support LTT continuation awards that also meet the requirements of the Traditionally Underserved Populations program. The Department used fiscal year 2022 funds to support LTT continuation awards and will run a new Traditionally Underserved Populations competition in fiscal year 2023.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Training

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

Fiscal Year	(dollars in thousands)
2019	\$29,388
2020	29,388
2021	29,388
2022	29,388
2023	29,388

### **FY 2024 BUDGET REQUEST**

For fiscal year 2024, the Administration requests \$29.4 million for the Training program, level with the fiscal year 2023 appropriation. In fiscal year 2024, approximately \$12.4 million would be used to support new awards; 16.5 million would be used to support continuation awards; \$294,000 would be used for the Traditionally Underserved Populations program; and \$200,000 would be used for peer review.

The Training program supports projects that provide training to new VR staff or upgrade the qualifications of existing staff. 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 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 supports the development of new types of training programs and new and improved methods of training rehabilitation personnel, are effective mechanisms for recruiting new graduates into the rehabilitation field and ensuring they have access to high-quality training. The request includes approximately \$19.1 million to support these activities through new awards and non-competing continuation awards under grants and contracts.

The Administration is requesting appropriations language that would provide RSA with authority to use Disability Innovation Funds for RSA's information technology needs. If this authority is provided, up to an additional \$1.1 million would be available for new awards under the Training program in fiscal year 2024. (See the VR State grants program section of this Congressional Justification for additional information on this request.)

In addition, the Administration is requesting an increase in funding under the Client Assistance State grants program (CAP). If this increase is provided, funding for the Short-Term Training: CAP award would be provided by the CAP appropriation, thereby making available an additional \$308,000 for new awards under the Training program in fiscal year 2024. (See the Client Assistance State grants program section of this Congressional Justification for additional information on this request.)

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Training

#### **PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES**

(dollars in thousands)

Output Measures	2022	2023	2024 <sup>1</sup>
<b>Program Funding:</b>			
Long-Term Training:			
New awards	\$500	0	\$9,851
Continuation awards	15,445 <sup>2</sup>	\$15,534	5,751
Subtotal	15,945	15,534	15,602
Technical Assistance:			
New awards	0	0	0
Continuation awards	5,735	5,739	6,000
Subtotal	5,735	5,739	6,000
Short-Term Training:			
New awards	0	0	0
Continuation awards	308	308	308
Subtotal	308	308	308
Training for Interpreters for Individuals who are Deaf and Deaf-Blind:			
New awards	0	0	0
Continuation awards	2,938	2,935	2,935
Subtotal	2,938	2,935	2,935
Innovative Rehabilitation Training:			
New awards	0	0	2,550
Continuation awards	3,392	3,363	900
Subtotal	3,392	3,363	3,450

<sup>1</sup> If the Administration's requests for the authority to use Disability Innovation Funds for information technology needs and to increase funding under the Client Assistance State grants program are provided, \$500 thousand under Long-Term Training, \$308 thousand under Short-Term Training, and \$599 thousand under the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials will become available to support new awards under the Training program.

<sup>2</sup> An additional \$910 thousand of Traditionally Underserved Populations funding was also used toward continuation LTT awards, for a total of \$16,355 thousand used for continuation LTT awards in FY 2022.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Training

Output Measures	2022	2023	2024
National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials:			
New awards	0	0	0
Continuation awards	719	599	599
Subtotal	719	599	599
Other Activities:			
Peer review of new award applications	0	0	200
Traditionally Underserved Populations	351	910	294
Subtotal	351	910	494
<b>Program Totals:</b>			
New awards	500	0	12,401
Continuation awards	28,537	28,478	16,493
Other Activities	351	910	494
Total	29,388	29,388	29,388

## PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

### Performance Measures

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

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

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

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Training

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#### 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
2019	40%	35%
2020	40	39
2021	40	39
2022	40	33
2023	40	
2024	40	

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

Year	Target	Actual
2019	85%	94%
2020	85	88
2021	85	84
2022	85	72
2023	85	
2024	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. The decline in the percentage of graduates fulfilling their payback requirements through qualifying employment in the fiscal year 2022 cohort is likely because this cohort graduated in fiscal year 2019 and may have been seeking eligible employment during the height of the COVID pandemic. We anticipate that the fiscal year 2023 and 2024 cohorts may also be negatively impacted by the COVID pandemic.

#### Efficiency Measures

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

Year	Target	Actual
2019	\$24,000	\$36,771
2020	24,000	41,780
2021	24,000	45,831
2022	24,000	N/A
2023	24,000	
2024	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 level scholars who successfully completed funded training programs ending in that year. Only

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Training

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those grants with at least 90 percent of the scholars in a Master's program are included. 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. The fiscal year 2021 data includes 3 closed grants with 65 completers. No grants closed in fiscal year 2022 so no data are available for fiscal year 2022. No grants are scheduled to close in fiscal year 2023, so we do not anticipate any data will be available for fiscal year 2023 either.

The Department is currently reviewing options to revise the targets for this measure. During the process of analyzing data to identify appropriate targets, we identified potential concerns about whether the current methodology reflects the best approach to measure the cost efficiency of the LTT program. We are analyzing the impact of administrative costs and scholarship size on program outcomes to determine whether we should revise the current methodology. We will then determine if adjustments are needed to the targets or the performance measure. The Department intends to establish revised targets, and a revised methodology if appropriate, beginning with fiscal year 2025.



## REHABILITATION SERVICES

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### **Demonstration and training programs**

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

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2024 Authorization: To be determined<sup>1</sup>

Budget Authority:

<u>2023 Appropriation</u>	<u>2024 Request</u>	<u>Change</u>
\$5,796	\$7,296	+\$1,500

### **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.

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<sup>1</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2021. Reauthorization for FY 2024 is expected through appropriations action.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Demonstration and training programs

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Funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years were:

Fiscal Year	(dollars in thousands)
2019	\$5,796
2020	5,796
2021	5,796
2022	5,796
2023	5,796

### FY 2024 BUDGET REQUEST

For fiscal year 2024, the Administration requests \$7.3 million for the Demonstration and Training programs, \$1.5 million more than a fiscal year 2023 appropriation. The increase would support supplemental funding for the Parent Information and Training program.

Approximately \$1.5 million of the proposed increase for fiscal year 2024 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). Each of these centers receives approximately \$300,000 annually, for a total of \$2.7 million that has not proven sufficient to support the increased scope of work following the transition to the regional model (prior to fiscal year 2020, PTIs received an average of \$65,000 per state served; currently, they receive an average of \$45,000 per state served). This additional \$1.2 million would bring the average amount PTIs receive per state served to approximately \$70,000 and would support increased collaboration among the Regional PTIs, the development of new materials, and enhanced services to consumers in their respective regions. New funds would also provide the National PTI with an increase of \$250,000 to provide much needed guidance, support, and coordination to the Regional PTIs.

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 \$15,000 of the increase proposed for fiscal year 2024 would be used to cover the related increase to meet this requirement, for an estimated contribution of \$73,000 from the Demonstration and Training programs.

Approximately \$3 million of funding would be used for new awards under the Braille Training program, a continuation award for the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition, and to support evaluation activities for two technical assistance centers focused on improving outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Demonstration and training programs

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#### **PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES**

(dollars in thousands)

Output Measures	2022	2023	2024
<b>Program funding:</b>			
Technical assistance			
New awards	0	0	0
Continuation awards <sup>1</sup>	\$2,689	\$2,689	\$2,689
Braille training			
New awards	0	0	\$342
Continuation awards	\$342	\$342	0
Parent information and training			
Continuation awards	\$2,700	\$2,700	\$2,700
Supplemental awards	\$65	\$65	\$1,450
Peer review of new award applications	0	0	\$42
Traditionally Underserved Populations	0	0	\$73
Total, Program funding	\$5,796	\$5,796	\$7,296
<b>Number of awards:</b>			
New awards	0	0	3
Continuation awards	15	15	12
Total, Number of awards	15	15	15

#### **PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION**

##### **Performance Measures**

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

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 GPRAs 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),

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

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Demonstration and training programs

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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 Vocational Rehabilitation Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities (CPID) Demonstration Projects and its associated measures. The Department will set targets for all new performance measures based on baselines established in fiscal years 2021, 2022, and 2023.

#### VR-CPID Measures

**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 employed through those career pathways, and the weekly earnings and benefits of those who obtain competitive employment through CPID-funded activities.*

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

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

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Demonstration and training programs

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#### 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.

**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.

Year	Target	Actual
2021	Baseline	60%
2022	Baseline	50
2023	Baseline	
2024		

**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 who become VR program participants.

Year	Target	Actual
2021	Baseline	80%
2022	Baseline	83
2023	Baseline	
2024		

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Demonstration and training programs

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**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.

Year	Target	Actual
2021	Baseline	20%
2022	Baseline	17
2023	Baseline	
2024		

### 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.

Year	Target	Actual
2021	Baseline	91%
2022	Baseline	89
2023	Baseline	
2024		

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

**Measure:** The percentage vocational rehabilitation or employment/employment products and services deemed useful, quality, and relevant.

Year	Target	Actual
2021	Baseline	91%
2022	Baseline	89
2023	Baseline	
2024		

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

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### **Protection and advocacy of individual rights**

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

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2024 Authorization: To be determined<sup>1</sup>

Budget Authority:

2023 Appropriation	2024 Request	Change
\$20,150	\$20,150	0

### **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.

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<sup>1</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2021. Reauthorization for FY 2024 is expected through appropriations action.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Protection and advocacy of individual rights

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Funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years were:

Fiscal Year	(dollars in thousands)
2019	\$17,650
2020	17,650
2021	18,150
2022	19,150
2023	20,150

### FY 2024 BUDGET REQUEST

For fiscal year 2024, the Administration requests \$20.2 million for the PAIR program, level with the fiscal year 2023 appropriation, to help provide information and P&A services to individuals with disabilities. The Department plans to reserve 1.8 percent of the funds requested (\$362,700) to provide training and technical assistance to eligible statewide systems established under this program, as required by the authorizing statute.

During fiscal year 2022, PAIR programs nationwide reported handling 9,022 cases and responded to 22,625 requests for information or referral. Of the individual cases handled by PAIR programs in that year, most were related to education (18 percent), housing (17 percent), and employment (17 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 (25 percent), neurological impairments (15 percent), and other disabilities (13 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 2022, 55 out of the 57 PAIR programs (96 percent) reported that these activities resulted in changes in policies and practices benefiting individuals with disabilities.

The following examples of case services provided in fiscal year 2022 illustrate how PAIR programs assist individuals and, in some cases, bring about systemic change. Funds requested in fiscal year 2024 would support similar activities.

- In December 2021, Disability Rights Maryland (DRM), in partnership with the Maryland Suspension Representation Project (MSRP), successfully reserved a zero-tolerance discipline policy in the Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS). It appeared that PGCPS was using a zero-tolerance discipline approach and was automatically referring students for extended suspension or expulsion for certain offense types. DRM, through its representation of a PGCPS student referred for expulsion, found evidence of this zero-tolerance approach in an illegal behavior contract used in the student's expulsion. MSRP, with DRM taking the lead, informed the district of its concerns regarding the district's zero-tolerance approach to discipline and use of the illegal behavior contract. MSRP included client summaries in the letter to illustrate its concerns and demanded that PGCPS make certain reforms. As a result, PGCPS agreed to, among other things: conduct trainings for all staff where staff will be informed that behavior contracts are not to be used and reminded that Zero Tolerance is not practiced in PGCPS; send a memorandum to all staff reminding



## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Protection and advocacy of individual rights

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them that disciplinary decisions must be made on an individualized, fact specific basis; and add MSRP and DRM to the Community Resources List that is provided to students who are suspended.

- Disability Rights Pennsylvania (DRP) participates in the Amtrak Disability Services/Accessibility Workgroup, a national workgroup organized by Amtrak to monitor its ADA accessibility improvements to its stations, rail cars, and equipment. Amtrak provides updated information to the workgroup about its efforts to come into compliance with the ADA. To date, 103 of 387 train stations have been made fully accessible and an additional 69 have been made accessible except for the platforms. In addition to this work done in 2022, the Workgroup voiced its concerns about the narrow aisle design of the Intercity train cars that Amtrak planned to purchase. This led Amtrak to make a number of adjustments to the design, including increasing the number of accessible seats on each trainset.

### PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

Output Measures	2022	2023	2024
Information inquiries/referrals	23,900	23,000	24,000
Individuals provided case services	9,000	9,000	9,400

### PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

#### Performance Measures

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

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Protection and advocacy of individual rights

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**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
2019	89%	95%
2020	89	74
2021	89	96
2022	89	96
2023	89	
2024	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.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

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### **Supported employment State grants**

(Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VI)

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2024 Authorization: To be determined<sup>1</sup>

Budget Authority:

2023 Appropriation	2024 Request	Change
\$22,548	\$22,548	0

### **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. 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 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.

In addition, States are required, under the amendments to Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act made by WIOA, 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 based on population, using the most recent estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, with no State receiving less than \$300,000, or one-

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<sup>1</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2021. Reauthorization for FY 2024 is expected through appropriations action.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Supported employment State grants

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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)
2019	22,548
2020	22,548
2021	22,548
2022	22,548
2023	22,548

### FY 2024 BUDGET REQUEST

For fiscal year 2024, the Administration requests \$22.5 million for SE State Grants, level with the fiscal year 2023 appropriation, to continue to provide a dedicated source of funding for supported employment services, including significant support for services to youth with the most significant 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.

Even though states have demonstrated a need for funding, 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. Some of the challenges reported by States include limited vendor capacity due to the pandemic; restrictions around use of SE funds, including a requirement that funds be spent on individuals once they are employed, which limits the number of youth clients who qualify for services; availability of VR State Grant funding to support SE services, which has less complicated administrative requirements; and the need for additional staff training, policies and procedures related to utilizing SE funds.

The challenge of meeting these requirements is demonstrated by recent SE State Grant expenditure patterns. Grantees did not use more than \$3.7 million of fiscal year 2021 SE funds. As a result, more than 16 percent of the entire FY 2021 SE appropriation, less set-asides, will return to the Treasury. The amount of funds reverting to Treasury has increased by more than \$1 million since 2019.

In order to respond to the substantial amount of unused funds in both the VR State Grants program and the SE State grants program, the Department has updated its Monitoring and

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Supported employment State grants

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Technical Assistance Guide<sup>1</sup> (MTAG) in collaboration with six VR agency directors and leaders representing the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB). The MTAG explains the process through which the Department will conduct on-site monitoring and off-site reviews of, provide technical assistance to, and review the progress of, VR agencies in 1) maximizing the expenditure and use of Federal funds to improve the quality of services for, and employment outcomes achieved by, individuals with disabilities, and 2) complying with requirements under the Rehabilitation Act. In fiscal year 2023, the Department will monitor 12 agencies selected based on the amount of funds they returned through reallocation or at the end of the project period. Specific to the focus areas addressed during the fiscal year 2023 on-site monitoring and off-site reviews, the VR agency will develop and implement a strategic action plan (SAP) to demonstrate how it will reverse the return of unused funds and maximize the use and expenditure of Federal funds to improve performance and increase employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities. The SAP should—

- identify causes for unused Federal funds and strategies and activities the VR agency will undertake to increase and maximize its ability to expend Federal VR and Supported Employment program grant funds;
- provide a written workable plan for taking action, which contains a timeline for implementation that demonstrates results within a reasonable specified time;
- be supported by documentation (e.g., fiscal reports, data, policies) showing implementation of the actions and results achieved; and
- demonstrate a roadmap and commitment for continuous improvement.

The Department will also continue to analyze expenditure patterns, provide technical assistance, and work with all grantees to better understand their challenges with providing the state dollar match and using SE funds, in order to ensure States provide critical supported employment and extended services for youth with the most significant disabilities, consistent with the intent of the authorizing statute.

Beginning in fiscal year 2018, the Department made changes to the implementation of the SE State Grant program in order to separate SE funds into two awards – one for SE services for youth with the most significant disabilities and one for SE services to non-youth. These changes allow the Department to better track expenditures and compliance with non-Federal match requirements; however, in order to give grantees time to adjust to the changes, the Department did not enforce the matching requirements immediately. The Department will begin enforcing the matching requirement in 2023 by seeking recovery of Federal funds for non-compliant SE expenditures made beginning in fiscal year 2018.

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). In fiscal year 2023, the Department

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<sup>1</sup> [https://rsa.ed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/vr/FFY%202023%20MTAG%20Final%20\(01.20.2023%20update\).pdf](https://rsa.ed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/vr/FFY%202023%20MTAG%20Final%20(01.20.2023%20update).pdf)

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Supported employment State grants

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is meeting the requirement for section 21 funds fully out of Training funds, so all SE funds will be allotted to States. The fiscal year 2024 request includes \$225,000 to meet this requirement.

### PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

(dollars in thousands)

Output Measures <sup>1</sup>	2022	2023	2024
Individuals with the most significant disabilities who exited with SE outcomes in competitive integrated employment	22,784	22,800	22,850
Individuals with the most significant disabilities who received SE services	46,396	46,400	46,450
Youth <sup>2</sup> with the most significant disabilities who received SE services	22,575	22,600	23,650
Traditionally Underserved Populations	\$225	0	\$225

### PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

#### Performance Measures

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

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 previous performance measures, which were reported until fiscal year 2021. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> The output measures data for Supported Employment State Grants are estimates based on program year 2021 data.

<sup>2</sup> Youth is defined as individuals 14 to 24 years old.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Supported employment State grants

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Performance data reported in 2022 are based on data collected under the RSA-911 for program year (PY) 2021 from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022. The Department has reported baseline data for PYs 2020 and 2021 under the new measures for 2021 and 2022.

**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 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.

Year	Target	Actual
2021	Baseline	20
2022	Baseline	20
2023	20	
2024	21	

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

Year	Target	Actual
2021	Baseline	61.3%
2022	Baseline	65.3
2023	65.3%	
2024	66.0	

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

Year	Target	Actual
2021	Baseline	53.8%
2022	Baseline	55.7
2023	55.7%	
2024	56.0	

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

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### **Independent living services for older blind individuals**

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

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2024 Authorization: To be determined <sup>1</sup>

Budget Authority:

2023 Appropriation	2024 Request	Change
\$33,317	\$38,317	+\$5,000

### **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, Medicaid or Medicare.

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 2022 were assistive technology devices and services (provided to 72.8 percent of participants), daily living skills training (58.5 percent), and information and referral services (52.2 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.

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<sup>1</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2021. Reauthorization for FY 2024 is expected through appropriations action.



## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Independent living for older blind individuals

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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)
2019	33,317
2020	33,317
2021	33,317
2022	33,317
2023	33,317

### **FY 2024 BUDGET REQUEST**

For fiscal year 2024, the Administration requests \$38.3 million for the ILOIB program, \$5 million more than the fiscal year 2023 appropriation and the first increase since fiscal year 2014. The requested increase in funds will help ensure ILOIB programs have sufficient funds to hire and retain qualified providers to meet the independent living needs of older individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired. ILOIB providers are reporting challenges in their ability to retain and recruit qualified staff. Of 40 respondents to the OIB Technical Assistance Center's 2022 Needs Assessment, 12 OIB program managers reported that none of their staff members were certified by either the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals or the National Blindness Professional Certification Board. Ten program managers indicated that fewer than half of their staff have a certification, while only five reported that 80 to 100 percent of their staff are certified. The impact of increased operational costs and reduced staff capacity for conducting outreach and providing direct services is reflected in a 23 percent decrease in the number of eligible individuals served by ILOIB programs between 2014 and 2021. The Department would use nearly \$690,000 to provide training and technical assistance to ILOIB grantees and service providers.

In fiscal year 2022, 50,211 individuals received services under the ILOIB program, 61.1 percent of whom were over 75 years of age and about 83.7 percent of whom were still living in a private residence. Approximately 53.6 percent of these individuals were either legally blind or totally blind, and 18.3 percent also had some degree of hearing impairment. Macular degeneration continues to be the most commonly reported eye condition, followed by other causes of visual impairments, 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-aged people. Persons aged 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 (born from 1946 to 1964) continue to age. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2021 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates), 6.0 percent of individuals 65 and older (about 3.3 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-

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Independent living for older blind individuals

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related disabilities) increases with age, with a dramatic increase for individuals in the 75 years and over category, where 22.4 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). In fiscal year 2023, the Department is meeting the requirement for section 21 funds fully out of Training funds, so all ILOIB funds will be allotted to States or reserved for training and technical assistance. The fiscal year 2024 request includes \$383,000 to meet this requirement.

### PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

(dollars in thousands)

Output Measures:	2022	2023	2024
Minimum State award	\$225	\$225	\$225
Number of States at minimum	17	17	15
Average State award	\$620	\$626	\$713
Traditionally Underserved Populations	\$333	\$0	\$383
Training and technical assistance	\$600	\$600	\$690

### PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

#### Performance Measures

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

Due to concerns about the precision of previous performance measures, the Department established five new performance measures designed to measure the performance of the ILOIB program more accurately. The Department reported baseline data under the new measures for fiscal years 2022 and 2023 after which targets were set for fiscal years 2023 and 2024.

**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.*

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**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.

Year	Target	Actual
2021	Baseline	79%
2022	Baseline	84
2023	85%	
2024	85	

**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.

Year	Target	Actual
2021	Baseline	78%
2022	Baseline	83
2023	84%	
2024	84	

**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.

Year	Target	Actual
2021	Baseline	87%
2022	Baseline	90
2023	92%	
2024	92	

**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.

Year	Target	Actual
2021	Baseline	77%
2022	Baseline	90
2023	90%	
2024	90	

**Objective:** *To ensure that State OIB programs demonstrate an efficient and effective use of funds to serve older individuals who are blind.*

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Independent living for older blind individuals

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

<b>Year</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Actual</b>
<b>2021</b>	Baseline	\$942
<b>2022</b>	Baseline	933
<b>2023</b>	\$945	
<b>2024</b>	945	

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

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### **Helen Keller National Center**

(Helen Keller National Center Act)

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2024 Authorization: To be determined<sup>1</sup>

Budget Authority:

2023 Appropriation	2024 Request	Change
\$19,000	\$19,000	0

### **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

The Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults (HKNC or the Center) 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 several 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 11 regional representatives and 12 deaf-blind specialists. Through this network, HKNC assists deaf-blind individuals and their families and provides 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), operated by the Center in collaboration with the New York State Commission for the Blind and the California Department of Rehabilitation Services, provides comprehensive rehabilitation, vocational, and support services to eligible persons who are deaf-blind in their homes, worksites, and communities. CSP is staffed by

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<sup>1</sup> The GEPA extension expired September 30, 2004. Reauthorization for FY 2024 is expected through appropriations action.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Helen Keller National Center

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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, a 71-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 and interpreting services) to deaf-blind individuals.

HKNC also offers a program called the Deaf-Blind Immersion Experience, 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.

### COVID-19 Pandemic Adjustments

Due to COVID-19, HKNC transformed the in-person vocational rehabilitation program into a virtual program approximately halfway through fiscal year 2020. In-person services in New York and other parts of the country were made available as State and local regulations allowed. Although HKNC began the recruitment process to reopen its residential training facilities in early summer 2021, services on campus did not resume until late 2021. HKNC experienced difficulties in recruiting essential staff. The Center falls under the guidelines of the New York State Department of Health and requires a minimum number of nursing staff as well as dormitory staff to reopen the residential facilities. As in-person training increased, HKNC had to reduce the number of individuals that supported virtual training initiatives. The difficulties hiring qualified staff have influenced HKNC's ability to increase the number of program participants living on campus. The Center, however, continues to increase its numbers on campus and is providing virtual and hybrid services at the same time.

### Revenue and Expenses

For fiscal year 2022, HKNC reported total public support and revenues of \$25 million. Funds from the Federal government (\$21.3 million) made up 85 percent of its total revenue. Funding from State grants and contracts amounted to \$2.4 million (10 percent). HKNC received approximately \$495,000 in donations and public support (2 percent) and reported an approximately \$805,000 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.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Helen Keller National Center

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For fiscal year 2022, HKNC incurred total operating expenses of approximately \$23.6 million. Because most of the specialized services required by this population are provided by HKNC staff, salaries, and fringe benefits (approximately \$17.1 million) account for most expenses (72 percent). Other expenses include: building, utilities, and rent (approximately \$760,000, or 3 percent); professional services (approximately \$1.8 million, or 8 percent); client related services (approximately \$685,000, or 3 percent); and other operating expenses (approximately \$3.2 million, or 14 percent).

Funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years were:

Fiscal Year	(dollars in thousands)
2019	\$13,500
2020	16,000
2021	17,000
2022	18,000
2023	19,000

### **FY 2024 BUDGET REQUEST**

For fiscal year 2024, the Administration requests \$19.0 million for HKNC, level with the fiscal year 2023 appropriation, to sustain regional office support for an estimated 1,900 individual consumers, 650 families, and 1,650 agencies and organizations, while also strengthening direct intensive services to approximately 90 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 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.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

Helen Keller National Center

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### PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

Output Measures	2022	2023	2024
Number of individuals served at headquarters:			
Adult training program clients	85	90	90
Specialized training services:			
Transition for high school students	10	15	15
Senior citizens	25	30	30
Individuals with intellectual disabilities	10	15	15
Targeted skills training	10	15	15
Community Services Program	150	165	165
Number of individuals served through regional representatives and deaf-blind specialists:			
Consumers	1,300	1,900	1,900
Families	360	650	650
Agencies/organizations	945	1,650	1,650
HKNC FTE staff	160	175	175

### PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

#### Performance Measures

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

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the unique health and developmental needs of the communities served by HKNC, several of the performance outcomes outlined below indicate notable shifts from past performance. These shifts are typically decreases and are found in performance measures designed to capture outcomes in spaces where service recipients are typically required to either live at HKNC headquarters or have extensive in-person contact with HKNC-affiliated staff. HKNC expects outcomes on these performance indicators to move back toward normality.



## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Helen Keller National Center

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**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 Consumers	Actual # of Adult Consumers (on/off)	Target % of Training goals met	Actual % of Training goals met	Target % Placed in Employment	Actual % Placed in Employment (on/off)	Target % in Less Restrictive Settings	Actual % in Less Restrictive Settings
2019	80	59/38	95%	89%	48%	63/67%	86%	87%
2020	80	86/92	95	87	60	33/50	86	93
2021	80	82/95	95	88	60	10/41	86	12
2022	80	70/91	95	93	60	26/67	86	78
2023	80		95		60		86	
2024	80		95		60		86	

**Additional information:** In fiscal year 2022, HKNC served 70 consumers through its virtual training and on campus programs sponsored by HKNC headquarters and 91 additional off-campus consumers through its NY 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 2022, 26 percent of consumers served by HKNC headquarters and 67 percent of regional consumers participating in the 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.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Helen Keller National Center

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**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
2019	600	505
2020	600	372
2021	600	384
2022	600	258
2023	600	
2024	600	

**Additional information:** These referrals help deaf-blind consumers access resources within their home community that improve their ability to function independently. The expansion of HKNC's field services impacted the number of referrals in 2022 as more individuals were referred to HKNC programs both in and out-of-state.

**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
2019	75%	68%
2020	75	75
2021	75	75
2022	75	74
2023	75	
2024	75	

**Additional information:** This measure provides information on the activities of the field services programs, including the regional representatives and 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.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Helen Keller National Center

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**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
2019	65	55
2020	65	79
2021	65	47
2022	65	54
2023	65	
2024	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
2019	45%	47%
2020	45	35
2021	45	35
2022	45	53
2023	45	
2024	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.

## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### Account Summary Table

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FISCAL YEAR 2024 PRESIDENT'S BUDGET  
(in thousands of dollars)

	Cat Code	2022 Appropriation	2023 Appropriation	2024 President's Budget Request	FY 2024 President's Budget Request Compared to FY 2023 Appropriation		
					Amount	Percent	
<b>Rehabilitation Services</b>							
1. Vocational rehabilitation State grants:							
(a)	Grants to States (RA Title I-A, sections 110 and 111) <sup>1</sup>	M	3,668,471	3,899,057	4,202,679	303,622	7.79%
(b)	Grants to Indians (RA Title I-C)	M	50,650	50,650	51,155	505	1.00%
	Subtotal, Pre-Sequestration	M	3,719,121	3,949,707	4,253,834	304,127	7.70%
	Subtotal, Post-Sequestration	M	3,507,131	3,724,574	4,011,365	286,791	7.70%
2.	Client assistance State grants (RA section 112)	D	13,000	13,000	15,000	2,000	15.38%
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	7,296	1,500	25.88%
5.	Protection and advocacy of individual rights (RA section 509)	D	19,150	20,150	20,150	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	38,317	5,000	15.01%
8.	Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults (HKNCA)	D	18,000	19,000	19,000	0	0.00%
9.	Community Project Funding/Congressionally Directed Spending	D	2,325	0	0	0	—
	Subtotal		143,524	143,199	151,699	8,500	5.94%
	<b>Total</b>		<b>3,862,645</b>	<b>4,092,906</b>	<b>4,405,533</b>	<b>312,627</b>	<b>7.64%</b>
	Discretionary	D	143,524	143,199	151,699	8,500	5.94%
	Mandatory	M	3,719,121	3,949,707	4,253,834	304,127	7.70%

<sup>1</sup> This amount is pre-sequestration.

NOTES:

1) D = discretionary program; M = mandatory programs

2) 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 2022 and 2023 Appropriation columns reflect the 5.7 percent reduction that went into effect on October 1, 2021 and October 1, 2022, respectively.

3) Detail may not add to totals due to rounding.