

## **WORKING TOGETHER TO BETTER SERVE VETERANS WITH DISABILITIES**

Veterans with disabilities, rehabilitation professionals, and businesses that hire and retain veterans with disabilities benefit from collaborative partnerships within the public vocational rehabilitation program. The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and the Veterans Administration (VA) have a long and positive history in working together to assure better employment outcomes for veterans with disabilities.

On May 23, 2011, RSA Commissioner Lynnae M. Ruttledge and Director Ruth A. Fanning, along with the VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Service, reaffirmed their shared commitment and signed an updated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU will ensure that both federal agencies work together to support local relationships between state VR agencies and other entities funded by RSA and the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services program. Services are administered through VA regional offices for the purpose of providing a more comprehensive and integrated program of vocational rehabilitation services for veterans with disabilities. Building on the collaborative relationships at the federal, state, and local levels, the MOU will encourage the development of new relationships and coordination of services in new ways. The intended result is more, better, and in many cases more localized services to veterans with disabilities who want to prepare for, get, or keep a job.

There is an excellent resource for rehabilitation professionals in the 34th **IRI** Institute on Rehabilitation Issues entitled *When Johnny (or Jeannie) Comes Marching Home . . . and Back to Work Linking Veterans Affairs and State Vocational Rehabilitation Services for Service Men and Women* at <http://iriforum.org/download/34IRI.pdf>.

RSA and VR&E look forward to working together with the many partners that working on better outcomes for our veterans with disabilities. Some of the key partners with current activities include the National Rehabilitation Association, the Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation, and the National Council on Independent Living.

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
BETWEEN  
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICE  
AND  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION**

### **A. Purpose**

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Service and the Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) agree to advance, improve, and expand the employment opportunities for disabled veterans committing themselves to active cooperation and coordination in implementing the objectives set forth in this agreement.

Both VR&E Service and RSA believe that employment outcomes for disabled veterans can be improved through a closer working relationship. This memorandum of understanding (MOU) establishes the framework for VR&E Service and RSA to encourage their respective Departments, funded entities, and offices to establish cooperative agreements to provide improved services to their mutual participants.

### **B. Authority**

This agreement is authorized in accordance with 38 U.S.C. §§3115 (a) and 3116(a) and section 12(b) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (the "Act"), as amended (29 U.S.C. § 709(b)).

### **C. Terms**

VR&E Service and RSA will each appoint an individual to:

- Serve as the point of contact for joint VR&E and RSA activities within their respective Departments.

- Serve as the contact person for state and local agencies and offices to provide information and guidance regarding joint VR&E and RSA activities.
- Assist in establishing cooperative agreements between State

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Agencies pursuant to section 101(a)(11) of the Act (29 U.S.C. § 721(a)(11), and VA Regional Offices (RO). Such agreements are intended to identify opportunities at the local level for collaboration and partnership to improve services and increase employment outcome for disabled veterans. VR&E and RSA, through the assigned liaisons, will share information and coordinate activities to carry out and support the objectives of this MOU.

Specifically, they will:

- Develop and disseminate national guidance about statutory requirements of the VR&E and the public VR program under the Act, and identify opportunities for partnership.
- Exchange information about best practices and joint service provisions at the local levels, to include any local level pilot programs and existing local level collaborations.
- Invite the other to appropriate national meetings and training conferences for the purpose of familiarizing both parties with the services, requirements, best practices and issues relating to collaboration of both systems at the local level.
- Assign staff to participate in workgroups on topics or issues of mutual interest, such as participation in RSA Institutes of Rehabilitation Issues prime study groups.
- Provide technical assistance and support to any VR office or VA RO that requests assistance in facilitating the development and/or operation of a state or local agreement.

This agreement does not in itself authorize the expenditure or reimbursement of any funds, and nothing in this agreement obligates either party to expend appropriations or other funds, or to enter into any contract or other obligation. Further, this agreement shall not be interpreted to limit, supersede, or otherwise affect either party's normal operations or decisions in carrying out its mission or statutory or regulatory duties. This agreement does not restrict the parties from participating in similar activities or arrangement with other entities.

This agreement will become effective upon the date of signature of the underlined parties and will remain in effect until terminated by either or both parties, but will be jointly reviewed at five year intervals from the date of signature. This agreement may be terminated by either party with 30 calendar days written notice. This agreement may be modified subject to the mutual written consent of the parties or their designees.

**Ruth A. Fanning, Director**  
Vocational Rehabilitation and  
Employment Service  
Department of Veterans Affairs

**Lynnae M. Rutledge, Commissioner**  
Rehabilitation Services Administration  
Department of Education