

Vocational Rehabilitation--Services for American Indians with Disabilities (CFDA Nos. 84.128 H, 84.250 A-B, 84.250 C)

I. Legislation¹

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, P.L. 93-112, as amended by P.L. 102- 569 and P.L. 103-73, Title I, Section 130 (29 U.S.C. 711 and 750) (expires September 30,1997).

II. Funding History

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Appropriation</u>	<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Appropriation</u>
1981	\$ 650,000	1989	\$ 3,625,750
1982	624,000	1990	3,821,000
1983	650,000	1991	4,082,000
1984	715,000	1992	4,470,000
1985	1,430,000	1993	6,203,000
1986	1,340,000	1994	6,615,000
1987	3,202,500	1995	10,271,000
1988	3,448,750	1996	10,572,000

III. Analysis of Program Performance

A. Goals and Objectives

The purpose of this program is to support projects that provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians with disabilities who live on federal or state reservations. The services are expected to be similar to those provided under the Vocational Rehabilitation Basic State Grants Program.

B. Strategies to Achieve the Goals

Services Supported

In FY 1996, 35 Vocational Rehabilitation Service projects for American Indians with disabilities were funded; 32 were continuations (including extensions) and 3 were new projects. These three-year projects are awarded on a competitive basis to governing bodies of tribes, but may be extended for up to two additional years. The projects provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who live on federal or state reservations.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Service projects for American Indians with disabilities provide comprehensive rehabilitation services, including diagnostic services, vocational assessment, physical

¹Beginning in FY 1987, funds for this program were provided through a set-aside of the Vocational Rehabilitation State Grants program. The Rehabilitation Act also requires that not less than 0.5 percent and not more than 1.5 percent of the appropriation in FY 1996 for Vocational Rehabilitation Basic State Grants be set-aside for grants for American Indians.

and mental restoration (including services traditionally used by Indian tribes), vocational training, placement, and post-employment services. Individual projects also conduct outreach activities designed to acquaint potential clients with the range of services available. Approximately 5,000 American Indians with disabilities were served with FY 1995 funds.

Strategic Initiatives

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) provides grants to projects and monitors the projects. The governing bodies of the tribes provide rehabilitation services directly, by contract, or by purchase of service agreements. The projects, to be funded, must be developed in consultation with the designated state units. The projects may develop a cooperative working arrangement with the designated State units and may refer the American Indian with disabilities to such designated state units for services if the individual so desires.

RSA regional offices have provided technical assistance to individual projects, and have included project staff in meetings related to the provision of vocational rehabilitation services. The American Indians are included under RSA's Cultural Diversity Initiative; activities that support this initiative include outreach, training, and technical assistance to funded projects, applicants, and potential applicants. Technical assistance is also available through the Regional Rehabilitation Continuing Education Programs.

In the past, the quality of many of the applications received under the Indian program was inadequate to be considered for funding. The Department has been working to improve the quality of applications received for this program by sending copies of individual peer reviewer's evaluations and the panel summary to unsuccessful grantees, and by providing technical assistance to prospective applicants (e.g., sharing copies of the top-ranked application from the previous year's competition). These steps improved the quality of applications received for FY 1995 competition and are expected to continue to do so.

C. Program Performance—Indicators of Impact and Effectiveness

Program indicators are under development.

IV. Planned Studies

RSA plans to use FY 1998 funds to support an examination of this program. The most recent RSA evaluation of this program, conducted in 1985, was limited to the project conducted by the Navajo Nation (NVRP). NVRP was the first project funded under this program authority and, with annual funding of more than three times the average annual grant for other projects funded under this program, remains by far the largest project. In addition, a 1987 study funded by RSA broadly examined the special problems and needs of American Indians with disabilities, on and off the reservations. Since FY 1992, funding for this program has almost tripled, primarily as a result of the increase in the statutorily mandated minimum set-aside. Currently, there is little reliable information on the operation and performance of these projects. The new study would examine client characteristics, services provided, outcomes, and management of the American Indian VR Services program. The study would also examine the relationship between characteristics, services received, and employment outcomes for American Indians served under the VR State Grants program and those served under the American Indian program.

V. Sources of Information

1. Follow-up on the Effectiveness of Tribally Operated Vocational Rehabilitation Projects (Flagstaff, AZ: American Indian Rehabilitation Research and Training Center, Northern Arizona University, 1991).
2. Service, Research and Training Needs of American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Indian Rehabilitation Projects (Flagstaff, AZ: American Research and Training Center, Northern Arizona University, November 1989).
3. Study of the Special Problems and Needs of American Indians with Handicaps Both On and Off the Reservation (Flagstaff, AZ: Native American Research and Training Center, Northern Arizona University, November 1987).

VI. Contacts for Further Information

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