

## **Statewide Assessment**

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### **I. State Unified Plan**

Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI), the Designated State Unit for South Dakotan's who are blind or visually impaired submits this attachment to address the "Needs Assessment" section of the State Unified Plan. The results reflect comprehensive statewide needs assessment conducted in FFY 2011 for the 2012 state plan and is conducted every three years. This assessment was conducted in cooperation by the public vocational rehabilitation agencies in South Dakota (Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) and SBVI), in addition to the State Rehabilitation Councils (Board of SBVI and Board of Vocational Rehabilitation).

The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired has conducted an assessment of the needs of all individuals with disabilities as per the Needs Assessment section of the State Unified Plan and the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act, and state plan requirements. Public vocational rehabilitation includes workforce partners in this assessment process to assure that the workforce needs of the state to include individuals with disabilities were addressed. This assessment includes the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with most significant disabilities, individuals with disabilities who have been unserved and underserved including individuals who are minorities and all components of the Statewide Workforce Investment System.

### **II. 2012 Triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment**

In carrying out the Triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), SBVI has adapted its process after the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) model of Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment development, and in compliance with the 2011 instructions from RSA regarding the assessment process.

The South Dakota SBVI CSNA was guided by an Executive Committee composed of Directors of the Designated State Units (DRS and SBVI), key planning staff, and Chairs from the Boards of Vocational Rehabilitation, Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC).

In addition to establishing the Executive CSNA committee, the South Dakota agencies (SBVI and DRS) worked directly with the Region 8 TACE in developing data sets, and in designing, and interpreting needs assessment surveys and instruments.

The primary role for the Executive Committee was to facilitate the development of and commitment to the emerging goals of this specific CSNA cycle. The Chairs of all three Boards worked with the respective Directors and staff in engaging the collaboration of their general Board membership. The information sources that constitute the foundation of the SBVI CSNA came from the review of the following data, documents, public hearings, listening sessions and surveys:

- American Community Survey and Census Data; compiled and analyzed in partnership with Region 8 TACE
- SBVI 911 Year End Program Data for 2009 and 2010
- A Report of VR Extant Data Analysis for Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (South Dakota) Jan. 21, 2011, Sukyeong Pi, Ph.D. Research Associate, Office of Rehabilitation and Disability Studies.
- Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Board Meeting; Indicator 14 results from 2007-08 Exiters, Dr. Greg Cooch
- Post High School Transition Survey 2010; Black Hills Special Services Cooperative
- SBVI Consumer Satisfaction surveys 2009/10
- Consumer Satisfaction Longitudinal Report
- Project Skills Year End Data 2010
- Project Skills Survey 2009
- Analysis of FFY 2010 Year End Results of Federal Program Evaluation Standards
- FFY 2010 Year End Results of All Cases
- 2009 Joint meeting of the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (BSBVI); Board of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR); Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) March 10, 2009
- Public Listening Session Notes; Kyle SD May 14, 2010
- Eagle Butte Listening Session; Eagle Butte, April 22, 2010
- Board of SBVI Video Conference Public Meeting: Aberdeen, Pierre, Rapid City and Sioux Falls - April 27, 2010

- SBVI Public Listening Session in conjunction with National Federation of the Blind of SD State Convention – May 7, 2010
- Partners In Policy Making: Sioux Falls 2010 Public Listening Session April 24, 2010
- Partners In Policy Making: Sioux Falls 2010 Public Listening Session April 18, 2009
- Key Informant Interviews:
  - Dan Rounds: Community Rehabilitation Programs
  - Mary Modena: Sioux Falls Multicultural Center; Minorities
  - Bill Molseed; South Dakota Workforce Programs
  - Patrick Czerny: Dakota Link, Assistive Technology
- SBVI Counselor Rehabilitation Needs Survey
- Unsuccessful Outcome (28) Survey

Attachment 4.11(a) will document the results of a comprehensive, statewide assessment, by relating the identified needs jointly developed by the SBVI administration and the SBVI Board (SRC). Needs will be described in this attachment and related to specific agency goals when possible. Certain needs that were described, but were not necessarily statewide needs, or in some cases beyond the immediate scope of VR services, will be addressed in terms of agency “response”. The sum of this attachment reflects the SBVI commitment to respond as completely as possible to the range of needs brought out through the CSNA process.

**1) The Needs Of Individuals With Disabilities Who Have The Most Significant Disabilities, Including Their Need For Supported Employment Services**

“Individual with a Most Significant Disability” means an individual with a disability who meets the criteria for having a significant disability and *in addition* has serious limits in two or more functional capacities (such as, but not limited to, mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome. Individuals who meet the criteria for this Priority Level I category are determined to be individuals with the “Most Significant Disability”. The needs identified for this category were as follows:

- a) **Transitions for Students with Disabilities including students with the most significant disabilities:** SBVI has included in the 2012 State Plan a goal to address the input regarding the needs of students

with disabilities transitioning from secondary school. The agency will continue to build on its successful program serving students with the most significant disabilities exiting the school systems. The Comprehensive Needs Assessment points to several reoccurring themes including enhancing mentoring programs for transition students with a priority of mentoring programs for transition students attending the South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (SDRC) especially for evening and weekend activities at the SDRC.

Also identified is the fact that the transition students have benefited from Project Skills, which is a paid work experience through a cooperative agreement between the schools and SBVI.

**b) VR Education:** This is a category that SBVI and its Board are currently working on and one that continues to require attention. We heard several comments regarding teacher education regarding transition planning, particularly as it pertains to students who have significant visual impairments. One of the agency's goals will be to facilitate student's movement from school to post secondary education and/or employment. The agency will also be working on a goal to further develop outreach methods so that other referral sources, employers, and citizens who are blind or visually impaired are aware of the unique services provided by SBVI.

**c) Transportation:** Transportation emerged as a systemic issue across South Dakota. All planning categories identified the absence of transportation alternatives as issues for South Dakotans as potential impediments for individuals with disabilities in accessing work opportunities, services, and community resources. Individuals with the most significant disabilities were the not an exception to this need.

**Response Statement:** Access to transportation appears to be a systemic issue for citizens of South Dakota, and is not restricted to citizens with disabilities. While much of the needed response lies outside the scope of SBVI, the response of the agency will be to maximize:

1. Existing internal transportation support capacity within the case service system; and

2. Influence the larger systems of South Dakota that may have the capacity to expand the state's transportation resources.

**b) Life Transition Supports & Safety Net SSA Public Assistance:**

Results of the needs assessment revealed that consumers are struggling with managing the changes in personal and work relationships that occur in their personal lives over the course of their VR programs. The concern and confusion experienced by consumers over their SSA benefits and other safety net assistance, including the use of Social Security PASS Plan supports and the availability of benefits counseling can have a negative impact on their motivational state for work.

**c) Assistive Technology:** SBVI received a number of comments regarding the use of assistive technology for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Included in these recommendations were the need for continued training, both for consumers and staff, equipment exchange, deaf/blind communication devices, and making sure that SBVI stays actively engaged in the area of assistive technology at the state level to insure accessibility for all individuals in South Dakota who need to make use of the different kinds of technology.

**d) Mental Health Services:** Mental Health issues appeared in the needs assessment more as a broad systemic service issue rather than a specific SBVI VR need. However, SBVI depends on certain mental health supports being in place in a community in order to successfully execute an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) for individuals who, in addition to blindness or significant visual impairment, also have severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI). This topic also interacts with rural service issues where in the more remote South Dakota communities basic supports for individuals with SPMI are minimal or absent.

**e) Pre-Placement Training:** The CSNA needs assessment results indicated a growing need to assist consumers obtain the skills and supports necessary for successful daily living, money management, and skills to develop and maintain personal and work relationships. The absence of life management skills, including soft skills in work settings, undermines the effectiveness of VR programming. To

address this emergent rehabilitation need a new goal will be introduced into the SBVI State Plan. It will be designed to ensure that SBVI consumers receive services that allow them to maximize their ability to communicate, interact and perform to their potential in employment settings. Strategies to implement this goal are also being developed by the agency.

## **2) The Needs Of Individuals With Disabilities Who Are Minorities And Have Been Unserved Or Underserved**

SBVI surveyed consumers and staff regarding possible underservice for individuals with disabilities with an emphasis on serving individuals who are members of minority communities. In addition, as part of the CSNA, SBVI submitted its 2010 911 Data to for an impartial analysis intended, in part, to determine if the patterns of service in SBVI suggested underserved or underservice for any individuals, including minorities. The analysis was completed by Sukyeong Pi, Ph.D. Research Associate, Office of Rehabilitation and Disability Studies. Her analysis of the South Dakota Data concluded from the perspective of data, there was no evidence of under-service of minorities by SBVI in South Dakota. In addition further analysis of closure rates shows SBVI is closing minorities, including Native Americans, at a rate higher than the percentage of those minorities in the general South Dakota population. The data analysis indicated that minorities were being served at appropriate levels, but suggested that the agency may have some under-service concerns in some remote rural counties. At the qualitative level of the CSNA, communities and SBVI staff reported what they perceived as needs for minorities, unserved and underserved. Those perceived needs were as follows:

**a) Transportation:** Transportation emerged as a systemic issue across South Dakota. All planning categories identified the absence of transportation alternatives as issues for South Dakotans as potential impediments for individuals with disabilities in accessing work opportunities, services, and community resources. Minority communities reported this need frequently and often in relationship to very rural communities with few or no public transportation options.

### **Response Statement:**

The response of the agency will be to maximize:

1. Existing internal transportation support capacity within the case service system; and
2. Influence the larger service systems of South Dakota that may have the capacity to expand the state's transportation resources.

**b) Life Transition Supports & Safety Net SSA Public Assistance:**

SBVI has committed to a goal of strengthening the agency's ability to provide services to the ever changing minority population in South Dakota.

**Response statement:**

In response to South Dakota's largest minority population; Native Americans, SBVI commits to continue cooperation with the Section 121 American Indian Projects in South Dakota. SBVI has cooperative agreements with all the Section 121 projects and an SBVI staff member is assigned as the liaison between the projects and the Division of SBVI.

- 1) The Division continues to recruit individuals from minority backgrounds for counseling, rehabilitation teaching and other positions in the agency.
- 2) The Division regularly invites the Section 121 Project staff to conferences or other training sessions sponsored by the Division.
- 3) In-service training needs assessments include the 121 American Indian Programs.
- 4) Employees and consumers of SBVI participate in the Native American cultural events to learn strategies for addressing cultural issues when serving South Dakotans of American Indian heritage.
- 5) SRC membership includes a representative of the Directors of the 121 American Indian Projects.
- 6) The SBVI Counselor Manual includes specific guidance on providing culturally sensitive services to American Indians with disabilities.
- 7) SBVI staff has done outreach activities on American Indian reservations during promotion of National Disability Employment Awareness Month and in conjunction with Reservations events such as health fairs.
- 8) The Division has been providing training and technical assistance to schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.
- 9) The Division continues working with the 121 American Indian Projects to update the cooperative agreements to better

coordinate services between the 121 Programs and SBVI to ensure that individuals with blindness and/or severe visual impairments are being adequately served.

**d) Language/Culture:** Communication and cultural issues were expressed in qualitative inputs as issues for minority groups and under/unserved populations. The impediments were described in the framework of communication, trust and connection. The service implications of these three impediments depended on the specific minority community and their history. Many of those histories were further complicated in the refugee communities. The refugee communities were described in a category separate from the indigenous minority populations.

**Response statement:** SBVI has taken the following additional steps to assure equal access individuals with disabilities from other minority groups:

- 1) Sioux Falls is experiencing an increase in individuals with cultural diversity. SBVI has made arrangements with Lutheran Social Services for foreign language interpreting. The data as well as key informant interviews indicate growing numbers of specific minority communities seeking opportunity in South Dakota.
- 2) SBVI will continue to utilize organizations such as Lutheran Social Services and the Multicultural Center to bridge impediments of communication, trust and connection in order that the agency can more effectively conduct needs assessment, support referrals and service delivery.

**e) Rural Citizen Supports:** Some South Dakota rural communities are so sparsely populated that the economy of scale in these areas prohibit the maintenance of critical levels of the provider supports essential to supporting a VR program. The data suggests that some rural counties may be underserved, but the South Dakota response to any underservice cannot be a singular statewide strategy, but rather must be built around the local and regional economic realities.

**Response statement:** SBVI commits to the following activities to address the possibility of underservice in rural counties:

- 1) SBVI will work with SBVI district office staff to identify specific areas of underservice in South Dakota; concentrating on specific



service needs in rural communities and feasible models of service response for those needs to blind and visually impaired consumers.

- 2) SBVI will work with the larger Workforce system of partners to use the system of resources to meet service needs in rural areas.
- 3) SBVI will continue to collaborate with the current Community Rehabilitation Program system of services to create new models of service to address needs for rural services.
- 4) SBVI will utilize the increasing access to technology in rural areas to further the provision of basic VR services and assistive technology to blind and visually impaired consumers in rural counties.

**f) Interagency Service Collaboration:** Frequently, responders described impediments and subsequent needs that called for actions outside the SBVI/VR scope of services. When this occurred, responders suggested turning to interagency collaboration and cooperation to tackle the broad systems issues that called for responses outside the VR scope. In response to this range of needs, SBVI is developing a goal and strategies to insure that partner agencies, as well as SBVI consumers are aware of the specific and unique services that are provided by SBVI staff.

**g) Assistive Technology:** Assistive Technology was described as a possible means by which both language barriers and services in some rural communities could be partially bridged. SBVI staff and their Board have a specific interest in ensuring that that the agency staff are well trained and positioned to offer assistance both to their consumers, and to other agency partners and employers.

**Response statement:**

- 1) Explore augmentative communication devices with Dakotalink as potential methods to bridge communications;
- 2) Utilize existing technology in SBVI to reach into the most rural communities that may be determined to be underserved.

**3) The Needs Of Individuals With Disabilities Who Are Served Through Other Components Of The Statewide Workforce Investment System.**

South Dakota has a comprehensive and coordinated public and private statewide workforce investment system. There is a partnership of agencies and employer resources under the guidance of the South Dakota Workforce Development Council. Public vocational rehabilitation is represented on the State Workforce Council and the Executive Director of State Workforce Council is a member of the Board of SBVI (SRC). In addition to the methods of identifying needs described elsewhere in this attachment, SBVI personnel partner with the state workforce system on local workforce boards, and by attending and presenting at statewide workforce conferences.

Public vocational rehabilitation analyzes employment trends and labor market demands as an agency represented on the South Dakota Career Council. Annually, SBVI participates with WIA on follow-up studies as to placements, retention, and wages. All of these initiatives allow SBVI to guide services and resources in higher demand job areas as well as fields that will provide good wages and careers for individuals with blindness and visual impairments.

A significant need for individuals who are served through the workforce investment system is the coordination of services and funding with the vocational rehabilitation programs. Because of this need, the South Dakota public vocational rehabilitation programs and the Department of Labor issued a joint memorandum to the Vocational Rehabilitation offices, One-Stop Career Centers, and the Career Learning Centers. This memorandum addresses the confusion regarding the level of services available when funded through the WIA.

In the South Dakota CSNA the SBVI staff survey indicated a high level of satisfaction with the current Work Force Partners system of services. Any needs appeared to be localized in certain communities and will be addressed through SBVI representatives and workforce teams at the local level.

In a Key Informant Interview with Bill Molseed, the South Dakota Work Force Investment Administrator, two recommendations stood out for the Work Force System. Mr. Molseed expressed his support of the services that offer formal certification of readiness to work to help persons with disabilities access to entry level work (i.e. National Career Readiness

Scale). He also strongly encouraged and supported broad efforts of public education that would help employers and the public understand the productive capacity of individuals with disabilities.

**Response Statement:** SBVI is developing a goal to ensure a strong statewide community SBVI presence and partnerships with business, service providers, schools and service organizations. This will involve specific outreach and education efforts with strategies to support those efforts. SBVI will also utilize opportunities for public education through Central Office staff as well as local offices to promote the public's understanding of the capability of persons with blindness and visual impairments.

#### **4) Assessment of the need to establish, develop or improve Community Rehabilitation Programs**

The CSNA surveys and forums gave evidence that the public and SBVI staff are looking for additional, enhanced resources to serve their clients through the provider world (Community Rehabilitation Programs). The data indicates that there is a staff perception that some change is needed in the provider service configuration to continue to effectively serve blind and visually impaired consumers. This involves primarily specific training for CRP staff regarding blindness and visual impairment. The various responses to needs identified for the Community Rehabilitation programs are not collected in one dedicated goal but rather distributed throughout the SBVI goals and strategies contained in attachment 4.11 (c).

The primary needs identified that relate to the South Dakota Community Rehabilitation Programs were:

- a) Pre-Placement:** In the CRP dimension of service provision, there was commentary on the impediments to employment presented by the lack of skills necessary to attract the positive attention of an employer; both interpersonal and occupational. The CSNA needs assessment results indicated a growing need to assist blind and visually impaired consumers with skills and supports necessary for successful daily living, money management, personal, and work relationships. These adult life management skills, including soft skills in work settings, undermine the effectiveness of VR programming. To address this emergent rehabilitation need a new goal has been introduced into the SBVI State Plan. The new goal will be to ensure that SBVI consumers receive services that allow them to maximize

their ability to communicate, interact and perform to their potential in employment settings.

**b) Life Transitions Skills:** Unlike Pre-placement Training, the needs in this category would not be focused on job site/employer/public relations skills, but more on adult competencies of daily living. This category also emerged as a need and was often connected to the CRP program planning dimension. The needs tended to be expressed in terms of daily living competencies such as budgeting, maintaining housing, some references to medical management and occasionally personal relationships. There appeared to be a sense that daily living skill instability in the personal lives of consumers was making it increasingly hard for counselors and CRP providers to provide VR services. The surveys of unsuccessful consumers revealed that many individuals simply weren't ready for work related services until they were able to master daily living skills and stabilize their medical issues.

**Response Statement:** SBVI intends to focus on providing training to raise awareness and understanding of blindness and visual impairments and related functional limitations; coordinate vocational rehabilitation services with the Special Education system; increase and strengthen transition services for students with blindness who are exploring their employment future; and expand and maintain transition services that have demonstrated effectiveness (Project Skills, Project Search, Youth Leadership Forum, Catch the Wave). SBVI has a real resource in their Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (SDRC) in Sioux Falls. Services at SDRC will be prioritized to address specific services and training in blindness related issues.

**c) Job Placement/Coaching:** Because of turnover and sometimes a minimal recruiting pool for potential job coaches in rural communities, issues of under trained job coaches were brought up as impediments to employment. This is particularly true regarding services for the blind and visually impaired. There were also concerns from both staff and consumers regarding low pay for job placement providers, which creates turnover in these positions.

## **Goals and Strategies**

Findings from the statewide needs assessment and a number of other activities are utilized to identify goals and strategies to improve services. Goals and priorities are addressed in attachment 4.11(c)(1) through a number of activities planned with input elicited from the Board of SBVI, consumers of services and other partners in vocational rehabilitation. Strategies are addressed attachment 4.11(d). In addition to the statewide needs assessment, the following activities are instrumental in developing appropriate state goals and priorities and strategies for use of Title I funds in innovation and expansion activities:

- Consumer Satisfaction Surveys;
- Public Meetings;
- Focus Groups;
- Case file reviews;
- Conferences and Seminars;
- Board Strategic Planning Sessions;
- Surveys of staff;
- Input from consumer organizations;
- Agency data

The results reported for the state wide needs assessment for this state plan submission have been analyzed and goals/strategies developed with the full input of the Board of SBVI to address identified needs. Future state plan updates will address results from activities that provide information pertinent to goals and priorities and strategies to address innovation and expansion activities. Collaboration between the State Workforce Investment Council, Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, Statewide Independent Living Council and other entities in the workforce, education and social service systems will occur to ensure continuity of policies and procedures for service provision.