

II. STATE UNIFIED PLAN

A. Vision and Goals

1. Vision, Goals, and Challenges

[Federal Planning Guidance: Provide the State's comprehensive vision of a workforce investment system, including broad economic, education, training, workforce development and related goals. Describe any challenges to achieving your vision, including any economic development, legislative or reorganization initiatives anticipated that could impact on the performance and effectiveness of your State's workforce investment system. Describe how each of the programs included in the plan will contribute to achieving these goals.]

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board will coordinate and establish policy for conducting employment and training activities within the workforce investment system created by the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999, including all activities conducted in and through Arkansas' One-Stop career centers.

The vision statement approved by the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board on November 9, 1999, is as follows:

A globally recognized workforce in Arkansas —educated, trained, skilled—with the character and work ethic needed to excel in a changing economy.

The mission statement approved by the state board on December 14, 1999 is as follows:

To establish a unified, flexible, accountable workforce training system implemented through the collaboration of business, industry, labor and citizens, and characterized by accessible and responsive one-stop career development networks. The system will offer employers a resource for workers in existing and emerging occupations and empower Arkansans to receive employment services as well as job-specific training.

On January 11, 2000, the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board met and discussed the challenges to achieving the vision for Arkansas' workforce in the areas of economic development, legislation and reorganization initiatives. They also discussed the goals for accomplishing this vision.

The daylong work-session included members of the state board, as well many representatives of state agencies and local JTPA, Welfare-to-Work, School-to-Work, and TANF providers. Audience participation and input into the plan were invited. During the session, members of the board and the audience divided into discussion groups to give written input into the plan. The

main purpose of the session was to give direction to the workforce investment system so that all populations of Arkansas were addressed. Because of the diversity of the participants, a broad range of issues, including the needs of public housing residents, were discussed, and included in the list of challenges and goals included in this section, as well as in Part D, Needs Assessment.

The discussions on challenges, goal, and needs began with a summary of information from “A Plan for the Future”, developed by the Arkansas Workforce Development Commission March 31, 1998. Members of this commission included 24 members, including 7 business, industry, and labor representatives; 2 members of the Arkansas Senate; 2 members of the Arkansas House of Representatives; 2 public school teachers; 1 member of the General Assembly appointed by the Black Caucus; 1 member of the General Assembly appointed by the Women’s Caucus; 1 president or chancellor representing two-year institutions of higher learning; 1 president or chancellor representing four-year institutions of higher learning; 1 technical institute president or director; 1 person representing adult education; 1 local school district superintendent; and the director of the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, Employment Security Department, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, and Arkansas Department of Education. Care was taken to assure that female and minority members were included on the Commission. Specialists who contributed to the compilation of data included representatives of labor, private business, education at all levels from early childhood to higher education, economic development.

Board members and other participants at the January 11 meeting began with this information, and considered a broad range of other issues during their discussion groups. From their input the following challenges and goals were summarized:

Major challenges to achieving the vision are:

- Inadequate education/skill level of workforce, especially for high-tech jobs
 - Meeting this challenge will be a main focus of the Arkansas workforce investment system. Most WIA-funded activities will have goals to address this challenge.
- Lack of work ethic in some workers, particularly in categories including low-waged jobs and youth entering the workforce
 - Local programs, especially those for youth and for participants who receive public assistance, will include job-readiness skills. The need for these skills will be assessed and documented as part of the Individual Service Strategies, with appropriate training given. In addition, information and encouragement

concerning work ethic and job-readiness skills will be incorporated as part of the core services of each One-Stop center.

- Insufficient coordination between employers and education/training professionals
 - Local boards, through the One-Stop system, will act as catalysts to facilitate information and coordination between employers and education. The goal of coordination between employers and education must be addressed in each local plan.
- Failure of job-seekers and employers to make optimum use of existing workforce development programs
 - Through the One-Stop system both job-seekers and employers will become better informed about existing programs and will be encouraged to use these programs. One-Stop centers are expected to be creative in ensuring that individuals are aware of the services provided at the centers and in presenting information to the public.
- Sometimes inefficient, ineffective, and unresponsive K-12 and non-baccalaureate education and job-training system
 - The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, through Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999, is charged with the responsibility of evaluating the educational system of the state and making recommendations for change.
- Lack of clear and definite communication between the K-12 system and preschool and postsecondary schools
 - The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, through Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999, is charged with the responsibility of evaluating the educational system of the state and making recommendations for change.
- Lack of motivation to increase skill and education level
 - The coordination between providers of public assistance and the workforce investment system will assist in motivation to increase skill and education levels. In addition, local areas are encouraged to be creative in informing individuals about the rewards of increasing skill and education levels.
- Lack of awareness of the availability of higher-paying jobs for people who receive increased education/training

- Information will be available through all One-Stop centers. Local areas are encouraged to be creative in advertising the availability of information at the centers.
- Duplication of services and programs, which creates an inefficient system
 - Memoranda of understanding and cross-training of One-Stop partners are two ways that this challenge will be met. In addition to memoranda of understanding, One-Stop centers are required to have regular meetings to cross-train partners on other programs, including eligibility for those programs. Service-mapping sessions are encouraged as a method to eliminate duplication of service.
- Lack of a clearly defined role and scope in some individual institutions and agencies
 - Meeting this challenge will be part of the evaluation of the educational system as authorized in Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999.
- Convincing Arkansans of reasons for investing in an improved workforce
 - Advertising, information, and cooperation between various segments of the population are the keys to meeting this challenge. Employers want results, and success breeds success. Local areas must be creative in convincing Arkansas of reasons for investing in an improved workforce.
- Confidentiality regulations of certain agencies which creates barriers to service
 - State agencies will work together to meet this challenge while retaining confidentiality.

Major goals of the Arkansas workforce investment system and strategies for achieving these goals are:

- Prepare the state's unemployed and underemployed for rewarding, well-paying jobs
 - Arkansas is a diverse state with regionally different employment opportunities and challenges. The state board will assist local boards in identifying specific needs of the various areas and developing strategies for meeting the needs of the unemployed and underemployed in those areas.
- Create an integrated system that upgrades skills of existing employees
 - Local areas are required to address the needs of the unemployed, but to assist the employed in upgrading skills. The main vehicle for doing this is a One-Stop

Career Development Network that is accessible to all individuals, and through program-specific programs designed for existing employees. Local boards will work with private industry to create and support these programs.

- Support the workforce training needs of employers, including facilitating communication with training providers
 - One-Stop centers will serve as a clearinghouse for education and employers to communicate in meeting the needs of employers. In addition, apprenticeship programs will be encouraged.
- Define clearly the role of each segment of the educational system and coordinate these segments
 - The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board will study the role of each segment of the education system and make recommendation for change as appropriate. In addition, service to individuals through various segments of the educational system will be coordinated through local workforce investment systems.
- Eliminate duplication among new and existing programs and providers
 - Memoranda of understand and cross-training of One-Stop partners are two ways that this will achieved. In addition to memoranda of understanding, One-Stop centers are required to have regular meetings to cross-train partners on other programs, including eligibility for those programs. Service-mapping sessions are encouraged as a method to eliminate duplication of service.
- Improve and expand the system of cooperative projects and over-all effort between employers and schools
 - The One-Stop systems will be catalysts to facilitate the communication between employers and schools in order to improve and expand the cooperative efforts.
- Ensure that high school graduates have the basic skills needed for further education or work
 - The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, through Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999, is charged with the responsibility of evaluating the educational system of the state and making recommendations for change. In addition, local areas will assist in basic skills development through youth programs coordinated by local Youth Councils.

- Implement competency-based certification programs for instructors and students
 - The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, through Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999, is charged with the responsibility of evaluating the educational system and recommendation of such programs. This will be done after the state workforce investment system is operational.
- Provide incentives through a skilled workforce for higher-paying business and industry to expand within the state and/or move into the state
 - A priority for local workforce investment systems will be to increase the skills level of individuals through such activities as youth programs, apprenticeship programs, advertisement of opportunities for individuals with increased skills, and encouragement for high-tech education. Local areas are encouraged to be creative in forming education-business linkages in order to increase the skill level of individuals. It is anticipated that an increased skill level will attract higher-paying jobs.
- Provide access to career planning and preparation services for all interested Arkansans
 - This will be available at all One-Stop centers.
- Offer labor market information that is current and accurate, including information about available jobs and the skills required for those jobs
 - This will be available at all One-Stop centers.
- Develop and implement a statewide management information system that simplifies intake, case management, data collection, and reporting, as well as allows for comparative analyses
 - This is currently being developed through a cooperative effort of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, the Arkansas Employment Security Department, and the Arkansas Department of Information Services.

Specific strategies for meeting these state challenges and goals, as well as any additional local challenges and goals must be included in local plans.

Programs included in the Arkansas State Unified Plan that will contribute to achieving these goals are described below:

PERKINS III / TECH PREP

The Perkins funds are granted to the state by federal formula that is based on the population of various age groups. Generally, Arkansas receives about 1 percent of the funds authorized by Congress for Perkins. The recipients of the funds are local education agencies and postsecondary or higher education institutions offering vocational education programs of less than a baccalaureate degree. These recipients must use the funds to improve their vocational and technical education programs. In addition, a very limited amount of funds are available for services to persons in state correctional agencies or institutions that serve persons with disabilities.

Funds available under Perkins fall into two categories: the basic grant and the Tech Prep education grant. The basic grant for Arkansas in the 1999-2000 fiscal year is \$11.4 million. The basic grant funds are split into three purposes: state leadership (10 percent), state administration (5 percent), and local grants (85 percent).

nontraditional training and employment, and services to individuals in state institutions such as state correctional institutions and institutions that serve individuals with disabilities.

The local grant funds must be used to improve vocational and technical education programs that accomplish the following:

- Strengthen the academic, vocational, and technical skills of students through the integration of academics with vocational and technical programs through a coherent sequence of courses
- Provide students with a strong experience in and understanding of all aspects of the industry
- Develop, improve, or expand the use of technology in vocational and technical education
- Provide professional development to teachers, counselors, and administrators
- Develop and implement evaluations of vocational and technical education programs
- Initiate, improve, expand, and modernize quality vocational and technical education programs
- Link secondary and postsecondary vocational and technical education.

The Tech Prep education grant is \$1.2 million for the 1999-2000 fiscal year. Grants are provided to consortia composed of secondary and postsecondary/higher education institutions to carry out articulated vocational and technical programs that consist of at least two years of secondary school and two years or more of postsecondary/higher education or apprenticeship. These Tech Prep programs are referred to in the state as “Tech Prep Associate Degree” programs or “2+2” programs. Arkansas model is actually a “4+2” program that is open to students beginning in the

ninth grade. The goal of the Tech Prep Associate Degree programs is to involve students by grade 11 in an articulated vocational and technical education program of studies and then transition those students into their postsecondary component with completion of at least the associate degree, two-year certificate, or two-year apprenticeship program as the outcome.

The Arkansas Department of Higher Education shares responsibility for the Tech Prep education programs and jointly approves the consortia budgets each year. In addition, the ADWE has delegated responsibility for the Perkins basic grant funds that are provided to higher education institutions to the Arkansas Department of Higher Education and its state board, the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board. A portion of the state leadership and state administration funds are transferred to the Department of Higher Education to carry out this responsibility.

Perkins III is less than ten percent of the funds that are expended on the vocational and technical education programs in Arkansas as a whole. The Perkins III funds are intended to be more of a catalyst for change and improvement rather than to support the basic vocational and technical education programs in the state.

The congressional vision for Perkins III programs is stated in the purpose of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act as follows:

The purpose of this Act is to develop more fully the academic, vocational, and technical skills of secondary students and postsecondary students who elect to enroll in vocational and technical education programs. This federal vision fits totally into the state vision for vocational and technical education at the secondary and postsecondary levels. All children at the secondary level and all adults at the postsecondary should have access to high-quality, relevant vocational and technical education programs that prepare them to enter and succeed in further education and training and in their chosen career.

Many of the goals of the Workforce Investment Board relate directly to programs that are funded, in part, by Perkins III. The goal of ensuring that high school students have the basic skills needed for further education or work is one of the primary goals of Perkins III at the secondary level. Perkins funds are used to help vocational and technical teachers integrate academic skills into their programs to assist students in learning and using academic concepts. Related to the goal of competency-based certification programs for teachers and students, Perkins funds have for many years been used to develop and implement a student competency assessment at the secondary level that will help measure the vocational and technical skills attained by students in the programs. In addition, the postsecondary teachers in the technical institutes have access to a competency-based certification program that includes a career ladder with increased pay for achievement.

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board goal of access to career planning has been promoted and encouraged at the secondary level for several years. Many local school districts have used Perkins funds to develop and implement an improved plan for career guidance and counseling that begins at the eighth grade, provides for annual checks, and includes the involvement of parents each year.

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board vision is supported by many aspects of the programs funded by Perkins. That vision of Arkansans who are “educated, trained, skilled—with the character and work ethic needed to excel,” sums up the purpose of Perkins. All activities funded by Perkins are designed to improve vocational and technical education programs and ensure that the students enrolled in those program succeed in further education/training and in their chosen field of work.

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT TITLE I (YOUTH, ADULT, AND DISLOCATED WORKER)

The Workforce Investment Act Title I youth, adult, and dislocated worker programs are designed to be operated through the One-Stop career center system, the Arkansas Career Development Network. Through this network and its partners, core, intensive, and training services will be provided as appropriate. Core services will be provided to anyone who requests them. These are non-staff intensive services to provide information about and access to career planning and job placement resources. Individuals who are not able to obtain employment through this low intensity intervention will be eligible for intensive services. If these individuals still are unable to find employment, they will be eligible for training services. Employers will also obtain valuable information and services through the network. Local workforce investment boards, along with the chief elected officials of the area, select One-Stop operators who coordinate the process under the oversight of the workforce investment boards.

The vision of the Workforce Investment Act Title I programs is that adults, youth, and dislocated workers will receive the services they need through a network of one-stop centers and will become or remain employed at an income level high enough to support their families. The goals generally are the same as those for the Workforce Investment Act overall. Title I programs provide a method for service providers to coordinate their resources so that they may be used effectively by common customers. The programs also provide resources, through core, intensive, and training services, to assist people in becoming employed and businesses in finding prepared workers or in training eligible workers they hire.

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY

The Arkansas Department of Workforce Education (ADWE) is under the authority and leadership of the State Board of Workforce Education and Career Opportunities. The State Board is appointed by the Governor and is charged with responsibility for overseeing and directing the work of the ADWE. The ADWE is responsible for vocational and technical education at the secondary level, the post-secondary technical institutes and vo-tech schools, adult education/General Educational Development (GED), the Federal Surplus Property Agency, the State's Veterans Approving Agency, and the State's Job Training Partnership Act 8-percent set-aside education programs. In addition, ADWE serves as the lead state agency and fiscal agent for the Career Opportunities Initiative (School-to-Work federal grant). Also, under the umbrella of the State Board of Workforce Education and Career Opportunities and the ADWE is the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services state agency. The Arkansas Rehabilitation Services agency is a partner in the workforce investment system, and information regarding that agency is included separately in the plan.

The mission of ADWE is to provide leadership and contribute resources to serve the diverse and changing workforce training needs of the youth and adults of Arkansas. The goals of the agency are as follows:

- Develop a strategic plan for effective delivery of lifelong career development and workforce education
- Develop a strategic marketing plan that promotes the system's ability to achieve its mission
- Provide an effective communication system that is involved, informative, and interactive
- Collaborate effectively both internally and externally with all stakeholders

The Arkansas Department of Workforce Education-Adult Education Section (ADWE-AES) funds 53 local adult education programs and 47 community based and/or privately operated literacy councils and special projects such as the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center through grants of state and federal funds. The adult education program is supported with \$4.5 million received under Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, and \$17.6 million in state funding.

The service delivery systems are diverse. Programs are funded through a variety of local administrative entities, including public school systems, county boards of education, community colleges, technical colleges, technical institutes, the Arkansas Department of Corrections, and the Arkansas School for the Deaf. Local programs provide adult education services such as teaching academic skills to people who function from beginning reading through a 12.9 functioning grade level and English as a Second Language (ESL). These services are provided through classes held in locations throughout each program's service area and in programs such as family literacy,

workplace, correctional institutions and Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE). In the 1997-1998 program year, 69,537 adult Arkansans received services from programs receiving adult education funding; 3,711 of these were in ESL classes, and 5,829 were in correctional institutions programs.

Adult education services are available in every county in Arkansas, delivered by certified teachers working in full time programs and trained volunteers. Certified teachers receive staff-development in areas such as teaching adults, ESL, learning disabilities, literacy task analysis, and using technology.

Adult education services include business and industry specific workplace education programs that are based on literacy task analyses performed by trained local adult education personnel and basic educational skills classes provided at the workplace. In the 1997-1998 program year, 6,232 adults were served in workplace programs developed in partnership with employers.

ADWE-AES administers the tests of the General Educational Development program in Arkansas. In calendar year 1999, a total of 6,839 people successfully passed these tests and received their Arkansas high school diploma.

The mission of the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education - Adult Education Section (ADWE-AES) is to provide adult learners with the mechanisms to improve and refine their K-12 academic skills, attain the Arkansas High School diploma, and the life skills that prepare the citizen for self-sufficiency and improvement in the quality of life. This agency will collaborate with all of the participating agencies to implement the common goals of the state Workforce Investment Board. In addition, the Adult Education Section has set goals in accordance with the ADWE, the Workforce Investment Act Title II, and the National Reporting System for Adult Education.

The goals of this agency include assessment activities, General Educational Development (GED) preparation, basic skills enhancement for unemployed and underemployed individuals, English as a Second Language instruction, family literacy, diagnostic assessment for learning disabilities, implementing new performance standards in accordance with the Workforce Investment Act and Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999, developing and implementing a new performance-based funding formula, and implementing the new Adult Education Management Information System (AdEd MIS).

FOOD STAMP EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAM

The Division of County Operations has responsibility for providing leadership and support for the 84 local DHS county offices in 75 counties and is responsible for administering several

economic programs, including: Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA), Food Stamp, Medicaid Eligibility, and Community Services programs.

DCO also provides employment assistance and support services to enable clients to become self-sufficient. In addition, assistance is provided to Arkansans through grants to community action agencies and the distribution of surplus U.S. Department of Agriculture donated food.

The Food Stamp Employment and Training Program (E&T) is a program that requires able-bodied, non-exempt food stamp recipients to meet certain work-related requirements. The program is designed to assist eligible recipients in obtaining skills necessary to become self-sufficient. Goals of the program include helping participants to become self-sufficient.

TRADE ACT PROGRAMS

The Arkansas Employment Security Department operates the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program and the North American Free Trade Act Transitional Adjustment Assistance (NAFTA/TAA) programs to assist individuals who have lost their jobs due to an increase in imports or, under NAFTA, a company moving production to Canada or Mexico. Services include job training, including tuition and fees; support services such as books; transportation; job search and relocation assistance; and transitional assistance allowances after unemployment insurance benefits are exhausted.

The objectives of the TAA and NAFTA/TAA programs are to help eligible individuals whose jobs have been lost due to increased imports or whose jobs have moved to Mexico or Canada gain new jobs and, if necessary, to assist them in obtaining new skills so they will qualify for new careers. This improves the economy in that it helps provide workers for jobs that exist in Arkansas. Training may be provided only in jobs in which there is likelihood for placement. At the same time, individuals who receive training allowances are able to contribute to the economy.

WAGNER-PEYSER ACT

The Arkansas Employment Security Department's (AESD) mission is to provide its customers with employment related services that enhance the economic stability of Arkansas and its citizens. These services are provided to employers, the workforce, and the general public and include:

- Linking employers with qualified job applicants
- Helping the employed and unemployed find work or training
- Providing unemployment insurance benefits to those eligible
- Facilitating employer compliance with Arkansas Employment Security Law

- Collecting unemployment insurance taxes
- Producing and communicating labor market information

AESD's core strategies for achieving its mission include:

- Empowering staff members to excel and make continuous improvements in customer service
- Maximizing the use of appropriate new technology in delivery of services
- Improving operational processing

The agency administers four major programs and a variety of smaller programs. The major programs include unemployment insurance, labor exchange (Wagner-Peyser Act, which is now under Title III of the Workforce Investment Act), job training (currently Job Training Partnership Act; under the Workforce Investment Act, job training will be under Title I programs), and labor market information (partially covered under Title III of the Workforce Investment Act).

AESD has approximately 535 full time employees and about 200 intermittent employees who supplement the permanent staff when the workload is heaviest. Most of the intermittent employees work in the unemployment insurance section. There are 30 full time AESD offices around the state. Local AESD offices traditionally handle unemployment insurance initial claims and labor exchange, or job service, functions. Continued claims are handled through an interactive voice response (IVR) system via telephone, and claims are paid through a staff in the central office in Little Rock. Job training programs are sub-granted to regional program operators. Labor market information programs are accomplished through the central office staff in Little Rock.

Programs under the Wagner-Peyser Act provide labor exchange services to connect employers and job seekers. Special assistance is given to veterans. Another priority group served through the Wagner-Peyser Act is unemployment insurance recipients.

The Wagner-Peyser program has five goals that tie into the overall workforce development system. They are to:

- Increase the number of employers listing job orders with AESD
- Increase managerial, professional and technical job orders
- Increase the percentage of openings filled
- Measure and increase employer satisfaction on job referrals
- Make available information on supportive services and training to those applicants who need such services

These goals are compatible with the goals of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board and will be achieved in conjunction with one-stop partners in each local area.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM:

- **ARKANSAS REHABILITATION SERVICES**

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) is the state agency that provides vocational rehabilitation services to assist Arkansans with significant disabilities to go to work and live independently (with the exception of blindness provided by DHS-Division of Services for the Blind). ARS is a State Vocational Rehabilitation program created and regulated through the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, originally the Civilian Rehabilitation Act of 1920. A significant disability in terms of the ARS program is one that impacts a persons ability to obtain, maintain, or regain a job.

The ARS mission is to provide opportunities for Arkansans with disabilities to work and to lead productive and independent lives.

The ARS vision is for every Arkansan with disabilities, who wishes to do so, to become employed and/or live independently. ARS customers are people with significant disabilities and employers that need qualified employees. ARS provides services such as evaluation, counseling, vocational training, education, tools, adaptive equipment, transportation, job search and job placement to assist people with significant disabilities to go to work.

ARS envisions the vocational rehabilitation program it provides as an integral part of a new comprehensive workforce investment system in Arkansas which customer focused. ARS is committed as a full partner in the workforce investment system to following the principles of streamlining services, empowering individuals, universal access, increased accountability, integrated and coordinated services, State and local flexibility and improved programs.

The term “disability” is used in many different ways. What is a significant disability? A technical definition is in the Rehabilitation Act, ARS’ enabling federal legislation. However, a simple definition is “a disability that interferes with a person’s ability to obtain, maintain or regain a job,” In other words, if a disability interferes with a person’s ability to work, then it is significant from the standpoint of the vocational rehabilitation program provided by ARS.

The program provided by ARS is an eligibility program, not an entitlement. A customer must meet criteria for disability established in the Rehabilitation Act in order to receive services. The services are determined by the person’s unique abilities, strengths, characteristics and informed choice. An individual plan for employment (IPE) is developed by the customer, a qualified

vocational rehabilitation counselor or others, and must be approved by the counselor. Opportunities for the development of skills necessary for independent living are also made available through the vocational IPE or independent living counselors. Payment for assessment for eligibility for services is provided by ARS, if existing medical, psychological and vocational information is not adequate or available.

ARS provides eligible customers the opportunity to develop the skills needed to successfully enter and remain in the workforce. Eligible persons may receive one or more of the following vocational rehabilitation services based on the Individual Plan for Employment:

- Assessment to determine eligibility
- Counseling and guidance
- Physical and mental restoration
- Vocational training services
- Transportation
- Services to family members
- Interpreter and note-taking services
- Education and training
- Job search and placement
- Job retention
- Supported employment services
- Licenses, tools and equipment
- Rehabilitation technology

ARS is a State Vocational Rehabilitation program created and regulated through the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, originally the Civilian Rehabilitation Act of 1920. The Rehabilitation Act has been authorized on a regular basis for 80 years to provide a continually improving system of Vocational Rehabilitation Services to individuals with disabilities. Act 43 of 1955, the “Vocational Rehabilitation Act of Arkansas,” established Arkansas Rehabilitation Services as the statutory state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities throughout Arkansas (with the exception of blindness provided by DHS-Division of Services for the Blind since 1983).

ARS has adopted as its goal to exceed the benchmarks of the evaluation standards and performance indicators required by our federal funding agency, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), through the Rehabilitation Act. As a state vocational rehabilitation program, ARS is required to collect and report extensive data on client services and outcomes including:

Performance Standards (Paraphrased)

Standard 1: Employment Outcomes

- 1.1 The number who attain employment during the current period, compared to the previous period.
- 1.2 Of all who exit the program after receiving services, the percentage who attain employment.

- 1.3 The percentage who attain competitive, self-, or Business Enterprise Program employment, with earnings equivalent to minimum wage.
- 1.4 The percentage of the number who attain employment as above with the most significant disabilities.
- 1.5 The number who attain employment as above with equivalent earnings to minimum wage as a ratio of the state average earnings.
- 1.6 The percentage who attain employment as above who reported their earnings (as opposed to Public Assistance) as the largest source of income.
- 1.7 The percentage in full time competitive employment who had a medical plan with hospitalization available through their employer.

Standard 2: Equal Access to Services

- 2.1 The service rate for individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio to the service rate for those from non-minority.

National benchmarks for performance are established by RSA through the Rehabilitation Act against which each state is measured. ARS excelled in performance above each of those benchmarks in FY 1998. Continuous improvement is a goal that is required by RSA and pursued diligently by ARS.

The Rehabilitation Act also requires ARS to jointly conduct a consumer satisfaction survey each year with the Rehabilitation Council of Arkansas. The Council is by law made-up of individuals with disabilities, their family members, representatives and professionals who serve people with disabilities. Of customers surveyed in FY 1998 for consumer satisfaction, 82.4 percent rated services as “good or above” and 84.5 percent of those employed rated satisfaction with job as “good or above”.

ARS’ vision for the future is to function as a partner in the one-stop system as part of a seamless system of service delivery to Arkansans with employment needs. ARS highest priority is to provide the highest quality services to individuals with disabilities and employers in a system that is customer driven with universal access and maximizes use of resources.

The Vocational Rehabilitation program in Arkansas emphasizes quality employment outcomes that maximize the capabilities of eligible customers. Each customer’s rehabilitation program is tailored to address his unique characteristics and circumstances and consequently may span more than one fiscal year.

The active data file required by the ARS’ federal funding agency, the Rehabilitation Services Administration, indicates that in FY 1998:

- The number of customers with disabilities who accessed the ARS program totaled 19,578.
- Out of the 7,992 new applicants, program eligibility criteria was met by 4,383 (55 %) customers
- Among these customers who qualified to receive services, 4,133 (95 percent) were people with most significant disabilities.
- Of the 3,816 consumers who completed their rehabilitation program, 2,779 (73 percent) were successful in attaining employment.
- And, the majority among those, 2,597 (94 percent) was placed in competitive employment.

ARS is composed of a network of components that work interactively statewide to provide quality vocational rehabilitation. Rehabilitation counselors assigned to each of the state's 75 counties serve customers through the Field Program. The Hot Springs Rehabilitation Center offers one of the most comprehensive rehabilitation programs available in the nation. Other components include the Office for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired, the Rehabilitation Initial Diagnosis and Assessment for Clients diagnostic unit, the ICAN Technology Project and the Supported Housing Project.

The Field Program is ARS' largest component. There are 78 counselors who provide counseling and guidance to customers in 19 offices serving all 75 counties across the state. ARS field offices are located in Batesville, Benton, Booneville, Conway, El Dorado, Fayetteville, Fort Smith, Harrison, Helena, Hot Springs, Jonesboro, Monticello, Pine Bluff, Russellville, Texarkana, West Memphis, Little Rock, North Little Rock, and Lonoke.

The Rehabilitation Initial Diagnostic and Assessment for Clients (RIDAC) section provides medical, psychological and vocational assessment for customers who apply for agency services. RIDAC helps identify customers' strengths and needs and provides Rehabilitation Engineering services.

The Office for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired serves individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or deaf-blind. Counselors operate out of the ARS Field Offices located throughout the state; the comprehensive five-part program includes vocational rehabilitation services (as described above), independent living services, Deaf Access, the Deaf Outreach Center and the Deaf-Blind Program.

The Hot Springs Rehabilitation Center offers one of the most comprehensive rehabilitation programs in the nation. With a staff of approximately 300, the Center provides a full range of services including complete live-in accommodations for approximately 350 customers. Services include: personal and vocational evaluation, employability services, vocational training in 17 job fields and direct job placement assistance. The Center's hospital provides specialties including physical/occupational therapy, speech/language pathology, social/rehabilitation services, rehabilitation nursing and other specialized services.

The Increasing Capabilities Access Network is a federally funded program designed to make technology information available and accessible to everyone who needs it. The program provides information on new and existing technology at no charge to any person regardless of age or disability, and supports equipment demonstrations, training opportunities and an equipment exchange.

The Arkansas Kidney Disease Commission provides services to people with end stage renal disease and to people who have received kidney transplants. Services include prescription medication, dental work for patients awaiting transplants and assistance with medical services during the three-month Medicare waiting period. These medical services include: dialysis, physician fees and other related services. The Arkansas Kidney Disease Commission is housed administratively within Arkansas Rehabilitation Services.

The Supported Housing office, formed in 1991, is a collaborative effort between Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and seven state agencies to staff the Governor's Task Force on Supported Housing and to increase the supply of accessible, affordable housing for people with disabilities and for the elderly. Supported Housing combines accessible features, affordability and individually tailored services to enable people with special needs to live with maximum dignity, choice, and independence. Specifically, Supported Housing assists community-based non-profit service providers in identifying funding sources for the development of low-income housing.

Individuals with disabilities have one of the highest rates of unemployment and under-employment compared in research to other groups – as high as 70 percent. People with disabilities also have high rates of poverty and public assistance. The purpose of the Rehabilitation Act as stated in Section 2, Findings, includes “to empower individuals with disabilities to maximize employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence and inclusion and integration into society through statewide workforce investment systems . . . that include, as integral components, comprehensive, coordinated state-of-the-art programs of rehabilitation”.

ARS' goal is to participate fully in the Arkansas workforce investment system. ARS' vision for the future is to function as a full partner in the one-stop system as part of a seamless system of service delivery to Arkansans with employment needs. ARS highest priority is to provide the highest quality services to individuals with disabilities and employers. ARS envisions a system that is customer driven, offers universal access and maximizes use of resources. ARS advocates and is committed to the inclusion of people with disabilities in a contemporary, skilled, highly qualified workforce.

The employment of Arkansans with disabilities has a significant economic impact on Arkansas. The active data file required by the ARS' federal funding agency, the Rehabilitation Services

Administration, indicates that in FY 1998 average weekly earnings for ARS customers after they became employed amounted to \$301.15. Also, the dependence on public assistance was greatly reduced. During FY 1998, the vast majority (83%) of the state's citizens with disabilities who applied for rehabilitation services reported public assistance as their primary source of income. Once these customers completed their rehabilitation program only 11.6% continued public assistance, with 88.4% having job earnings as their main source of support. ARS' goal is to continue to increase the number of Arkansas citizens with disabilities who are employed.

ARS foresees continuing to play a significant role towards the education and training necessary for a quality workforce. Vocational rehabilitation services provided by ARS through the Rehabilitation Act include education and training necessary for employment for eligible customers with disabilities. ARS anticipates many more potential customers with disabilities being identified through the comprehensive one-stop system. The resources available through the vocational rehabilitation program to meet these training and education needs will be a considerable advantage to the system. Another factor that is an advantage regarding training available through the Rehabilitation Act is that no other criteria is required for "intensive" services for a person with a disability once eligibility is established.

Another service area of ARS involves students with disabilities. Transition services are available to eligible youth and young adults with disabilities to assist in the transition from school to work. Vocational rehabilitation resources are available to consult and augment school efforts that lead towards employment and ultimately the workforce goals of the comprehensive system.

Challenges are many to the contribution of ARS as a vocational rehabilitation agency in the workforce investment system in Arkansas. A significant challenge will be to convey the correct information to the other partners in the one-stop system concerning the unique goals and activities mandated to ARS through the Rehabilitation Act to serve people with disabilities. Extensive education and training of partners will be required in order to achieve the collaboration and cooperation necessary to promote a cohesive system.

Limited resources are another significant challenge. Funding is not available to provide vocational rehabilitation services to every Arkansas citizen with disabilities who needs them. ARS operates under an order of selection giving the highest priority of service to those individuals with the most severe disabilities. Adequate funding to address the anticipated increase in needs for services identified in the workforce system will be an ongoing challenge.

Another challenge facing ARS concerns requirements for development of qualified professionals, the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) under the Rehabilitation Act. The CSPD calls for vocational rehabilitation counselors to have a master's in rehabilitation counseling. An Arkansas regulation prohibits financial assistance with state

general revenue with a course that leads to a degree for a state employee (DFA Accounting and Procedures Manual, Sec. III, Sec. 9, pg. 12.22). Special language during the legislative session will be required to allow ARS to meet the CSPD requirements under federal law.

Each program is required by the Plan Guidance to specifically respond to certain questions and not to respond to others. The specific questions required in ARS sections of the Unified State Plan, as with each program, are “tailor made” consistent with the program’s enabling laws and regulations. Therefore, no questions were posed to ARS under certain sections in the Plan Guidance. However, ARS is responding to each question for purposes of the Executive Summary in order to describe our participation in Arkansas’ Workforce Investment One-Stop System.

The ARS response to section A(1)(a) concerns the programs vision and goals. The ARS vision is for every Arkansan with disabilities to become employed and live independently. As our goal ARS adopted to exceed the benchmarks of the evaluation standards and performance indicators required by our federal funding agency, the Rehabilitation Services Administration, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation, U.S. Dept. of Education.

Additional information concerning the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is contained in 1(a) below.

- **DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND**

The Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) is the designated state agency serving the blind in Arkansas. DSB operates under an Order of Selection providing service priority to the most severely disabled individuals.

The Division of Services for the Blind is committed to providing specialized, quality rehabilitation services to blind and visually impaired Arkansans, creating opportunities for individuals to achieve maximum personal and economic independence. DSB is further committed to promoting positive awareness about blindness and advocating for informed choice and equal opportunity for blind Arkansans: Changing the present to improve the future.

The Division of Services for the Blind is dedicated to the independence of Arkansans who are blind or visually impaired and is committed to the principle that these individuals have the right to make informed choices regarding where they live, where they work, how they participate in the community and how they interact with others.

The Division of Services for the Blind offers a variety of services with distinct eligibility requirements based chiefly upon the severity of visual impairment and its effect upon the

individual's employment opportunities and ability to function independently. If an individual cannot read standard print regardless of corrective lenses, or, the individual's visual acuity is less than 20/200 in the letter eye, or the individual's useful vision is rapidly deteriorating, the individual may be eligible for DSB services.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services are a comprehensive statewide program of services to assess needs and to plan, develop and provide job-related services to blind or severely visually impaired individuals. An individual with a visual disability must require vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, retain or regain employment. The eligible individual must benefit in terms of an employment outcome from the vocational rehabilitation services provided. An individual who is blind and determined by Title II or Title XVI of the Social Security Act will be considered to be an individual with a significant disability and is presumed to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services. Vocational rehabilitation services are provided for achieving an employment outcome that is consistent with the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choices of the individual.

Additional services available through DSB are Rehabilitation Teaching Services, Transition Services, Vending Facility Program Services, and Radio Reading Services for the Blind.

A listing of local DSB offices is contained in Attachment A-1.

The Division of Services for the Blind is committed to providing specialized, quality rehabilitation services to blind and visually impaired Arkansans, creating opportunities for individuals to achieve maximum personal and economic independence. We are further committed to promoting positive awareness about blindness, and advocating for informed choice and equal opportunity for blind Arkansans; thereby changing the present to improve the future.

Within the constraints of state and federal laws and based on the availability of funds, the Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind fulfills its mission through the following goals:

- To assist Arkansans who are blind or visually impaired to secure or maintain employment in careers consistent with their skills, abilities and interest
- To assist Arkansans who are blind or visually impaired to live as independently as possible through the development of skills, accommodations, or adaptations that are necessary to perform all activities of daily living
- To assist in preventing blindness, stabilizing vision and where possible restoring vision

DSB has established goals to acquire and maintain qualified rehabilitation professionals, increase job opportunities for blind and visually impaired consumers, continue to expand DSB's technology program and services, provide transition services from school to work, continue the

implementation of and update the automated information system. DSB's primary goal is to provide and maintain an effective vocational rehabilitation program that meets the needs of its consumers.

Additional information concerning the Division of Services for the Blind is contained in 1(a) below.

VETERANS PROGRAMS

Funds are provided to the Arkansas Employment Security Department (AESD) for staff in local offices specifically designated to provide service to veterans and, in some cases, their eligible family members. Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs), who are themselves veterans, are located in most AESD local offices to provide job counseling and in-depth assistance to veterans. Representatives of the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOPs) are in some offices, based on eligible veterans' population, to contact employers and provide additional assistance to disabled veterans who may need additional help with job preparation and job finding. Generally, these employees are disabled veterans. All Wagner-Peyser funded labor exchange services target veterans as a priority.

The vision of the Veterans Programs is that all veterans who want or need to work will be fully employed in jobs that use their skills and provide a livable wage. Goals are expressed through performance standards and are described in Part K.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

The Unemployment Insurance program's purpose is to retain a trained and experienced workforce during temporary business lulls and to provide a safety net—insurance benefit—for workers who have lost their jobs while they seek another or wait to go back to the job from which they were laid off.

The mission of the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program for workers is to provide an insurance benefit to help them with living expenses while they are temporarily unemployed. The objective is to help them until they can return to the job from which they have been laid off or to help them while they search for a new job. The goal of the program is to get people back into appropriate employment as quickly as practicable. This may involve retraining them for new jobs, providing them with job search skills or, if rehire has been promised by the employer within a specific and short time period, simply sustaining them until they can return to work. The mission of the program for employers is to maintain a trained and experienced work force if the company has to lay off workers for a short time period.

Additional information concerning the Unemployment Insurance program is contained in 1(a).

TANF

The Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA) program helps economically needy families become more responsible for their own support and less dependent on public assistance. Central to this purpose is helping adults and minor parents increase their employment potential, helping to reduce out-of-wedlock births, and promoting family unity.

In addition to case management and employment related services, the TEA program provides monthly cash assistance to eligible families to help meet the family's basic needs while the parent or other adult relative works toward increasing his/her earning potential.

TEA cash assistance is also available to help meet the needs of children who are being cared for by non-parent adult relatives. Assistance to such relatives may be provided without regard to a specified time limit.

In addition to serving as a "safety net" for some of Arkansas' most needy families, the TEA program contributes to Arkansas' overall workforce investment system by helping the parents in those families recognize their employment possibilities. Through employability assessments, employment planning, and the provision of employment related services, the TEA program helps direct them into jobs, thus helping to reduce the family's need for public assistance. Minor parents are encouraged and supported in completing a high school education or equivalency so that they are better prepared to enter the job market as adults. Since TEA benefits are time-limited, emphasis is placed on short-term goals so that the parent is able to enter employment before the end of his or her time limit.

In addition, the TEA program supports and encourages the formation of local community-based coalitions to address the needs of low-income families living in the community. These coalition efforts may include focusing on education and training needs of the community to increase employment opportunities available to low-income families, creating jobs, providing wage subsidies to employers to increase job opportunities, and other similar activities.

WELFARE-TO-WORK

The Welfare-to-Work (WtW) program provides employment assistance and support for those welfare recipients who have the most barriers to employment. Generally a "work first" program which requires that individuals be employed and then receive training to help them stay employed and improve their work skills, recent amendments allow for short term training prior to job placement. The program is operated under the auspices of the local workforce investment boards.

The WtW program envisions that welfare programs will become short-term transitional programs and that all individuals who are physically and mentally able to work will earn sufficient income to support their families. Welfare recipients will be trained in the skills needed by the state's employers in order to help the overall economy grow. The program uses the demand training system and the eligible training providers list used by Title I of WIA in order to ensure that only appropriate training is provided.

SCSEP

The Division of Aging and Adult Services is under the Arkansas Department of Human Services and serves as the focal point for all matters concerning older Arkansans. The Division serves as an effective and visible advocate for the aging population through its administration of the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging and the Silver Haired Legislative Session. The Division gives seniors a choice of how and where they will receive long term care services; and a Long Term Care Ombudsman Program is in place to provide state and local advocacy services to address the issues and problems faced by residents of long term care facilities. The Division of Aging and Adult Services also plans, coordinates, funds and evaluates the following programs for senior adults: Adult Day Care, Adult Protective Services, Chore Services, Client Representation, Congregate Meals, Home Delivered Meals, Employment Services, Homemaker Services, Information and Assistance, Legal Assistance, Material Aid, Personal Care Services Repair/Maintenance/Modification, Socialization, Telephone Reassurance and Transportation. The Division also offers Adults with Disabilities Medicaid Waiver Services, ElderChoices/ Medicaid Services and an IndependentChoices Program.

The Division of Aging and Adult Services has the following mission and objectives: The Division serves as the focal point for all matters concerning older Arkansans; serves as an effective and visible advocate for older individuals; gives citizens a choice of how and where they receive long term care services; plans, coordinates, funds and evaluates programs for older Arkansans.

The Division of Aging and Adult Services has established the following goals:

Goal I: Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to educate the public about important aspects of aging, including financial, legal, health, lifestyle, and other issues.

Goal II. Expand the continuum of care through the development of new initiatives.

Goal III. Strengthen existing services administered by the Division of Aging and Adult Services.

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), authorized by Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965, as amended, is administered by the U. S. Department of Labor. The Act divides SCSEP into two large categories: programs administered by state units on aging and programs administered by Title V national contractors. The DHS Division of Aging and Adult Services is the state unit on aging in Arkansas and receives funding for SCSEP, which is distributed to Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) by a formula used to allocate a variety of other funds.

The program provides 224 half-time positions for low-income persons who are 55 and over. The salary is at least the minimum wage and includes other fringe benefits. Area Agencies place workers in host community service agencies, such as senior centers, libraries, county offices, and recreational facilities.

Each participant is evaluated and an individual plan is developed. The ultimate goal is to place workers in unsubsidized positions. The annual goal is a 20 per cent placement.

The SCSEP will continue to fill a specialized niche in the overall Arkansas Workforce Investment system. It will offer individualized part-time employment opportunities for low-income persons 55 and over. This specialized program for older adults meets a specific need. The Area Agencies on Aging and the Division of Aging and Adult Services will work with the components of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board. The Area Agencies on Aging will enter into memoranda of understanding with local boards and work through the One Stops and use them as a source of job applicants and also refer older people to the One Stop facilities for assistance. Area Agencies on Aging cover up to 10 counties and have one staff member who is the SCSEP specialist.

COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT

The Governor has designated the Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of County Operations, Office of Community Services (DHS/DCO/OCS) as the lead agency to be responsible for carrying out Community Services Block Grant activities in the State of Arkansas. In addition, through Act 345 of 1985, the Legislature has made the DHS/DCO/OCS responsible for carrying out all aspects of the Act.

It is the mission of OCS to be the lead agency in state government in dealing with problems of the poor. This agency is responsible for providing technical assistance to local communities and agencies in providing community services to low-income persons. OCS is responsible for administration of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Program, Emergency Shelter Grants Program (ESGP), Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) and other grant programs designated by state government. OCS is also

responsible for advising the Governor, Legislature and other state agencies about programs intended to provide services to low-income persons, and about policies as they affect low-income persons.

OCS's responsibilities include program planning and coordination, development of policy, procedures and forms, management of program funds, monitoring/evaluation of program implementation by eligible entities, and other administrative functions as required. All programs are coordinated in every way feasible to assure that a comprehensive package of services is offered to low-income persons within the resources available.

The CSBG Program provides assistance to States and local communities, working through a network of community action agencies (CAAs) and other neighborhood-based organizations, for the reduction of poverty, the revitalization of low-income communities, and the empowerment of low-income families and individuals in rural and urban areas to become fully self-sufficient.

As part of the state plan, the Governor made assurance that the State and eligible entities will coordinate the provision of employment and training in the State and in communities through workforce investment systems under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

Representatives of the Department of Human Services serve on a WIA workgroup, responsible for recommending criteria to be considered in the five-year strategic plan. For Community Services Block Grant funding requirements, eligible entities provided descriptions of how they plan to coordinate the provision of employment and training activities as part of the workforce investment systems under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

(a) Vocational Rehabilitation

The state vocational rehabilitation programs provide services to assist individuals with significant disabilities in becoming employed and living independently. The state vocational rehabilitation programs are funded through the Vocational Rehabilitation Act (Title IV of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998) and have been provided through federal and state matching funds since 1973.

Responsibility for providing services under the Vocational Rehabilitation Act in Arkansas is shared by two state agencies: the Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS). DSB is a division of the Arkansas Department of Human Services and provides services to Arkansans who are blind or visually impaired. ARS is a division of the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education and provides services to Arkansans with disabilities other than blind or visually impaired.

(i) Goals and Priorities

[Federal Planning Guidance: In accordance with sections 101(a)(15)(C) and (D), identify the goals and priorities of the State in carrying out the program and identify the strategies to address the State's needs and achieve the State's goals and priorities (Sec. 101(a)(15)(C) and (D)).]

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

The Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) is dedicated to the independence of Arkansans who are blind or visually impaired. The goals and priorities of this agency will be developed and approved annually by the DSB Board, which under specific state law, must be consumer-controlled. DSB will identify and develop goals and priorities to carry out a program of vocational rehabilitation services for blind and visually impaired Arkansans.

The mission of DSB is to work in partnership with these Arkansans by assisting them in obtaining the information they need to make informed choices and by providing them with access to services which increase their opportunities to live as they choose.

Within the constraints of state and federal laws and based on available funds, DSB fulfills its mission through the following goals:

- Employment – to assist Arkansans who are blind or visually impaired to secure and maintain employment in careers consistent with their skills, abilities and interests.
- Independent Living – to assist Arkansans who are blind or visually impaired to live as independently as possible through the development of skills, accommodations, or adaptations that are necessary to perform all activities of daily living.
- Prevention of Blindness – to assist in preventing blindness, stabilizing vision, and where possible, restoring vision.

The consumer-controlled DSB Board and agency staff will jointly conduct a comprehensive, statewide assessment every three years. The comprehensive assessment will be submitted to consumer groups and individuals served by DSB during program years 2001, and every three years thereafter. The needs assessment instrument will also be published on the DSB web site. The assessment results will describe the rehabilitation needs of individuals with visual disabilities residing in Arkansas. The comprehensive needs assessment will identify the vocational rehabilitation needs of blind and severely visually impaired individuals with the most significant disabilities, including; (1) their need for supported employment services; (2) the number of individuals with visual disabilities responding who are minorities and individuals with visual disabilities who have been unserved and underserved by the DSB vocational rehabilitation program; and (3) individuals with visual disabilities served through other components of the workforce investment system (other than the vocational rehabilitation programs). The comprehensive needs assessment will include an assessment of the need to establish, develop, or

improve community rehabilitation programs in Arkansas. A report will be submitted to the RSA Commissioner by DSB of revisions to the assessment as the report is updated. The comprehensive statewide assessment instrument and its resulting report will be made available in an accessible format to all consumers served by DSB in the fiscal program year.

The DSB Board will analyze the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment needs identified in the comprehensive assessment. DSB goals and priorities will be modified based on the needs identified in the comprehensive assessment, on the performance of the Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind compared to the standards and indicators established under Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act and other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the DSB vocational rehabilitation program, and on any findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under Section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act.

The DSB will submit annually a report to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Commissioner containing information regarding yearly revisions of any goals and priorities. The annual report to the RSA Commissioner will include estimates of:

- The number of individuals in Arkansas who are eligible for Title I services under the Rehabilitation Act, as amended;
- The number of individuals who will receive services provided with funds under Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and under Part B of Title VI-Supported Employment Services for Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities;
- The number of individuals to be served under each category within the Division of Services for the Blind Order of Selection;
- The costs of services, including the service cost for each priority within the Division of Services for the Blind Order of Selection;
- Age, gender, race, ethnicity, education, category of impairment, severity of disability, and whether the individuals are students with disabilities;
- Dates of application, determination of eligibility or ineligibility, initiation of the individualized plan for employment, and termination of participation in the vocational rehabilitation program;
- Earnings at the time of application and termination of the program;
- Work status and occupation;
- Types of services, including assistive technology services and assistive technology devices, provided under the vocational rehabilitation program;
- Types of public or private programs or agencies that furnished services under the vocational rehabilitation program; and
- The reasons for individuals' terminating participation in the program without achieving an employment outcome.

The Division of Services for the Blind estimates that during the five-year program period its resources may not be sufficient to serve all eligible individuals who apply for vocational rehabilitation services. This estimate is based on previous service delivery history, increasing costs, an increase in the number of blind or visually impaired students entering highly technical fields of study, and increases in high technology costs. For these reasons DSB has implemented an Order of Selection. Individuals currently receiving services will continue to be provided a full range of services. Assessments and information and referral services will be provided to all individuals making application for services and who are determined to meet DSB eligibility criteria.

Eligible individuals who meet the criteria of the Order of Selection will receive a full range of vocational rehabilitation services. The Division of Services for the Blind ensures that blind and visually impaired individuals with the most significant disabilities will be served as a priority.

The Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind will complete the goals and priorities established as performance indicators by the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

The Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) will identify and develop goals and priorities to carry out a program of vocational rehabilitation services for blind and visually impaired Arkansans. The goals and priorities will be developed and approved annually by the DSB Board, which under specific state law, must be consumer-controlled.

The Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind is dedicated to the independence of Arkansans who are blind or visually impaired. DSB is committed to the principle that these individuals have the right to make informed choices regarding where they live, where they work, how they participate in the community and how they interact with others.

Mission Statement

The Arkansas Division of Service for the Blind is committed to providing specialized, quality rehabilitation service to blind and visually impaired Arkansas, creating opportunities for individuals to achieve maximum personal and economic independence. We are further committed to promoting positive awareness about blindness and advocating for informed choices and equal opportunity for blind Arkansans; thereby changing the present to improve the future.

Personnel Philosophy

As employees of the Arkansas Division of Service for the blind, we will strive to maintain a standard of professional ethics and conduct worthy of public trust and services; and through our

collective effort, we will make our work place enjoyable and productive as we assist people who are blind or visually impaired to make choices that allow them to move toward personal independence.

Management Philosophy

The Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind is committed to hiring, retaining, and promoting employees who perform their jobs in a manner that supports the agency's mission and reflects a dedication to excellence. As proactive managers, we will continually strive:

- To create an environment that provides each staff member with clear expectations, resources to accomplish goals and rewards for excellent performance;
- To foster a climate that allows the expression of all points of view;
- To encourage the employees to show respect for each other, our clients and the general public;
- To enhance the employee awareness and sensitivity to the fact that each Arkansan who is blind or visually impaired is unique and has distinct abilities as well as needs;
- To apply personnel policies in a consistent and fair manner;
- To provide equal opportunity to all persons, regardless of disability, race, sex, color, age or national origin.

Our mission is to work in partnership with these Arkansans by assisting them in obtaining the information they need to make informed choices and by providing them with access to services which increase their opportunities to live as they choose.

Strategies

Methods Used to Improved Services

The Division of Services for the Blind and its consumer-controlled Board place major emphasis on the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, as is evident in the agency's policies and procedures. DSB strategies clearly demonstrate the commitment to provide quality services to individuals with the most significant visual disabilities. The DSB Board, administration, and management staff continue to stress the importance of informed choice and consumer involvement in the planning and implementation of service delivery goals and objectives developed in Individualized Plans for Employment.

As a result of findings from an RSA on-site comprehensive review, an agency statewide study and a program evaluation, DSB has implemented the following changes in policy:

1. Consumer work history is documented in the narrative section of the case service record. Counselor judgment determines the information to be included in the work history. Information to be included in the work history should be only that information necessary to have an influence on the employment outcome.
2. The Certificate of Eligibility/Ineligibility Form was shortened and information deleted that was not necessary or was a duplication of information.
3. Developed policies and procedures to provide guidance to improve the process of purchasing technology equipment for consumers. The bid process addressed the purchase of software and hardware.
4. Received a waiver of procedures for Client Procurement and Purchasing that allows a faster and streamlined process to purchase items and services for DSB consumers.
5. Modified the billing process for supported employment services to allow payment for services at the time of referral, at the time of employment and at final payment after the individual has been employed for 90 days.
6. Issued policy and procedures to contract for Orientation and Mobility Services and Placement Services.
7. Developed Cooperative Agreements for employment services with two Centers for Independent Living: SAILS (Spa Area Independent Living Services) in Hot Springs and Mainstream Living in Little Rock. A third proposal has been received from the Delta Resource Center in Pine Bluff.
8. Reissued the requirement for 90 progress report in case service records.
9. Implemented a computerized, Y2K compatible client information system.
10. Implemented quarterly training sessions for Field Service Staff.
11. As a collaborative effort with the Arkansas School for the Blind (ASB), Arkansas Department of Education-Special Education Unit (ADE) and DSB a summer transition program was implemented. Funding for the summer program was provided by ASB, ADE, DSB and JTPA. It is anticipated that the summer transition will become an annual activity.
12. Revised the staffing assignment to identify rehabilitation teachers who will work primarily with vocational rehabilitation consumers.

Methods to Expand Rural Service Delivery

The DSB Board has identified the need for alternative approaches to service delivery, and has requested DSB staff to determine alternative approaches to meet the needs of individuals eligible for rehabilitation services. The methods used to make this determination are required to address service delivery in rural and urban areas of the state. The DSB consumer is an integral part of this study and provides valuable input into the study and the design of future service delivery. As a result of this input DSB has expanded its satellite office locations by opening a DSB office in the St. Francis County Department of Human Services in Forrest City. A vocational rehabilitation teacher is housed there.

Methods to Expand and Improve Services to Individuals With the Most Significant Disabilities

As a part of the commitment to deliver quality services to persons with the most significant disabilities, the Field Services Management Team will review the characteristics of all persons determined to be ineligible for services. A written analysis will be submitted in an annual report to the DSB Director and disseminated to staff.

An individual with the most significant disability means an individual with a visual disability, which, for such an individual, constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment; and the individual with the visual disability can benefit in terms of an employment outcome from vocational rehabilitation services. The visual disability must seriously limit one or more functional capacities (such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome. Vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require multiple vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time; and the individual must have one or more disability to result in a comparable functional limitation.

Substantial vocational rehabilitation services are: physical restoration; mental restoration; requiring treatment by a psychiatrist, licensed psychologist, or a licensed clinical social worker; vocational or other training services; interpreter services for individuals who are deaf; reader services or recording services for individuals who are blind, rehabilitation technology services; rehabilitation teaching services for individuals who are blind; job placement services, including job search and direct intervention with an employer to gain or retain employment; and other substantial services, with the exception of assessment for determining eligibility and vocational maintenance, transportation, personal assistance services and services to family members.

All individuals determined to be ineligible for DSB services receive written notification in a method of communication consistent with the choice of the individual. The written notification includes the reason for the ineligibility determination and the means by which an individual can

express and seek remedy for any dissatisfaction for the action taken. The written notification will also state specifically how to contact the Client Assistance Program.

Rehabilitation Technology Services

As a result of technological advancements in the area of telecommunications and sensory aids and appliances DSB employees and the Technology Specialist assist counselors and customers in the assessment, selection and purchase of technology services and equipment. The technology unit of DSB is staffed with a Rehabilitation Technology Specialist who works one-on-one with the customer and the counselor to determine the best equipment or services needed to fit the consumer's need. A timely assessment, appropriate selections, timely acquisition and effective use of technology may make the difference in a consumer achieving success in training and/or employment. The rehabilitation technology specialist (RTS) develops and maintains information on technological devices designed to assist people with disabilities to achieve a successful employment outcome.

When making a referral to the Technology Specialist, all DSB counselors follow these procedures:

1. The counselor must have documentation to support the referral. Examples of documentation may be: letters from teachers, employer request, medical reports, etc.
2. The use of technology must assist the consumer in: completing training that leads to employment; securing employment; or maintaining existing employment. The use of technology must be explained in detail in the IPE.
3. The counselor must complete the Technology Evaluation Referral Form and forward it to the Rehabilitation Technology Specialist in the central office. The Technology Specialist will be unable to work with the counselor or consumer until a written referral has been received by the Technology Department.
4. The Technology Specialist may receive referrals from Rehabilitation Teachers in the event that a consumer who is receiving services under the LIFE Program (Living Independence For Elders) would be in need of hi-tech or computer related equipment in order to accomplish their rehabilitation goal identified under the IPE.
5. Only computer related referrals should be made to the Technology Specialist. Examples of appropriate referrals would be: work-site modifications, college students (if they truly need a computer), creation of a new job within an existing business that would require the use of a

computer, software or hardware updates, etc. Braille N Speaks and Braille Displays are considered hi-tech and should be referred to the Technology Specialist.

6. The counselor and consumer should agree on the referral to the Technology Specialist.

The Technology Specialist follows the following procedures after a Technology Evaluation form has been received.

1. The referral is logged identifying the date received, and the referring counselor is notified of that fact.

2. The Technology Specialist contacts the consumer within (5) working days from the date the referral is received by the Technology Department.

3. The Technology Specialist communicates with the referring counselor on an as needed basis.

4. The Technology Specialist conducts evaluation for technology assistance at a location that best describes the consumer's situation. Example, a work-site evaluation might be completed at the work-site, an evaluation for a self-employment endeavor might very well be conducted within the home, etc.

5. The Technology Specialist makes a written recommendation for computer equipment and needed software, or written justification as to why the consumer does not need technology support at this time, and forwards back to the referring counselor within 20 working days from the date the referral was received by the Technology Department. Should the Technology Specialist need additional time beyond the 20 days allowed he/she will contact the referring counselor and justify the need for additional time, and work out an appropriate extension of time.

6. The Technology Department conducts an assessment that documents the technology needs of the consumer. The assessment is sent to the counselor along with the recommendation for services or the justification as to why the technology services are not needed at this time. The assessment will become a part of the supporting documentation in the case service record.

7. The Technology Specialist is responsible for completing the evaluation and making recommendations as the subject matter expert regarding technology. The counselor makes the decision regarding any equipment purchases.

A technology lab has been established with the latest computers, printers, magnification equipment, software and audio equipment for blind and visually impaired consumers. The lab is set up with work stations for hands on demonstrations and training. Portable on-site training is

available for some computer equipment. Computer training may occur at any phase of the rehabilitation process.

Rehabilitation Technology training is provided to vocational rehabilitation counselors to ensure counselors keep abreast of technology changes and products. Vocational rehabilitation counselors are strongly encouraged to visit the technology lab and experiment with the equipment available. Counselors also participate in formal technology training offered by the National Federation of the Blind in Baltimore, Maryland, as well as hands-on demonstrations of technology equipment provided by agencies offering technology services, e.g., Lions World Services for the Blind, ICAN, and vendor exhibits in conjunction with conferences and workshops. Technology training within the Lab is also made available to client assistance personnel, parents and families, Arkansas School for the Blind staff and other service delivery organizations and agencies. Students' families as well are encouraged to visit the lab before purchasing technology equipment.

Personal Assistance Services

The Division of Services for the Blind's Field policy and procedures describes personal assistance services as a range of services provided by one or more persons designed to assist an individual with a disability to perform daily living activities on or off the job that the individual would typically perform without assistance if the individual did not have a disability. Personal assistance services provided by DSB must be designed to increase the individual's control in life and to increase his/her ability to perform everyday activities on and off the job. Personal assistance services may be provided direct by the rehabilitation counselor or purchased. Personal assistance services may include home management training; assistance to customers to understand and identify his/her health, personal or physical needs related to the vocational adjustment; referrals to service delivery agencies and community resources; training on how to manage and/or direct personal services; financial management training; and how to maintain effective relationships.

Personal assistance services provided or purchased by DSB are available when it is determined by the customer and counselor that these services are necessary for the achievement of an employment outcome and only when the individual is receiving other vocational rehabilitation services. Personal assistance services are to be stated in the IPE developed by the customer and counselor. Customers are provided sufficient information to make an informed choice regarding personal assistance services.

Description of How Choice Will be Given to Individuals With Disabilities

The Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) provides consumer choice based upon the fundamental truth that:

All blind and visually impaired individuals have the right and responsibility to make informed choices and to participate as full partners in decisions affecting their lives.

Therefore, it is the written policy of the Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind to ensure that consumer choice is a formal part of each stage of the rehabilitation process. To ensure consumer choice, DSB provides consumers with information necessary to make informed choices and decisions, to achieve equality of opportunity, full inclusion and integration in society, employment, independent living, and economic and social self-sufficiency.

Interim Field policy and procedures are in place and training has been provided to assure that applicants, including those receiving extended evaluation, and other eligible individuals are provided a choice in the achievement of employment outcomes. This is evidenced by the following:

- The establishment of a partnership between DSB and the consumer that consists of honesty, truth, open communication, and a willingness to accept equal responsibility for all aspects of the rehabilitation process. DSB develops and maintains resource directories in a format accessible to consumers. The resource directory consists of a listing of service providers, state purchasing requirements, state policies, consumer groups, etc. A staff member has been assigned the responsibility to house and maintain the resource directory.
- Resource information will be provided to applicants for vocational rehabilitation services at the initial interview. Information is made available throughout the rehabilitation process to enable eligible participants the opportunity make informed choices and have input in the rehabilitation process. Information provided addresses support services for individuals with cognitive or other disabilities requiring assistance exercising informed choice. Support services are available throughout the rehabilitation process and in post employment to achieve employment outcomes.
- Each IPE developed must include a statement by the consumer, in his/her own words, describing how the consumer was informed about and involved in choosing among vocational goals, objectives, services including assessment, and service providers. When

appropriate, the statement may be in the words of a parent, family member, guardian, advocate or an authorized representative of the consumer.

- Consumers are provided the opportunity to amend their IPE after its development should circumstances arise that prevent the achievement of the vocational goal, an employment outcome, or independence.
- Policies and procedures developed ensure that information is provided to individuals with disabilities to result in the making of informed choices about the specific services and the providers of those services needed to achieve the individuals' vocational goal. At a minimum the information provided addresses the following:
 - The availability and scope of informed choice and how it can be exercised.
 - The availability of support services for individuals with cognitive or other disabilities who require assistance in exercising informed choice.
 - The duration, cost and how to access potential services
 - The satisfaction level of the individual with a disability with those services and informing the individual that satisfaction surveys will be conducted and the process the individual is use when dissatisfied with services and/or a service provider, including the vocational rehabilitation counselor. The DSB toll free number is also provided and information on the client assistance program and how to access the client assistance program. The name of the counselors' supervisor is provided as is information regarding fair hearing process.
 - The qualifications of service providers, a listing of the types of services offered by those service providers and the degree to which the services provided are in integrated settings.
- Within the Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind, consumers make the ultimate decision regarding how to live and which services to use in becoming independent or maintaining independence, and assume responsibility for the decision.
- During case review, the DSB Case Reviewer and the field service supervisors monitor how the opportunity for consumer choice was documented. Case review findings are provided to the counselor in a written report and to the DSB Director.

Community Rehabilitation Programs

The Arkansas Legislature appropriates special funding to Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) for programs approved under the Community Rehabilitation Program State Plan. The Plan covers activities for consumers of both ARS and the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB). Private non-profit programs are compensated for their services according to

Performance Based Funding, based on the clients served and positive outcomes with the ultimate goal being the competitive labor market.

Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) in Arkansas provide a comprehensive array of services to individuals with disabilities within the state. It is important that planning for the establishment, utilization, development and improvement of these rehabilitation programs be provided on a continuing basis.

Information regarding Community Rehabilitation Programs is made available to consumers of DSB services upon application to enable individuals to make informed choices regarding services and programs. The goal of CRP planning is to identify individuals with service needs which can most appropriately be met through the purchase of services from a CRP. These CRP objectives are developed jointly and agreed on by the individual with a disability and the counselor. Particular care is taken to ensure identified objectives focus on achievement of employment outcomes in the most integrated setting possible in accordance with the choice and capability of the individual. The objectives are included in the development of the IPE.

Counselors evaluate each individual to determine that CRP placements meet the specific need of the individual. Services and opportunities available to DSB consumers include: sheltered workshop, assessment, work adjustment, extended services, work activity, competitive employment, sheltered employment and supported employment. To be eligible to provide services to DSB clients and be reimbursed, CRP's must be certified annually by the ARS and DSB Community Program Development Sections (CPDS) and they must maintain that certification throughout the contract period. CRP's are evaluated using the Arkansas Standards for Community Rehabilitation Program Certification (1993 Revision) and must adhere to the Arkansas State Plan for Community Rehabilitation Programs (1993 Revision). As a part of the ongoing certification process the CPDS conduct the annual certification review, which is a comprehensive assessment of the CRP's ability to provide quality rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities including specifically blind and visually impaired persons. This assessment includes programmatic issues, fiscal oversight and physical plant inspection to assure compliance with applicable state and federal regulations. The DSB case reviewer is member of the CPDS.

The CRP is monitored by CPDS staff who maintain telephonic and written communication, conduct periodic on-site reviews, and monitor monthly CRP billings for accuracy and thoroughness. The CPDS also coordinates training for CRP staff through affiliations with three (3) major universities located in Region VI which regularly offer grant sponsored training to enhance/expand the skill levels of CRP Directors and support personnel. Representatives of DSB participate on the Region VI Advisory Committee for Community Rehabilitation Programs and on the Advisory Committee for the Regional Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program.

DSB encourages CRPs to participate in state and federal programs designed to promote the purchase of CRP products and services by agencies of local, state, and federal government.

CPDS conducts periodic statewide consumer and provider needs studies and "town meeting" type events to solicit input and collect information which is used to help guide/focus the types and levels of services provided by the Community Rehabilitation Programs. Current studies indicate major needs in the areas of housing, transportation, vocational training, special medical accommodations and recreational opportunities.

Arkansas Act 853 of 1991 expanded previous enabling legislation approved in 1973 which established the Arkansas Committee for the Purchase of Workshop-Made Products, (Arkansas' State Use Law). This Act outlines the process for CRPs to sell prime manufactured products to agencies of local municipalities and state government. The 1991 revision of this legislation expanded the committee membership and added services to the approved commodity listing. A 5% bidding preference is allowed to CRPs under this Act, and the ARS and DSB CPDS provides technical assistance and administrative support, with the administrator of the ARS CPDS serving as the legislated committee chair. DSB also provides CRPs with information on and encourages participation in the Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD), National Industries for the Blind (NIB), and National Industries for the Severely Handicapped (NISH) programs. The JWOD Program is expressly covered within the current Rehabilitation Act and is designed to promote the purchase of products and services from CRPs by agencies of the Federal Government.

Policies and procedures require that vocational rehabilitation counselors coordinate the use of CRPs in the IPE development. Services provided in CRPs are coordinated to meet the identified goals of individuals with disabilities to enable those individuals to maximize their employment opportunities, including career advancement. Each individual is evaluated by the counselor to ensure that CRP services meet the specific need of the individual. The goals and objectives are jointly developed and agreed on by the individual with disabilities and the vocational rehabilitation counselor. The goals and services are stated in the IPE. Under the agreement between ARS and DSB the following is applicable:

Assessment - An investigative process designed to identify and measure the individual's work-related experience and behavior. The assessment results in the identification of rehabilitation services or programs needed to achieve an employment outcome and placement needs.

Work Adjustment - Goal directed activities and services to enhance the individuals job-seeking and job-keeping skills to facilitate the achievement of a successful vocational placement.

Extended Services - training and services provided to an individual with a disability over an extended period of time for individuals who are employable and demonstrate the need for

continued adjustment services. The IPE must identify casework, counseling and guidance and adjustment services that are goal directed to maximize the individuals vocational, educational, personal and social functioning. Training provided to individuals utilizing extended services must be in agreement with the CRPs Evaluation and Training Certificate in accordance with Fair Labor Standards Act.

Work Activity - Services and training provided over an extended period to provide long-term personal and social development in a work environment. Individuals eligible must be unemployable in the competitive labor market at the time of referral. Services and training must be planned to assist the individual to develop social, educational, personal vocational and personal skills to: 1) achieve their best level of functioning in the community and 2) to progress to a more advanced rehabilitation program.

Services provided in CRPs may be one or more of the following:

- Medical, psychiatric, psychological, social, and vocational services that are provided under one management.
- Testing, fitting, or training in the use of prosthetic and orthotic devices.
- Recreational therapy.
- Physical and occupational therapy.
- Speech, language, and hearing therapy.
- Psychiatric, psychological, and social services, including positive behavior management.
- Assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs.
- Rehabilitation technology.
- Job development, placement, and retention services.
- Evaluation or control of specific disabilities.
- Orientation and mobility services for individuals who are blind.
- Extended employment.
- Psychosocial rehabilitation services.
- Supported employment services and extended services.
- Services to family members if necessary to enable the applicant or eligible individual to achieve an employment outcome.
- Personal assistance services.
- Services similar to the services described in paragraphs (A) through (P) of this definition.

The following services were provided to DSB consumers via community rehabilitation programs during FY 99: a ten-day work evaluation, an 80-day work adjustment and a 15-month period of extended evaluation. In FY 99, ninety-five DSB consumers were served in certified CRPs at a cost of \$63,109.

ARKANSAS REHABILITATION SERVICES

The goals and mission of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is given in the introduction above. The goals and priorities of ARS in carrying out the vocational rehabilitation program that serves individuals with significant disabilities reflect the vision and mission of the agency. The goals and priorities are also reflected in the performance standards and indicators required by our federal funding agency, Rehabilitation Services Administration, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation, U.S. Department of Education.

The primary goal and highest priority of the ARS vocational rehabilitation program is to increase on an annual basis the number of employment outcomes achieved by eligible individuals who are significantly disabled within the state of Arkansas. Other goals are reflected in the other performance indicators. The goal of ARS is to annually increase their levels of performance in these indicators.

Performance Indicators, which are the same for both entities are:

Standard 1. Employment Outcomes

Performance Indicators:

1.1. The number of individuals exiting the VR program who achieved an employment outcome during the current performance period compared to the number of individuals who exit the program after achieving an employment outcome during the previous performance period.

1.2. Of all the individuals who exit the VR program after receiving service, the percentage who are determined to have achieved an employment outcome.

1.3. Of all the individuals determined to have achieved an employment outcome, the percentage who exit the VR program in competitive employment, self-, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage.

1.4. Of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage, the percentage who are individuals with significant disabilities.

1.5. The average hourly earnings of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earning levels equivalent to at least the minimum wage as a ratio to the State's average hourly earnings for all individuals in the State who are employed (as

derived from the Bureau of Labor Statistics Report “State Average Annual Pay” for the most recent available year).

1.6. Of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage, the difference between the percentage who reported their own income as the largest single source of economic support at exit, and the percentage who reported their own income as the largest single source of economic support at application.

1.7. Of all individuals exiting the VR program in full-time competitive employment, the percentage exiting the VR program in full-time competitive employment who can enroll in a medical insurance plan that covers hospitalization and is made available through the individual’s place of employment.

Standard 2: Equal Access to Services

2.1. The service rate for all individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio to the service rate for all non-minority individuals with disabilities.

Both the Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind and the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services will report performance indicators as required by the Rehabilitation Services Administration and mandated changes or additions to the above stated performance indicators.

(ii) Goals and Plans With Respect to the Distribution of Funds Received Under Section 622 (Sec. 625(b)(3))

[Specify the goals and plans of the State with respect to the distribution of funds received under section 622 (Sec. 625(b)(3)).]

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

The Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind has developed a statewide Order of Selection to assure that the most severely disabled individuals receive services during periods when DSB cannot adequately fund all eligible individuals. All applicants for vocational rehabilitation services receive a preliminary diagnostic evaluation to determine eligibility or ineligibility for services. The Order of Selection will not preclude or restrict the provision of diagnostic and evaluation services which assist in the determination of eligibility. During periods of limited funding an individual determined to meet the eligibility requirements must also meet the requirements of an open Order of Selection category. Eligibility must be determined before administering the Order of Selection.

Any time that it is determined that services cannot be provided to all individuals expected to be determined eligible, the Director of the Division of Services for the Blind may declare the implementation of an Order of Selection. The Director will notify staff by written memorandum when the Order of Selection is to be implemented, amended or withdrawn. DHS will assure that the implementation of an Order of Selection will not discriminate against any eligible individual. However, restrictions in financial support may prevent immediate services to all eligible individuals with visual impairments.

The Order of Selection has a design that will preclude serving individuals with less severe disabilities, who are not already being served under an IPE at the time of implementation, in favor of individuals who are more severely disabled. (The Division will continue to serve individuals who are currently being served under an existing IPE, including post-employment services.) All eligible individuals who do not meet the Order of Selection criteria in effect will have access to services provided through the information and referral system implemented DSB.

The Order of Selection has been developed with the active participation and approval of the Division of Services for the Blind Board, and is consistent with the February 11, 1997 CFR 361.36 requirements. The Order of Selection gives first priority to those individuals with the most significant disabilities as defined by the division. The criteria to determine individuals with the most significant disabilities and subsequent order of categories to be followed in the selection of individuals to be provided services is based on a refinement of the criteria set forth in the definition of individuals with a significant disability, specifically, the degree by which an individual's impairment seriously limits his or her functional capacities.

According to DSB policy, the Order of Selection is administered on a statewide basis. It is implemented to assure that eligible individuals with the most severe disabilities are provided services before other eligible individuals. Eligible individuals who are public safety officers shall receive priority for services within each category. The division shall conduct an assessment to determine whether an individual is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services and to determine the individual's priority under the Order of Selection.

The Order of Selection shall not apply to the following:

- The acceptance of referrals
- The provision of assessment services to determine whether an individual is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services.
- Services needed by an eligible individual who has begun to receive services prior to the effective date of this order of selection, irrespective of the eligible individual's disability.

The director of the Division of Services for the Blind shall direct the order of selection by designating in written memorandum the priority categories to be served. An eligible individual

shall be immediately reclassified into a higher priority category whenever appropriate justification exists in the case record of the individual. In the order of selection each eligible individual within a closed priority category shall be placed on a waiting list until such time as the priority is opened. When a priority category is to be opened for services, the director of the Division of Services for the Blind shall issue an implementing memorandum to staff with instructions that appropriate services delayed under the order of selection may be provided.

When a request for services by an eligible individual is affected by the Order of Selection, the individual shall be immediately notified of such in writing and provided with information on the procedures for individual rights for appeal and how the client assistance program may provide help in the process.

Order of Selection

Priority One – Eligible individuals with the most significant disability whose impairment limits four or more functional capacities in terms of employment outcomes and whose rehabilitation requires three or more substantial vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time.

Priority Two – Eligible individuals with a significant disability whose impairment limits three functional capacities in terms of employment outcomes and whose rehabilitation requires three or more substantial vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time.

Priority Three – Eligible individuals with a significant disability whose impairment seriously limits two functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome and whose rehabilitation requires two or more substantial vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time.

Priority Four – All other eligible individuals.

Definitions

“Eligible individual who is a public safety officer” means an individual who meets the definition of Public Safety Officer under Section 7(12) of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended in 1992, and whose disability was sustained in the line of duty. In the line of duty is applicable when the cause of the disability is related to a criminal act, apparent criminal act, or, a hazardous condition resulting directly from the officer’s duties in direct connection with the enforcement, execution, and administration of law, fire prevention, fire fighting, or related public safety activities. Public safety officers may be individuals serving in the United States, state or any local unit of government, with or without compensation.

Examples:

- The enforcement of the criminal laws, including a highway patrol, or the maintenance of civil peace by the National Guard of the Armed Forces
- A correctional program, facility, or institution where the activity is potentially dangerous because of contact with criminal suspects, defendants, prisoners, probationers, or parolees
- The court having criminal or juvenile delinquent jurisdiction where the activity is potentially dangerous because of contact with criminal suspects, defendants, prisoners, probationers, or parolees
- Fire fighting, fire prevention or emergency rescue missions

Special consideration will be given in all priority groups to those individuals whose disability arises from a disability sustained in the line of duty.

“Functional capacities” mean the following:

- Orientation and mobility: The ability to travel independently to and from destinations in the community.
- Self-care: The ability to manage one’s own situation, including meal preparation, house cleaning, and health and safety needs.
- Communication: The ability to effectively exchange information through spoken or written words, sign language, Braille, concepts, gestures, or other means.
- Work skills: The ability to do specific tasks required for a particular job.
- Work tolerance: The ability to sustain required levels of functioning in work related activities with or without accommodations.
- Interpersonal skills: The ability to make and maintain personal, family, and community relationships.
- Self direction: The ability to independently plan, initiate, problem solve, organize, and carry out goal directed activities.

“Individual with a significant disability” means an eligible person with a disability:

- Who has severe physical or mental impairment which seriously limits one or more functional capacities, such as, mobility, communication, self care, self direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills, in terms of an employment outcome; and
- Whose vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require two or more substantial vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time.

“Individual with the most significant disability” means an eligible individual with a significant disability:

- Whose impairment seriously limits four or more functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome, and,
- Whose vocational rehabilitation requires three or more substantial vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time.

Statistics Reported for Program Year October 1997 – September 1998

Priority	# Served	# Rehabilitated	Costs
Category I	572	142	\$870,236.00
Category II	607	150	\$822,792.00
Category III	6	0	\$4,029.00
Category IV	9	0	\$935.00
All Categories	1,194	292	\$1,697,992.00
Average Cost Per Client			\$1,422.10
Minorities Served:	324		

ARKANSAS REHABILITATION SERVICES

Estimates of Number Of Individuals in State to be Served Under Part B Of Title VI
Supported Employment

Type of individual to be served	Number Served	Rehabilitated	Supported Employment Model
Mental Illness	25	17	Job Coach/Mobile Crew Transition Employment
Mild Mental Retardation	27	15	Job Coach/Mobile Crew
Moderate Mental Retardation	18	9	Job Coach/Mobile Crew
Severe Mental Retardation	2	1	Job Coach/Mobile Crew
Traumatic Head Injury	5	3	Job Coach/Mobile Crew
Other	38	25	Job Coach/Mobile Crew
TOTAL	115	70	

(b) Unemployment Insurance

[Provide a concise summary of the SESA's key direction and strategies for the plan, identifying the goal/main objective of each focus area.]

The Arkansas Employment Security Department administers the unemployment insurance (UI), employment service (ES), labor market information (LMI), and job training programs. As such, it is deeply committed to accessibility of governmental services in the One-Stop Centers. The UI program is currently accessible as a core service in the established One-Stop (career development centers) in Arkansas.

The Department plans to provide greater access through the use of technology so that the public may apply for and receive services without leaving their home and/or businesses. Plans for further use of technology include specifically:

- On November 1, 1999, the Department implemented a Continued Claims Interactive Voice Response (CCIVR) system statewide.
- Use of Internet for employers to submit wage records.
- Development of common data collection and reporting requirements for the use of electronic deposit for employer taxes/UI benefits.
- Employment service and UI programs.
- An automated adjudication process for handling UI issues.