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**Minnesota State Rehabilitation
Council for the Blind**



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Annual Report

October 1, 2004 - September 30, 2005

Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

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Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

Annual Report

Introduction

Long before it was required by federal law, blind consumers and Minnesota State Services for the Blind (SSB) recognized the wisdom of developing a partnership. In 1985, the Advisory Council for the Blind was formed. Prior to its existence in federal law, the majority of the membership of the Advisory Council for the Blind was composed of blind consumers with some representation from the business community. The Federal Government mandated the existence of a State Rehabilitation Advisory Council for the blind in 1992 and the already existing Minnesota Advisory Council for the Blind was expanded to comply with federal requirements.

In August, 1998, the Rehabilitation Act was again changed to rename this federally mandated council by deleting the word “advisory”. The renamed State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC-B) also has some changes in duties and responsibilities. The SRC-B is now asked to carry out SRC-B responsibilities after consultation with the Governor’s Workforce Development Council and in partnership with SSB. The SRC-B’s role is still advisory in relation to SSB; however, SSB’s relationship with the SRC-B is no longer discretionary. The implications of these changes indicate a stronger directive for the SRC-B and SSB to work in a more equal relationship.

The SRC-B has increased responsibilities to work in partnership with SSB to develop, agree to and review state goals and priorities. This is accomplished by evaluating programs for rehabilitation and submitting progress reports to the commissioner and in an annual report to the governor. The SRC-B still has responsibility for overseeing services provided by public and private agencies, and now must review employment outcomes as well as service outcomes for blind people.

The State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind is now asked to have a stronger role in coordinating the SRC-B’s efforts with other state and federally mandated councils. Minnesota has made an effort to avoid duplication of these councils since the early days of our Advisory Council for the Blind. The Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind has always had members that represented the Statewide Independent Living Council, Centers for Independent Living, advocacy organizations for the blind, advocacy organizations for disabled children, developmental disabilities and many aspects of business and industry. A new responsibility of the SRC-B must be to enhance its current organizational contacts to incorporate a system of working with the Governor’s Workforce Development Council.

This report is produced pursuant to federal law, Section 105(c) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, which calls for each state rehabilitation council to prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor or appropriate state entity and the Commissioner of the Federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

Mission and Vision

Mission Statement for Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

The Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind, working on behalf of Minnesotans who are either blind or visually impaired, is charged with insuring that State Services for the Blind is in compliance with mandates under Title IV of the Workforce Investment Act. The Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind strives to insure that Minnesotans who are either blind or visually impaired receive the best possible services under the law.

Vision Statement for Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

The State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC-B) will be a catalyst for the emergence of State Services for the Blind (SSB) as a national leader in the development, implementation and continuous improvement of the quality of service programs and education for persons of all ages who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind throughout our state.

The SRC-B, in conjunction with SSB, will strive to insure people who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind are made aware of the full array of services available to them whether aimed at adjustment to blindness training, independent living, employment or education.

The SRC-B will work to make employers aware that people who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind have tremendous abilities for employment today and must be included in planning for the workforce of the future.

It is our vision that persons who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind will enjoy full equality of opportunity, education, complete integration in the life of our communities and appropriate employment which fulfills each individual's needs and aspirations.

Message from the Chair

The activities of the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC-B) during FFY 2005 represented a continuation of the excellent work that has occurred for the past several years. In February it was my privilege to be elected to serve as chair of the SRC-B. My job was made much more doable by the excellent foundation laid over the past two years by the previous chair, Rod Haworth. I know I speak for all of us on the Council in expressing my great appreciation for his leadership.

As you will read throughout this report, the SRC-B worked effectively in partnership this year with SSB on a number of activities. First, members of the Council were involved in the process of selecting a new director for the Communication Center and Senior Services. Dick Strong, well-respected for his work over many years at SSB, began in this capacity early in the fiscal year, and since then, the Communication Center and Senior Services have experienced positive growth and changes.

In FFY 2004 the SRC-B participated in the development of an adjustment-to-blindness training program for staff at SSB, and this year we have been very pleased to see it implemented. At the beginning of the year many members of the Council joined most of the staff at SSB in attending a two-day training which covered basic information about the many aspects and issues of blindness. Now all new staff beginning employment at SSB will receive similar training, and some staff will receive more intensive training on blindness by attending four weeks of classes at adjustment-to-blindness Centers. This training represents a very important and positive step toward improved services to blind, visually impaired, and DeafBlind Minnesotans.

Much of the work of the SRC-B is done in committees and task forces. The updates from the committees contained in this report provide a view of the breadth of this Council's work, in partnership with SSB, to improve services to Vocational Rehabilitation customers as well as children, seniors, and/or the DeafBlind. All committees also participated in revising the agency's Goals and Priorities for the year 2006.

In June of 2005, Bonita Kallestad, Carol Leaders, Chuk Hamilton, and I traveled to Chicago to attend one of a number of training sessions sponsored by the Rehabilitation Services Administration for State Rehabilitation Councils (SRCs). Topics of this training included a history of rehabilitation in the United States, an overview of the rehab act and some of the VR principles and policies, and the role of the State Rehabilitation Council. There were breakout sessions dealing with annual reports, recruiting members and building effective partnerships. We took the opportunity to network with other SRCs, and learned some about how they operate, and we also passed on information about what has worked well for us as a Council. What we gained from this experience will be of great assistance to us in our work, and we hope these trainings will continue in subsequent years.

Due to the persistent efforts of Rod Haworth, who is also a member of the Governor's Workforce Development Council (GWDC), the SRC-B is now involved in a collaborative effort with the GWDC to create alliances and raise awareness of issues of employment of people with disabilities. This Creating

Connections Subcommittee includes representation from councils and agencies dealing with people with disabilities as well as members of the business community. The subcommittee will promote inclusion of employment of people with disabilities in the Governor's Investment Advisory. Toward the goal of raising awareness, members of the subcommittee presented at a well-attended session of the recent Governor's Economic Development conference.

Major changes occurred in the structure of the Rehabilitation Services Administration in 2005, including the closing of the ten regional offices and the closing of the Office for the Blind. This council has joined other SRCs, agencies, and consumer groups from around the country in registering concerns about the restructure of our federal partner agency. We have expressed our strong support for RSA to remain distinct among federal programs and to be well-staffed with people knowledgeable about rehabilitation policy and practice, responsive to the needs of people with disabilities, and funded sufficiently to assist with meeting those needs. The SRC-B will continue to keep informed and to make our voice heard for the protection of rehabilitation services which are so critical for the blind, visually impaired, and DeafBlind people of Minnesota and the nation.

Several new members were appointed to fill open positions on the SRC-B this year. We have already benefited from the addition of their ideas, expertise, and efforts and look forward to their continued participation. Additionally, several members have completed or will soon be completing their last terms on the council - Wally Hinz, RoseAnn Faber, and Rod Haworth. We are grateful to them for their dedicated service over the past six years.

I wish to thank Rebecca Kragnes, Vice Chair of the Council, for her assistance. All of the members of the SRC-B deserve much appreciation for their commitment and service to the cause of improving rehabilitation services for blind, visually impaired, and DeafBlind Minnesotans.

Finally I would like to thank the following staff for their untiring direct support throughout the year: Cathy Carlson, David Andrews, Craig Amundsen, Gwen Bighley, Pam Brown, Chuk Hamilton, Laurie Kalland, Sharon Killia, Lyle Lundquist, Darlene Kratt, Sharon Ostrom, Joe Pattison, Linda Lingen, Toni Amundson, Ed Lecher, Dick Strong, and Mike Young. Thanks also to our court reporter Kim Evavold for her skills in accurately capturing our minutes. Special thanks to Cathy Carlson and Mike Young for assisting in the preparation of this report.

Jennifer Dunnam, Chair

Director's Comments

This past year has truly been a productive one, thanks to the efforts of our customers, staff and other partners. This enterprise is a partnership that requires the work of the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC-B), Council committees, our advocates and consumer groups, community rehabilitation programs, policy makers and others in order to be effective.

The State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind, made up of many individuals representing a wide variety of constituencies. (SRC-B) is charged by law to review, analyze, and make recommendations regarding the services and programs offered by State Services for the Blind (SSB). We respect and applaud the

work done by the Council this past year. Many of the accomplishments listed below were achieved because of the hard work members did at the various Council committees in partnership with SSB staff. The dedication Council members' show by their willingness to complete their work through a committee structure with additional meetings is much appreciated.

Specifically I want to acknowledge the excellent leadership that Chairperson Jennifer Dunnam brings to Council deliberations. She has a wonderful way of keeping tight agendas on track and members focused yet with good humor and grace, even when handling challenging issues. It is truly a pleasure working in partnership with her.

Ms. Dunnam, along with Bonita Kallestad, Carol Leaders and I, attended the RSA training for Council members. There we had the opportunity to exchange ideas with Council members from other states in our region.

Working together toward a common goal is what makes this partnership "A Formula for Success." That goal is our mission—to facilitate the achievement of vocational and personal independence by Minnesotans who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind. We thank you for your involvement, support, and commitment!

I would like to share with you some important highlights that have resulted from our partnership over the past year:

- 125 customers obtained or retained competitive employment.
- SSB intensified our marketing and outreach activities. The Senior Outreach Project, designed to aggressively market the services of the Communication Center and Senior Services, has contacted every ophthalmologist and optometrist in Minnesota as well as others in the human service arena. Similar efforts have taken place related to children.
- SSB has re-established information and referral services to children and their families. We have created a Newsletter for them and developed new marketing and website materials. The web address is www.mnssb.org/children and it includes such topics as early childhood, education, advocacy, support for families, and book and video games.
- The Saint Paul Foundation fund-raiser for the Communication Center, Angela Bodensteiner, doubled the amount of gifts from 2004 to 2005, from \$200,000 to over \$500,000. One very large gift was provided by an estate. The web address is <http://www.mncommunicationcenter.org>.
- The Legislature allocated stable funding for the SSB administered, telephone accessed newspaper and magazine reading services, known as NFB-NEWSLINE® and Dial-In News. This resulted from the hard work of the National Federation of the Blind of Minnesota to get the bill introduced and passed. Support also was provided by the American Council of the Blind of Minnesota, the United Blind of Minnesota and others.

- SSB made a substantial short and long-term investment in staff training. SSB developed and implemented a staff training program regarding blindness and visual impairment. Phase 1 Training is designed to provide all staff with fundamental information about blindness, DeafBlindness, and visual impairment. Phase 2 Training provides some staff with experience under the blindfold to learn more about the emotional adjustment to blindness and the alternative techniques available to address vision loss.
- SSB developed the first Assistive Technology Trainer Certification Standards in the country. These standards include specific testing on software in the blindness and visual impairment field as well as a requirement for training in adult education. This contribution to the field of rehabilitation will be shared nationally.

Not one of these successful activities occurred without the input and hard work of the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind, or one of our other partners.

On behalf of SSB staff, thank you again for your partnership in this endeavor. Working together we make a positive, profound and life-long difference in the lives of blind, DeafBlind and visually impaired Minnesotans.

Chuk Hamilton, Director

Committee Reports

Customer Satisfaction & Outcome and Measures

Bonita Kallestad-Chair, Rod Haworth, Sam Jasmine, Shawn Mayo, Liz McDevitt, Judy Sanders, Joyce Scanlan. SSB staff-Pam Brown, Sharon Ostrom

The Customer Satisfaction & Outcomes and Measures Committee is to review the effectiveness of and customer satisfaction with State Services for the Blind=s Vocational Rehabilitation program and employment outcomes of persons served by SSB. The Committee is also to evaluate the extent to which SSB achieved its goals and priorities and met the standards and indicators set by the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

The Committee reviewed the Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS) results through March 31, 2005. Thirteen survey items were analyzed to compare the results for years ending 3/31/03, 3/31/04, and 3/31/05. Results for 3/31/03 were also merged with those for the year ending 3/31/04 and compared with results for the year ending 3/31/05. In these comparisons, no significant changes in results were seen from year-to-year.

**CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY REVIEW for Customer Satisfaction & Outcomes
and Measures Committee, Minnesota Rehabilitation Council for the Blind**

by Christopher Raudenbush, DEED Statewide Systems

	YE 3/31/03	YE 3/31/04	Two Years Ending 3/31/04	YE 3/31/05	Standard Deviation (‘03 vs ‘05, ‘04 vs ‘05)	Standard Deviation (‘03 + ‘04, vs ‘05)	Significant From ‘04- ‘05)	Significant ‘03 vs ‘05	Significant ‘03 + ‘04 vs ‘05
Q1: Overall satisfaction with services provided	76%	78%	77.0%	82%	8.2%	6.5%	NO	NO	NO
Q2: Extent to which services have met expectations	66%	70%	68.0%	74%	9.2%	6.5%	NO	NO	NO
Q3: Comparison with “ideal” set of services	66%	69%	67.0%	72%	9.2%	6.5%	NO	NO	NO
Q5: Satisfied that counselor understood customer’s needs	86%	81%	83.5%	80%	8.4%	6.5%	NO	NO	NO
Q6: Satisfaction of customer with own input into plan	77%	78%	77.5%	79%	8.4%	6.5%	NO	NO	NO
Q7: Satisfaction with employment plan	73%	72%	72.5%	71%	9.2%	6.5%	NO	NO	NO
Q8: Awareness of services available	81%	78%	79.5%	82%	8.4%	6.55	NO	NO	NO
Q19: How satisfied are you with the time it usually took to get your answer	NA	76%	76%	84%	8.4%	8.4%	NO	NA	NO
SSB1: How satisfied are you with your role in choosing your job goal?	78%	78%	78%	77%	8.4%	6.5%	NO	NO	NO
SSB2: How satisfied are you that you had adequate information to make decisions about services in your plan?	79%	76%	77.5%	80%	8.4%	6.5%	NO	NO	NO
SSB3: Satisfied with your role in making final decisions	82%	83%	82.5%	85%	8.0%	6.5%	NO	NO	NO
SSB4: Satisfied that you got services needed to get job wanted	67%	69%	68.0%	74%	9.2%	6.5%	NO	NO	NO
SSB5: Get services quickly enough	66%	70%	68.0%	70%	9.4%	6.5%	NO	NO	NO

¹Results are significant if they are more than one standard deviation from the figure with which they are being compared. The standard deviation is equal to two times the average standard error rate.

The year ending 3/31/05 has approval ratings ranging from a high of 85% and a low of 70%. The 85% approval rating was for SSB question 3, “How satisfied are you with your role in making the final decisions about your rehabilitation plan?” The 70% approval rating was the result for SSB question 5, “How satisfied are you that you got all the necessary services quickly enough to meet your needs?” For the complete Customer Satisfaction Survey results see: www.mnssb.org/workingadults.

Goals and Priorities

The Committee reviewed SSB's Goals and Priorities and reported on the achievement of goals at Council meetings. Goals and priorities for the Vocational Rehabilitation program (WorkForce Development Unit) of SSB were jointly developed between SSB and the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind. Progress toward achievement of each goal was reported at each Council meeting.

The first goal, to increase the number of paid closures from the FY03 level of 126, was not met. For FY05, 125 customers of the WorkForce Development Unit obtained paid competitive employment. Of the strategies associated with this goal, all were met except the strategy related to each counselor establishing and maintaining contact with at least 4 new employers each quarter. Although not all counselors met this goal every quarter, the Workforce Develop Unit staff did make 334 new employer contacts during FY05, which are 18 new contacts per counselor.

The goal to have at least 100 persons from minority backgrounds exiting services in FY05 was met. 102 persons from minority backgrounds exited services. All strategies for achieving this goal were successfully implemented in accordance with the prescribed deadlines.

According to the Goals and Priorities, achievement of the goal to increase the number of persons with a dual sensory loss accepted for services will be measured at the end of FY2006. However, strategies to increase the number of DeafBlind served in FY05 and to increase the quality of those services were achieved by the deadlines.

Customer satisfaction with services of the Workforce Development Unit increased from 78% to 82% for the 12 months from April 2004 through March 2005. This exceeded the goal of achieving at least an 80% satisfaction rate. Additionally, all strategies related to this goal were implemented according to the prescribed deadlines.

The fifth goal, insuring informed customer choice in selecting providers for adjustment to blindness training, was accomplished with all deadlines being met.

The goal related to the development and implementation of Introduction to Blindness Phase 1 and Phase 2 was met. All strategies were also met.

RSA Standards and Indicators

The performance of the Work Force Development Unit of State Services for the Blind on the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Standards and Indicators for FY 2005 follows on page 11.

The numbers reported for FFY 2005 are unofficial because the information is still being validated. The RSA requires that at least four of the six indicators must be met. Preliminary data indicates that SSB met or exceeded RSA standards on five of the six indicators. The RSA requires that the State agency meet or exceed at least 2 of the 3 primary indicators. For FFY 2005, SSB met or exceeded three of the primary indicators. An explanation about what the standards and indicators cover is at Appendix III.

State Services for the Blind Performance on Standard 1 and 2

Must pass at least 4 of 6 Indicators and 2 of 3 Primary Indicators for Standard 1

Federal Fiscal Year

	2005*	2004	2003	2002
Ind 1.1: Change in employment outcomes(>=0)	1	-74	13	-13
Ind 1.2: Percent of employment outcomes (>=68.9%)	43.97%	40.91%	46.34%	51.56%
Ind 1.3: Competitive employment (>=35.4%)	94.10%	93.22%	96.77%	81.82%
Ind 1.4: Significant Disability (>=89.0%)	98.66%	99.55%	98.00%	97.53%
Ind 1.5: Earnings ratio (>=.59)	.664	0.645	0.676	0.656
Ind 1.6: Self support (>=30.4)	35.42	36.82	30.67	31.28
Number of indicators in standard 1 that were passed	5	4	5	4
Number of primary indicators (1.3 to 1.5) in Standard 1 that were passed	3	3	3	3
2.1 Ratio of Minority to Non-Minority Service Rate (>=.80)	.74		.86	

* Not official until approved by the Rehabilitation Services Administration. Approval pending at time of publication.

Vendor Outcomes and Measures

Tom Scanlan-Chair, Jim Collins, Rebecca Kragness. SSB staff-Joe Pattison

Several years ago, SSB put in place a process intended to evaluate vendor effectiveness in improving the skills of customers taking adjustment-to-blindness training. The process consisted of a pre- and post-training survey, to be completed by each customer in conjunction with the counselor and vendor. The survey was intended to provide a way to measure the customer's skills improvement as a result of the vendor training. The process faced several problems with the major ones being:

- Lack of SSB staff support. Resistance to completing the surveys and no reporting of which customers should complete the surveys,

- Lack of management support. Little effort to get the staff to complete surveys. Assignment of the SSB support person to other department tasks, leaving no time for tabulating the few surveys that were completed, and
- Lack of vendor support. Only one vendor (Blindness: Learning in New Dimensions) responded to a request for comments on how to revive and improve the survey.

In light of the difficulties, and after interviewing staff members, SSB Director Chuk Hamilton concluded the process could not work as currently structured – an assessment supported by this committee. He therefore halted the process and began working with this committee on designing a new process. The intent is to achieve some customer satisfaction measures that can assist customers in making an informed choice when selecting an adjustment-to-blindness training program. The redesign has begun and will proceed during the coming year with involvement from this committee.

Customer Needs Assessment & Goals and Priorities

Jennifer Dunnam-Chair, Wally Hinz, Sam Jasmine, Mike Malver, Joyce Scanlan. SSB staff-Pam Brown

This committee exists to, in partnership with SSB: jointly conduct a statewide needs assessment every three years; and develop, agree to, and, as necessary revise goals and priorities.

During the review of committee charges and structure late in the fiscal year, the task of working on a customer needs assessment was removed from this committee. A task force was appointed to focus with SSB on this area, and their work begins in the next fiscal year.

Goals and priorities for the vocational rehabilitation program must be jointly developed, agreed to, reviewed annually, and, as necessary, revised by SSB and the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC-B).

The goals and priorities must be based on an analysis of:

1. Statewide needs assessment;
2. SSB performance on the standards and indicators;
3. Findings and recommendations from the annual section 107 review conducted by RSA;
4. Any reports, actions or recommendations of the SRC-B; and
5. Other available information.

This committee collaborated with SSB management to revise the goals and priorities for FFY 2006. As an initial step, the committee solicited input from all committees of the Council and from the general membership. SSB director Chuk Hamilton carried out a similar solicitation of SSB staff and advocacy groups. The committee and SSB management met and, after considering input from all entities, drafted

a proposed revision of the goals and priorities for SSB. The draft was presented at the August council meeting and approved unanimously. The Goals and Priorities for FFY 2006 are presented in Appendix IV of this annual report.

SSB and the SRC-B must submit annually a joint report to RSA containing:

1. An evaluation of the extent to which the goals and priorities were achieved;
2. A description of the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals and priorities;
3. To the extent the goals and priorities were not achieved, a description of the factors that impeded that achievement;
4. An assessment of SSB's performance on the standards and indicators.

Minority Outreach

Carol Leaders-Chair, Wally Hinz, Rebecca Kragnes, Vince Llanas, Ken Rodgers. SSB staff-Pam Brown, Linda Lingen

This past year has been very productive for the Minority Outreach Committee and SSB's outreach into minority communities.

Accomplishments:

- Information was gathered on five minority cultures.
- The four agency brochures were translated into Hmong, Russian, Spanish and Somali.
- Counselors have started diversity and sensitivity training.
- Outreach to persons in minority communities is well underway with a good working relationship with the St. Paul Neighborhood house, a support system for persons from the Hmong culture.
- SSB is building new relationships with the White Earth and Red Lake Indian reservations VR services.
- SSB is forging a new relationship with the Somali community in Rochester MN, with the help of Jan Bailey SSB counselor in the Rochester area.
- SSB gave a presentation to Catholic charities and the Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association in Rochester. These programs serve Hmong, Russian, Somali, and Latino communities in the Rochester area.
- Further contact with Neighborhood house to learn more about the programs offered to serve Russian, Somali, Latino and the Hmong communities.
- Attended the Elder's Health Fair in Mahnomen that included 500 elders from the northern American Indian Tribes.
- Many other outreach activities are planned for the future.

The following two stories show how the Minority outreach committee and SSB have an effect on people's lives.

NATIVE AMERICAN CUSTOMER

The area office worked with an 86 year old gentleman from the Dakota American Indian Nation. He is legally blind due to advanced macular degeneration. He has become an avid user of both the Talking Book Radio and Cassette player. He is most likely one of the best read individuals in his rural community. He spends several hours every day listening to various books and programs. The talking clocks enable him to tell time independently. He uses a white support cane when he is out in the community with his wife and family. He has borrowed a CCTV from SSB while he is waiting for the Veteran's Administration to provide a new 20 inch CCTV. He plans to participate in an Adjustment to Blindness Class that will be held this fall in his area.

SOMALI CUSTOMER

In Rochester, one Somali customer is almost ready to begin a full time adjustment to blindness training program. It has been a long road, but due to the enthusiasm, cooperation and willingness to learn, this customer is on the road to success.

His rehabilitation program began with about 10 weeks of learning English (ESL) through an adult education program. In the beginning, he needed interpreters to learn English. Also, the SSB counselor provided a list of "blind rehabilitation" words for the customer to learn in preparation for further blindness training. He began his ESL training early in the spring of 2005.

The SSB counselor also worked diligently with the adult education program to install assistive technology on a computer in their program in order to allow this customer to do some of his homework assignments independently. The customer is now completing some of his homework assignments on his own. In June, this customer began receiving some rehabilitation teaching services in his home paid for by SSB and provided by private rehabilitation teachers in the community. He began learning cane travel techniques, cooking skills, independent living skills and Braille. His excitement about learning has enabled him to progress in learning blindness skills through the use of an interpreter.

At this time, the customer:

- Knows Braille letters a through j
- Uses a talking watch as means to take responsibility for his daily schedule and for timing foods in the oven;
- Is learning to cook a variety of things and is using the oven safely
- Is using the washer and drier independently once the dials were marked; and has been introduced to a variety of cane travel techniques such as:
 - Holding the cane in a variety of grips;
 - Using the cane to locate door handles, stairs, curbs, etc.
 - Using the cane to detect changes in surface texture and to avoid obstacles;
 - Using the cane to go up and down stairs and to get in and out of cars; and using the cane when crossing controlled and uncontrolled street crossings.

This customer and his counselor will be touring the two community rehabilitation programs in the Twin Cities in order to determine which one can best meet his needs for continued training in blindness skills.

This Somali customer is on his way to realizing his dreams in a new country, with the help of several agencies and vendors working together.

DeafBlind

Eric Kloos-Chair, Lynette Boyer, George Failes, Kathy Hagen, Bonita Kallestad, Liz McDevitt, Craig Roisum, Al Spooner. SSB staff-Pam Brown, Linda Lingen, Roselee Siegler

The DeafBlind Committee has completed a very busy and productive year. The year started with a comprehensive review of procedures from the initial meeting to the intake process for SSB clients. What started as an idea of a “Best Practices” manual evolved into a new set of procedures and resources to improve outreach and services to persons who have a dual sensory loss, including persons who are DeafBlind. Many new materials were developed to help improve these processes, including a specific emphasis on the identification of specific communication and informational needs of people who are DeafBlind. The new materials developed in the last year include:

- Procedures, and a checklist, for setting up a meeting with a customer who is DeafBlind or has a hearing loss;
- A definition of terms, specifically in the areas of assistive technology and assistive listening devices;
- Guidelines for scheduling an interpreter;
- A DeafBlind Assessment Form, including a DeafBlind Information Inventory, a Functional Hearing Questionnaire, and a Supplemental DeafBlind Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs; and
- A DeafBlind Brochure, intended to describe the services available in an accessible format to people who are DeafBlind.

As this year comes to the end, the committee is moving on from the focus on procedures and resource materials to address the issues of outreach strategies and services leading to employment. Additionally, goals and priorities for the Committee include:

- Develop a list of suggestions and challenges on increasing the number of adjustment to blindness trainers in Minnesota with fluent ASL skills;
- Develop a DeafBlind Needs Assessment Survey, and
- Develop a Satisfaction Survey for SSB clients who are DeafBlind

Special thanks to the ongoing commitment and resolve of the committee members, community members and SSB staff that all worked together with a common interest of improving access and service delivery to SSB clients who are DeafBlind.

Senior Services

RoseAnn Faber-Chair, Toni Amundson, Janiece Duffy, Tom Heinl, Frank Johnson, Larry Lura, Roberta Cich. SSB staff-Lyle Lundquist, Curt Martinson

The Senior Services Committee functions to provide advice to the Senior Services Unit (SSU) of State Services for the Blind. The Unit provides services to blind, visually impaired, and DeafBlind Minnesotans who are primarily over age 55 to enable them to continue to live independently. A brief description of a customer's experience is provided below.

In February 2003, Gerald Kennedy, (name used with permission), from Paynesville, Minnesota, went to the hospital for back surgery and came out of the surgery with most of his vision gone from a stroke causing ischemic optic neuropathy. Jerry was a retired UPS manager and his wife and he had purchased a hobby farm and moved to Paynesville to enjoy their retirement.

Jerry's blindness was not in their plans for spending a comfortable retirement. His blindness was devastating and depressing to both Jerry and his wife. After having been a very independent man, Jerry was now relying on his wife to meet nearly all his personal needs.

While the prospect of having an enjoyable retirement life seemed over, Jerry was not ready to give up: he was determined to take control of his life once again. He started training with a rehabilitation teacher/travel instructor and soon began moving around his farm with the use of a white cane.

Eventually he was able to travel to uptown Paynesville where he would meet friends at the local cafe. He learned through instruction to prepare food for himself and carry out other daily living activities.

Slowly Jerry and his wife began to feel hope again. Since the onset of his blindness he has obtained a guide dog from Leader Dog and is now routinely seen walking in his community: an activity that seemed impossible to Jerry just a few years ago. Jerry is more independent because of services from SSB and his rehabilitation instructor. Most importantly, he and his wife are again truly enjoying life and retirement.

In federal fiscal year 2005, the Committee reviewed and finalized the draft of its report for inclusion in the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC-B) Annual Report for Federal Fiscal Year 2004. The Committee Chair participated in the selection process for the director of the Senior Services Unit and Communication Center. The Committee prepared and finalized an annual report for presentation to the State Rehabilitation Council for The Blind. The goals of the Committee for federal fiscal year 2005 included:

- 1) The development of a customer satisfaction survey process for the Senior Services Unit;

- 2) The development of a linkage with the Minority Outreach Committee to add a focus on seniors to the various cultural outreach activities planned by that committee;
- 3) The creation of a partnership project matching newly blind persons with an experienced blind person to help with concerns not addressed by counselors or training programs; and
- 4) Exploration of computer access for seniors.

Goal one concerning customer satisfaction is ongoing. Once customers have completed training and their case is closed, a sample of the Tier three (most intense service) customers are being contacted by phone to complete a telephone survey. Data collected through the surveys will be given to SSB staff for analysis. The purpose of the survey is to evaluate the program. The agency director and others need to know how the program is doing to be aware of areas of customer service in need of improvement.

Goal two involved developing a linkage with the Minority Outreach Committee to ensure that materials developed to help SSB staff in reaching minority populations include information about how the individual minority populations respond to their elders and to disability. The information gathered about select minority populations includes the individual cultural response to elders and to disability. This goal is ongoing as more minority populations are added.

The intent of goal 3 was to have a cadre of trained, experienced blind persons volunteer to provide a call center service for those new to blindness. This goal was suggested and developed by Janiece Duffy. This would give people a chance to ask questions between counseling/training sessions as the question comes up and to provide an atmosphere of privacy to ask questions of an anonymous volunteer. In addition to answering questions, volunteers will be prepared to discuss new and innovative products available to aid the blind. Each volunteer would be scheduled to take specific shifts as per their availability. A recorded message would be used when a volunteer is not available. Calls would be taken by volunteers at the volunteer's home by a method of forwarding an advertised telephone number to the volunteer's home phone for their scheduled shift. No record keeping of caller information/phone numbers will be taken or stored to be able to return calls. If a volunteer had to research the answer to a question, the caller would need to call back to get an answer to his/her question.

Several methods were used to advertise the service. These efforts included a flyer for distribution by SSU staff and others, an announcement on the Radio Talking Book, as well as contacts with consumer organizations and social service agencies. The line operated from January through June 2005. It functioned three days per week, seven hours per day. Approximately five calls were received during that time. Janiece Duffy and Nadine Jacobson were the volunteers who staffed the line. The effort was suspended due to lack of response.

Goal four involved computer access for seniors and is ongoing. Issues of how and to what extent computer access can be provided to seniors have been a concern of the SSU Committee and staff for some time. During this year, the Senior Services Unit was given access to a computer technician on a part-time basis. Much discussion has centered on the computer background or keyboard experience a senior needs to be successful as a computer user. A plan of action needs to be developed.

Committee members for federal fiscal year 2006 are: RoseAnn Faber, Chair; Toni Amundson; Roberta Cich; Frank Johnson; Larry Lura; Coralmae (Coke) Stenstrom; and Janiece Duffy.

Child

Elizabeth Bruber-Chair, Robin Exsted, Nadine Jacobson, Jean Martin, Liz McDevitt. SSB staff-Pam Brown, Sharon Ostrom

The Child Committee began meeting in March, 2005. With the hiring of a new Child Services Specialist, the Child Committee has been able to accomplish many goals that it has set forth.

The Charge to the Child Committee was revised to accurately reflect the services and the strategies for providing these services to blind, DeafBlind and visually impaired children.

The name of the committee was changed from the Children Committee to the Child Committee to reflect a focus on the individual blind, DeafBlind or visually impaired child.

The Child Services Brochure was created and distributed widely to Interagency Early Intervention Contacts (I.E.I.C.), each county in Minnesota, social service agencies, consumer groups, pediatricians, ophthalmologists, teachers of the blind and visually impaired and special education directors.

There is a link on the SSB website - www.mnssb.org - for Child Services. The committee continues to discuss topics and hot links to be included on this web page.

The Child Services Specialist has developed a Child Services newsletter, THE PIONEER, which is distributed to 300 child consumers, inter-agencies in each county, special education directors, Community Rehabilitation Providers (BLIND, Inc., VLR and the Duluth Lighthouse), consumer groups and the SRC-B members. It is also posted on the website. The newsletter is five pages and published quarterly. The Child Committee makes recommendations for the contents of the newsletter.

The Child Services Specialist has developed a set of four comprehensive "Parent Packets" of timely information for parents of blind, DeafBlind and visually impaired children. The information in the packet is designed for the age of the child. The Child Committee has reviewed and given input as to the content of the parent packets.

The continuing goals of the Child Committee is to form a family support connection, knowledge of resource for parents, the education and medical communities, inter-agency collaborative efforts and objectives and to increase family services and information necessary for the blind, DeafBlind and visually impaired child to reach independence and aid in the transition to adult vocational rehabilitation services. The members of the Child Committee feel that through the Child Services Brochure, SSB website link and the Parent Packets an outreach is firmly in place to the blind, DeafBlind and visually impaired child and his/her family.

Communication Center

Wally Hinz-Chair, Susan Barton, Julie Bauch, Catherine Durivage, Jennifer Dunnam, Carol Earle, Jean Martin, Ken Rodgers, Steve Jacobson, Andy Virden. SSB staff-Dick Strong, David Andrews, Mary Archer, Angela Bodensteiner, Gwen Bighley, Chuk Hamilton, Stuart Holland, Hal Schardin, Ellie Sevdy

The Communication Center Committee exists to help State Services for the Blind (SSB) improve and expand the services of the Communication Center for blind and visually impaired persons.

The product of this committee is a report to the SRC-B containing specific strategies for increasing and improving Communication Center services.

Membership on the committee currently includes representatives of the following: Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped; Resource Center for the Blind/Visually Impaired (Department of Education); Teachers of the Blind and Visually Impaired; representatives from colleges/universities; and Consumers at-large.

During FFY 2005 the Communication Center met every two months to receive updates and offer input on the projects, staffing changes, and other on-going work of the Communication Center.

New Communication Center/Senior Services Director

In November 2004, Richard Strong was hired to direct the Communication Center and the Senior Services Unit. Two members of the Communication Center Committee - Jennifer Dunnam and Ken Rodgers - served on a review team to assist with the selection of the new director. The Communication Center committee also provided input into the interview questions to be asked of the candidates. Dick Strong has worked at SSB for many years, and his excellent work and leadership skills are well known to those who have had the privilege of working with him. The Communication Center has thrived under his direction over the past year.

New Outreach Coordinator for Communication Center and Senior Services

In April 2005, Ed Lecher came aboard to coordinate outreach efforts for the Senior Services Unit and the Communication Center. Among other efforts, during the summer he and Ellie Sevdy conducted focus groups with customers, counselors and referral sources throughout the state to identify options for improving referral of customers to SSB. As a result of the focus groups, a mailing was sent to ophthalmologists throughout Minnesota. Along with a new brochure about SSB's services to seniors including those of the Communication Center, the mailing contained a letter from SSB's consulting ophthalmologist, René Pelletier. The letter reads in part:

Older persons with vision loss are terrified they may have to leave their homes. They face anxiety about becoming a burden on their families. They do not want to give up the things they love such as reading. Like most people, going "blind" is simply the worst thing they can imagine!

At State Services for the Blind (SSB) there are resources available to seniors experiencing a wide range of vision problems. These seniors are looking to their doctors for answers. People trust

their doctors and they will listen when you tell them there is help.

For many, vision loss means being cut off from the news and the joy of reading. The Communication Center at SSB can provide seniors with books on tape, a closed circuit radio reading newspapers, magazines and books and touch tone telephone access to 200 different newspapers and magazines. The Communication Center will also provide custom audio recording.

Making a referral will make a huge difference in the lives of your senior patients by keeping them connected, informed, self-sufficient and active. Making a referral to SSB can mean that you never have to say, "There is nothing more I can do for you".

The mailing has already resulted in an increase in referrals from ophthalmologists to SSB.

Volunteer Emeritus Project

The Volunteer Emeritus Project, now in its second year, is a program to recognize people who have volunteered with the Communication Center for fifteen or more years and are now retired from volunteering. The chair of the Communication Center committee joined SSB staff and volunteers in attending this year's event in May at the James J. Hill house. Eleven volunteers were recognized.

Volunteer Recognition Event

The annual Volunteer Recognition event - this year a cruise on the ship Avalon on the St. Croix River in Stillwater MN - was one of the best attended ever. The more than 400 attendees of the September 18 event included a significant number from Greater Minnesota. Several members of this committee attended the event to join in expression of appreciation of the many Communication Center volunteers.

Other Highlights

The committee kept informed and provided advice as needed on the following items:

The Minnesota Legislature has provided stable funding through the Telecommunications Access Minnesota Fund for NFB-NEWSLINE® and Dial-In News, previously funded by state and federal grants. These services allow access to over 200 newspapers and magazines via the telephone for those unable to read print. The legislation was initiated by the National Federation of the Blind of Minnesota and was supported by the American Council of the Blind of Minnesota, United Blind of Minnesota, and other individuals in the community. Communication Center staff is working with consumers to implement a program to mentor new users of the services.

\$488,132 in donations were raised for the Communication Center (more than twice as much as last year), due to the excellent work of Angela Bodensteiner, Gwen Bighley and Sharon Ostrom. Corporate sponsorships were developed for the Communication Center with AARP, St. Paul Eye Clinic, Kowalski's, and others. The Communication Center was advertised extensively on Minnesota Public Radio and in high-circulation publications such as *Minnesota Monthly*, *AARP Bulletin*, *Good Age*, and *Minnesota Member Update*

The Braille Section recently acquired a new high-end braille embosser which promises to increase production capacity.

Work continues on the 21st Century Plan - the upgrading of software and other technology for the Communication Center - and the conclusion draws nearer. Progress continues on digitization, including overnight automation, of the Radio Talking Book and development of a new digital talking book radio.

Communication Center staff and members of this committee participate and hold leadership positions in national and international professional organizations and often report on their activities for the committee. Mary Archer and Jennifer Dunnam are board members of the Braille Authority of North America; Mary Archer currently serves as President of the National Braille Association; Stuart Holland is a board member of the International Association of Audio Information Services.

Task Forces

A variety of SRC-B Task Forces met and completed their assigned activities during the year. These Task Forces included: Annual Report; New Member Orientation; Budget Resource Plan; and Self Employment Policy.

Appendices

Appendix I Council Members

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND MEMBER LIST

Toni Amundson	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
Lynette Boyer	DeafBlind
Elizabeth Bruber	Parent of a child with multiple disabilities
Jim Collins	Community Rehabilitation Programs
Jennifer Dunnam, Chair	Disability Advocacy Group
RoseAnn Faber	Statewide Independent Living Council
Chuk Hamilton	Director, State Services for the Blind
Wally Hinz	Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Rod Haworth	Governor's Workforce Development Council
Steven Jacobson	Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Sam Jasmine	Business, Industry, and Labor
Bonita Kallestad	Client Assistance Project
Eric Kloos	MN Department of Education
Rebecca Kragnes, Vice Chair	Disability Advocacy Group
Carol Leaders	Business, Industry, and Labor
Gloria LaFriniere	American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Projects
Jean Martin	MN Department of Education
Liz McDevitt	Parent Information and Training Center

Eric Smith

Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Coralmae Stenstrom

Disability Advocacy Group

**STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL
FOR THE BLIND
MEMBERS
FFY 2005**



Back row: Steven Jacobson, Sam Jasmine, Rebecca Kragnes, Carol Leaders, Chuk Hamilton, Bonita Kallestad,
Middle row: Jim Collins, Jean Martin, Lynette Boyer, Coralmae Stenstrom, Elizabeth Bruber, **Front row:**
Jennifer Dunnam, RoseAnn Faber, Rod Haworth, **Not pictured:** Toni Amundson, Wally Hinz, Eric Kloos, Gloria LaFriniere, Liz McDevitt, Eric Smith.

Appendix II State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind Work Plan

June-2005

The Customer Satisfaction & Outcomes and Measures Committee will report progress to Council on achievement of Goals and Priorities.

The Customer Satisfaction & Outcomes and Measures Committee reviews Statewide Customer Satisfaction Survey and reports to Council.

The Customer Needs Assessment & Goals and Priorities Committee and SSB begin drafting goals and priorities for next fiscal year.

Review and act on report of Task Force on Council Committees. Chair sets date for applications for committees.

July-2005

The Customer Needs Assessment & Goals and Priorities Committee and SSB provide joint draft of the goals and priorities update to SSB by July 11.

Council members must provide comments on the goals and priorities update to SSB by July 18.

SSB will summarize and distribute comments on the update no later than July 25 to ensure Council action at the August meeting.

The Budget Task Force meets and makes recommendations for the Resource Plan for next fiscal year.

August-2005

The Customer Needs Assessment & Goals and Priorities Committee and SSB present goals and priorities for next fiscal year for approval. The fiscal year begins October 1.

The Budget Task Force makes recommendations for the Resource Plan for next fiscal year. Council acts on the recommended Resource Plan for the next fiscal year.

The Customer Satisfaction & Outcomes and Measures Committee review results of the Statewide Customer Satisfaction Survey and reports to Council.

Chair appoints a task force to create an Annual Report.

Chair, with Council approval, appoints Council committee members and chairs.

September-2005

October-2005

The Customer Satisfaction & Outcomes and Measures Committee will report progress to Council on achievement of goals and priorities.

The Customer Satisfaction & Outcomes and Measures Committee review results of the Statewide Customer Satisfaction Survey and reports to Council.

November-2005

The Customer Satisfaction & Outcomes and Measures Committee, after receiving data around November 1, reviews preliminary VR effectiveness data and sends a draft report to Council by 11/10.

Annual Report Task Force delivers draft Annual Report to SSB by 11/10.

Council members meet and review draft Annual Report on 11/15.

SSB sends revised draft of Annual Report to council members by 11/23 to ensure action at December meeting.

Council members must comment on VR Effectiveness Report by 11/17.

SSB sends comments on VR effectiveness to council members by 11/23 to ensure action at December meeting.

December-2005

The Customer Satisfaction & Outcomes and Measures Committee will report progress to Council on achievement of goals and priorities.

Council approves Annual Report and VR Effectiveness Report.

Annual Report and VR Effectiveness Report are produced for distribution by December 31.

January-2006

February-2006

The Customer Satisfaction & Outcomes and Measures Committee will report progress to Council on achievement of goals and priorities.

The Customer Satisfaction & Outcomes and Measures Committee reviews Statewide Customer Satisfaction Survey and reports to Council.

Council elects Chair and Vice Chair.

Chair appoints a "Coordinating Councils Task Force" whose members each agrees to attend a meeting of the other councils to address federal requirement of collaborating. The members would coordinate attendance with chair of each council to ensure their participation at the meeting would be noted on the agenda and a dialogue about Rehab Council and collaboration occurs. The members attend meetings prior to the June SRC-B meeting and provide feedback to the Goals and Priorities Committee.

The Chair appoints a Budget Task Force to get update on current status of expenditures and to propose any necessary refinements in the Resource Plan for current FY at the April SRC-B meeting. This group will also meet in the summer and make recommendations for the budget for next fiscal year at the August SRC-B meeting.

The Chair appoints a Task Force to review and update the SRC-B New Member Orientation Packet.

March-2006

April-2006

The Budget Task Force makes recommendations for any necessary changes to budget for current fiscal year.

The Customer Satisfaction & Outcomes and Measures Committee will report progress to Council on achievement of goals and priorities.

The Customer Satisfaction & Outcomes and Measures Committee reviews Statewide Customer Satisfaction Survey and reports to Council.

Appoint task force on Council Committees to review committee structure and report recommendation on changes necessary at June SRC-B meeting.

In even numbered years, the Council, in partnership with SSB, agrees on a pool of impartial hearing officers.

May-2006

All committees assess progress on goals and priorities relevant to their committee and submit written recommendations to Goals and Priorities Committee.

The Coordinating Councils Task Force provides feedback on their activities to the Goals and Priorities committee.

Appendix III Standards and Indicators

State Services for the Blind Performance on Standard 1 and 2

Must pass at least 4 of 6 Indicators and 2 of 3 Primary Indicators for Standard 1

For any given year, calculations for indicators 1.1 through 1.6 for Designated State Units that exclusively serve individuals with visual impairments or blindness are based on aggregated data for the current year and the prior year, i.e., two years of data (34 CFR §361.81(4)).

- 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 VR program after achieving an employment outcome during the previous performance period.**

Required Performance Level: DSUs performance in current period must equal or exceed performance in previous period.

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

Required Performance Level: For the general and combined DSUs, the level is 55.8%; for agencies serving individuals who are blind, the level is 68.9%.

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

Required Performance Level: For the general and combined DSUs, the level is 72.6%; for agencies serving individuals who are blind, the level is 35.4%.

- 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.**

Required Performance Level: For the general and combined DSUs, the level is 62.4%; for agencies serving individuals who are blind, the level is 89.0%.

- 1.5** The average hourly earnings of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earnings 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).

Required Performance Level: For the general and combined DSUs, the level is a ratio of .52; for agencies serving individuals who are blind, the ratio is .59.

- 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 report their own income as the largest single source of economic support at the time they exit the VR program and the percentage who report their own income as the largest single source of support at the time they apply for VR services.

Required Performance Level: For the general and combined DSUs, the level is an arithmetic difference of 53.0; for agencies serving individuals who are blind, the level is a difference of 30.4.

Standard 2: If a DSU had fewer than 100 individuals from a minority background exit the VR program during the reporting period, the DSU must describe the policies it has adopted or will adopt and the steps it has taken or will take to ensure that individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds have equal access to VR services, in lieu of calculating the ratio described below (34 CFR §361.86(b)(2)(iii)).

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

Required Performance Level: All agencies must attain a ratio level of .80.

Appendix IV Goals and Priorities for State Services for the Blind

The following goals and priorities were jointly developed by SRC-B and SSB and were approved by the full Council at their meeting on August 4, 2005.

GOAL AND PRIORITY #1: Employment Outcomes

Minnesota State Services for the Blind will meet RSA Indicator 1.1 for Standard 1 dealing with employment outcomes. This indicator measures 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 VR program after achieving an employment outcome during the previous performance period. To achieve this indicator, SSB's performance in the current period must equal or exceed performance in the previous period. This goal is measured by the SSB MIS system and subsequent federal reports. This goal and priority is driven by the evaluation of SSB performance on the Standards and Indicators.

Strategies:

- Each Counseling Supervisor will ensure staff of the Workforce Development Unit (WFD):
 1. agree to explicit paid closure goals by 9/30 each year;
 2. establish and maintain contact with at least 4 new employers each quarter; and
 3. attend DEED training on use of Labor Market Information in career development process at least once in a two year period;
- The Director of the WFD will support attendance and participation of counselors and other staff in the Chamber of Commerce or similar organization as part of targeted job development efforts.
- As a result of information obtained from the Needs Assessment Task Force of the Rehabilitation Council for the Blind, the WFD unit will develop and implement outreach activities throughout Minnesota. The result of these activities will be increased referrals to the WFD. The effectiveness of this initiative will be measured through documentation of referrals over the three year period of FY2006 through FY2008 as documented in the RSA 113.
- The Director and Supervisors of the WFD will complete an analysis of the record of service of persons closed in FY2005 without achieving an employment outcome. This analysis will include a review of customers closed because of refused services or further services and be completed by December 31, 2005.

As a result of this analysis, training activities may be developed to decrease the number of customers closed without successful employment. Should the analysis indicate the need for additional training, this training will begin no later than May 31, 2006.

- The Director and Supervisors of the WFD will develop and implement a plan to increase the knowledge of the Business Services Representatives of the potential SSB customers have to participate in the Minnesota workforce. This plan will be developed not later than October 31, 2005 and implemented not later than January 31, 2006.

GOAL AND PRIORITY #2: Minority Service Rate

By the end of FFY 2006 at least 100 persons from minority backgrounds will exit services annually. The number exiting in FFY 2004 was less than 100. The measure for this goal and priority is as defined in regulation and comes from the RSA 911 report finalized each November 30th.

This goal and priority is driven by SSB performance on RSA Indicator 2.1 for Standard 2 dealing with equal access to services.

Strategies:

- Linda Lingen, Rehabilitation Area Director will:
 1. Continue cooperating on a bi-monthly basis with particular SSB VR staff in community outreach activities at major community focus points.
 2. With input from counselors, staff, vendors, and relevant experts, including former customers, develop best practices for adjustment to blindness training for individuals who have little or no English proficiency. Best practices developed by March, 2006.
 3. Develop and implement a plan to train counselors, staff and vendors in the best practices. Training plan implemented no later than June, 2006.

GOAL AND PRIORITY #3: DeafBlind Outreach and Service

Increased outreach to and work with persons who have a dual sensory loss, including persons who are DeafBlind. The measure is an increase in the number of persons coded with a dual sensory loss (blind or visual disability and deaf or hard of hearing as well as persons coded DeafBlind) who are accepted in FFY 2006 compared to the number of persons similarly coded who were accepted in FFY 2003 (which was 19). Data source for this measure is the SSB MIS at the end of the FFYs.

This action item was originally recommended by the DeafBlind committee of the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind. It is also designed to outreach to and serve individuals seen by some as underserved by the SSB VR program.

Strategies

- Linda Lingen, Rehabilitation Area Director and a designated Rehabilitation Counselor will, with input from the SRC-B and under the overall direction of the Director of WFD, develop and then

implement explicit and specific actions to increase outreach to persons who have a dual sensory loss. This effort will be fully deployed by December 1, 2005.

- Additional refresher training, based on revised “Best Practices,” will take place no later than January 31, 2006.
- The DeafBlind Committee of the SRC-B will provide the Director of the WFD Unit with specific suggestions for increasing the number of adjustment to blindness trainers in MN who have ASL skills by March 31, 2006.
- The DeafBlind Committee of the SRC-B, with support from Linda Lingen, will develop and implement a customer satisfaction and needs assessment survey of the DeafBlind customers of SSB. This tool will focus on the satisfaction with services of customers served in the WFD Unit since FY2004 and an assessment of needs related to vocational rehabilitation services and employment. This survey will be completed by May 31, 2006.

GOAL AND PRIORITY #4: Increase customer satisfaction with services provided

By the end of March 2007 the “satisfaction” rating (percent of respondents reporting at level six and higher) for Q1 on the Customer Satisfaction Survey (What is your overall satisfaction with the services provided? Use a scale of 1 to 10 where “1” means “very dissatisfied” and “10” means “very satisfied”) will be at least 85%. The current rate (12 months April 2004 – March 2005) is 82%.

This item was originally recommended by the SRC-B.

Strategies:

- WFD management will research, develop and implement a counselor training program which addresses the essential aspects of developing a productive counselor-customer relationship. This program will be:
 - Researched by 10/31/05
 - Developed by 12/31/05
 - Implemented by 1/31/06

GOAL AND PRIORITY #5: Continue to apply a procedure developed in 2005 that insures informed customer choice in selecting providers for adjustment to blindness training.

Continue to apply a systematic procedure for ensuring all customers are provided information in an accessible format about options for receiving adjustment to blindness services. Continued use of this procedure will be documented by the WFD case review process with a compliance goal of 100%.

This goal was recommended by the SRC-B and builds on a goal established for FFY2005.

Strategies:

- Procedures implemented in February, 2005 will continue in place for the foreseeable future.
- Monthly case review reports pertinent to this goal will be summarized and shared with the SRC-B on a regular basis.

GOAL AND PRIORITY #6: Continue a goal of 100% the portion of VR staff members new to SSB receiving Introduction to Blindness —Phase 1 and/or Phase 2 training on the essential aspects of blindness and visual impairment.

This goal was originally recommended by the SRC-B.

Strategies:

- Supervisory staff will ensure all new VR staff will complete **Introduction to Blindness —Phase 1** training within three months of hire.
- Supervisory staff will ensure all new Rehabilitation Counseling staff will complete **Introduction to Blindness—Phase 2** training within three months of hire.
- Current employees of SSB who have not been exposed to all or part of the material in the **Introduction to Blindness – Phase 1** course will be invited and encouraged to receive that training in a timely manner.
- **Phase 2** training will be discussed with and encouraged for other current staff that would otherwise not be required to attend.