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Minnesota State Rehabilitation  
Council for the Blind



**Annual Report**

*October 1, 2005 - September 30, 2006*

# Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

## *Table of Contents*

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>  | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>MISSION AND VISION .....</b>   | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR .....</b>                                     | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>DIRECTOR’S COMMENTS .....</b>  | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>COMMITTEE REPORTS .....</b>  | <b>7</b>  |
| Customer Satisfaction & Outcome and Measures Committee.....             | 7         |
| Goals and Priorities Committee.....                                     | 10        |
| Minority Outreach Committee .....                                       | 10        |
| Vendor Outcomes and Measures Committee .....                            | 11        |
| DeafBlind Committee .....   | 12        |
| Senior Services Committee.....  | 12        |
| The Child Committee.....  | 14        |
| Communication Center Committee.....                                     | 14        |
| <b>TASK FORCES.....</b>   | <b>16</b> |
| Needs Assessment Task Force.....  | 16        |
| Service Record Documentation Task Force.....                            | 17        |
| <b>APPENDICES .....</b>   | <b>18</b> |
| Appendix I Council Members .....  | 18        |
| Appendix II State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind Work Plan .....  | 20        |
| Appendix III Standards and Indicators .....                             | 23        |
| Appendix IV Goals and Priorities for State Services for the Blind ..... | 25        |

# 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 had 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 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 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

As you will read throughout this report, the activities of the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC-B) during FFY 2006 represented a continuation of the excellent work that has occurred for the past several years. 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 those who are children, seniors, and/or DeafBlind. All committees also participated in revising the agency's Goals and Priorities for the year 2007.

Following are a few highlights from FFY2006 not covered in committee reports:

A recipient of Workforce Development services was invited to speak with the SRC-B at its December meeting and share his experiences. When this customer became blind in April of 2004, he lost the ability to drive and felt he was unable to do the job of boiler mechanic that he had held for 16 years. Through the adjustment-to-blindness training and other services provided to him by SSB, he regained control of his life again. He discussed his enrollment at the University of Minnesota and his pending internship. Hearing from the customer was an excellent way for the Council to interact with someone receiving the services about which the SRC-B deliberates.

At the end of April, along with SSB Director Chuk Hamilton, I attended part of a conference of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). My purpose in attending was to participate in activities specifically geared toward State Rehabilitation Councils. This was the first conference at which CSAVR made time in the schedule just for councils to gather in a closed session and have discussions about council-related matters. We worked together to find ways to work in closer partnership with CSAVR and to develop a common and unified message with which to approach the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). These meetings represented a first step in this effort. There is much work to do yet, but the effort is valuable given the climate in which we find ourselves these days with respect to rehabilitation in the United States.

This year the SRC-B, in collaboration with SSB management, created a framework for a needs assessment, discussed in the needs assessment task force report later in this annual report. Along with changes at the RSA came changes in RSA's expectations regarding state plans, particularly in the area of needs assessments to be conducted by states. SSB staff and SRC-B members met several times by phone with RSA to work out state plan updates that would meet the newly revealed requirements on a tight timeframe. The resulting document follows the guidance provided by the Council in the needs assessment framework. We await direction from RSA concerning needs assessments in the future.

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 besides the chair have completed or will soon be completing their last terms on the council - Carol Leaders, Sam Jasmine, Liz McDevitt, and Jim Collins. We are grateful to them for their dedicated service over the past six years.

It has been my great privilege to serve in the capacity of chair of this Council for the past two years and to work with such a committed and capable group of people. 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 SSB staff for their untiring direct support throughout my two years as SRC-B chair: Cathy Carlson, David Andrews, Craig Amundsen, Gwen Bighley, Pam Brown, Chuk Hamilton, Laurie Kalland, Sharon Killa, Lyle Lundquist, Darlene Kratt, Sharon Ostrom, Joe Pattison, Linda Lingen, Toni Amundson, 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

I am honored to work in partnership with the members of Minnesota's State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC-B) again this year. The energy and dedication the members bring to the SRC-B, the advice and input provided to State Services for the Blind (SSB) through regular Council meetings as well as many committee meetings throughout the year is greatly appreciated. SRC-B members willingly complete much of their work through additional committee meetings in keeping with the SRC-B's committee structure.

The SRC-B has been led admirably by Chairperson Jennifer Dunnam. Her leadership was especially valued this year while working on SSB's 2007 Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) state plan updates and the required needs assessment. New Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) requirements increased the workload and compressed the timeframe for completion of the plan, and with the SRC-B's help, the work was completed in time and successfully. Ms. Dunnam's assistance in this process along with Vice Chairperson Rebecca Kragnes was invaluable.

State Services for the Blind cannot do its work alone. The partnership that SSB and the SRC-B have makes it possible for us to work together toward a common goal and share a common mission: *To facilitate the achievement of vocational and personal independence by Minnesotans who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind.*

This has been a most productive year for SSB and the SRC-B as we worked towards realizing our mission. The following are some important highlights:

- Workforce Development Unit served 1,140 customers and assisted 96 customers to secure employment at an average hourly wage of \$14.86.
- Senior Services Unit served over 3,000 seniors this year—an all time high.

- Secured sufficient funding from the Department of Commerce’s Telecommunication Access Minnesota fund to add Minnesota Monthly to the local channel of NFBNewslines in August; and expect to add an additional newspaper each to NFB Newslines and Dial-in-News.
- Fundraising efforts have resulted in \$269,869 in gifts since October 1, 2005; \$97,663 was earmarked for the Senior Outreach Program.
- Extended for two years our interagency agreement with the Department of Education for the production of Braille and audio recording of instructional materials for Minnesota’s K-12 students.
- Partnered with the Secretary of State in outreach to inform and train the public in the use of the accessible voting machine, the Automark, providing the opportunity for blind and visually impaired persons to vote privately and independently for the first time in their lives.
- Completed the first year of a five-year program in-service training program for staff in the areas of DeafBlindness, Low Vision, and Cultural Competency.
- Conducted the first ever customer satisfaction and needs assessment survey of every SSB customer with a dual sensory impairment. The results will be used to evaluate and plan services and collaborative activities with other agencies also serving individuals with a dual sensory impairment.
- Piloted and launched a new customer satisfaction survey for SSB customers who have completed adjustment to blindness training.

All of these accomplishments were possible because of the input and commitment of the SRC-B, the quality and dedication of SSB staff, the hard work of SSB customers, and the contributions of other partners—truly a “Formula for Success”.

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

Chuk Hamilton, Director

## Committee Reports

### Customer Satisfaction & Outcome and Measures Committee

*Bonita Kallestad-Chair, Sam Jasmine, 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, 2006. Five survey items were analyzed to compare the results for years ending 3/31/03, 3/31/04, 3/31/05, and 3/31/06. While there has been some fluctuation in results, no significant changes have taken place from year-to-year.

### CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY REVIEW

#### SRC-B Customer Satisfaction & Outcomes and Measures Committee

by Christopher Raudenbush, DEED Statewide Systems

| Summary  | YE 3/31/03 | YE 3/31/04 | YE 3/31/05 | YE 3/31/06 |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Q1: Overall satisfaction with services provided                                      | 76%        | 78%        | 82%        | 81%        |
| Q2: Extent to which services have met expectations                                   | 66%        | 70%        | 74%        | 71%        |
| Q3: Comparison with "ideal" set of services  | 66%        | 69%        | 72%        | 73%        |
| Q5 (now Q4): Satisfied that counselor (staff) understood customer's needs            | 86%        | 81%        | 80%        | 85%        |
| Q10 (now Q5): How satisfied are you with the time it usually took to get your answer | NA         | 76%        | 84%        | 83%        |

The year ending 3/31/06 has approval ratings ranging from a high of 85% and a low of 71%. The 85% approval rating was for question 4, "How satisfied are you that the staff understands your needs?" The 71% approval rating was the result for SSB question 2, "To what extent have the services met your expectations?" For the complete Customer Satisfaction Survey results see: [www.mnssb.org/workingadults](http://www.mnssb.org/workingadults)



## **Goals and Priorities**

### **Goal and Priority #1: Employment Outcomes**

The Workforce Development Unit of SSB successfully closed 104 cases during FY06. Of those closures, 96 were in paid employment and 92 were earning minimum wage or higher. However, SSB did not meet RSA Indicator 1.1 for Standard I as called for in the Goals and Priorities because this number did not meet or exceed performance in the previous period. All strategies outlined in the Goals and Priorities were carried out as stated.

### **Goal and Priority #2: Minority Service Rate**

The goal of at least 100 persons from minority backgrounds exiting services in FY06 was not met. All strategies of this goal were completed as described in the Goals and Priorities with the exception of the completion of best practices for adjustment to blindness training for individuals who have little or no English proficiency. The scope of this strategy necessitated continued focus in FY07 with a revised delineation of strategies.

### **Goal and Priority #3: DeafBlind Outreach and Service**

With the input and support of the DeafBlind Committee of the SRC-B, the strategies of this goal were completed. The results of the satisfaction survey and needs assessment will continue to have significant impact on the focus and structure of services to DeafBlind in future years. The measure of this goal, that more persons with a dual sensory loss were accepted in FFY06 than in FFY03 was met. Nineteen individuals with a dual sensory loss were accepted for services in FFY03 and twenty were accepted for services in FFY06.

### **Goal and Priority #4: Increase customer satisfaction with services provided**

While the overall measure of achievement of this goal is not calculated until March 2007, the satisfaction rating for Q1 on the Customer Satisfaction Survey from April 2005-March 2006 was 81%, a decrease of one percentage point from April 2004-March 2005. The WorkForce Development Unit continues to train staff in topics related to increasing customer satisfaction.

### **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**

This procedure continues to be followed with all customers requiring adjustment to blindness training. Reports pertinent to this goal have been shared with the SRC-B on a quarterly basis. This goal continues to be met.

### **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**

In FFY06, all VR staff members new to SSB received Phase 1 and, as appropriate, Phase 2 training according to the timelines in this procedure. This goal continues to be 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 2006 follows.

The numbers reported for FFY 2006 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 four of the six indicators. The RSA requires that the State agency meet or exceed at least 2 of the 3 primary indicators. For FFY 2006, SSB met or exceeded three of the primary indicators. An explanation about what the standards and indicators cover is in 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*

|   | <i>2006*</i>  | <i>2005</i>   | <i>2004</i>   | <i>2003</i>   |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Ind 1.1: Change in employment outcomes(&gt;=0)</b>                           | <b>-5</b>     | <b>1</b>      | <b>-74</b>    | <b>13</b>     |
| <b>Ind 1.2: Percent of employment outcomes (&gt;=68.9%)</b>                     | <b>48.74%</b> | <b>43.97%</b> | <b>40.91%</b> | <b>46.34%</b> |
| <b>Ind 1.3: Competitive employment (&gt;=35.4%)</b>                             | <b>93.54%</b> | <b>94.09%</b> | <b>93.22%</b> | <b>96.77%</b> |
| <b>Ind 1.4: Significant Disability (&gt;=89.0%)</b>                             | <b>97.70%</b> | <b>98.65%</b> | <b>99.55%</b> | <b>98.00%</b> |
| <b>Ind 1.5: Earnings ratio (&gt;=.59)</b>                                       | <b>.717</b>   | <b>.650</b>   | <b>.0645</b>  | <b>0.676</b>  |
| <b>Ind 1.6: Self support (&gt;=30.4)</b>  | <b>30.87</b>  | <b>35.43</b>  | <b>36.82</b>  | <b>30.67</b>  |
| <b>Number of indicators in standard 1 that were passed</b>                      | <b>4</b>      | <b>5</b>      | <b>4</b>      | <b>5</b>      |
| <b>Number of primary indicators (1.3 to 1.5) in Standard 1 that were passed</b> | <b>3</b>      | <b>3</b>      | <b>3</b>      | <b>3</b>      |
|   |               |               |               |               |
| <b>2.1 Ratio of Minority to Non-Minority Service Rate (&gt;=.80)</b>            |               | <b>.72</b>    |               | <b>.86</b>    |

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

## **Goals and Priorities Committee**

*Jennifer Dunnam-Chair, Liz Bruber, Steve Jacobson, Sam Jasmine, Rebecca Kragnes. SSB staff-Pam Brown, Cathy Carlson*

This committee exists to facilitate the Council's responsibility to, in partnership with SSB develop, agree to, and, as necessary revise goals and priorities.

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 2007. 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. 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. As a result of discussions with the Rehabilitation Services Administration, further slight revisions were made, to be approved at the October 2006 meeting of the SRC-B. The Goals and Priorities for FFY 2007 are presented in Appendix IV.

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 Committee**

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

In order to improve services to people of minority cultures who are blind or visually impaired, the minority outreach committee has worked effectively with SSB on a number of activities.

- Throughout the year, Committee members provided SSB with information about training opportunities, outreach/marketing opportunities and relationship development opportunities within various cultures. This information was shared with all SSB staff to increase their knowledge of and exposure to these cultures.
- The Committee assisted SSB in generating a list of words related to adjustment to blindness to be included in English as a Second Language curricula.
- The Committee provided SSB with suggested questions and suggested format for a diversity-related needs assessment of the agency.

Future goals and activities of the Minority Committee will be developed in conjunction with SSB from the results of the diversity-related needs assessment of SSB.

## **Vendor Outcomes and Measures Committee**

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

This was a year of restructuring and reinventing the measurement of vendors and customer results and satisfaction with them. As reported last year, the previous process for attempting to measure vendor performance in adjustment-to-blindness training had not been successful.

Most of this year was spend developing a new survey of 20 items to be given to each SSB customer after completing specific training with a vendor. Whereas the previous pre- and post-training surveys were to be administered by SSB counselors assigned to the customer, the new post-training survey is administered by a DEED employee with no direct involvement in the training. This should remove the staff resistance experienced in the previous method. The reduction to a single survey should improve customer response as well as making the gathering of the data more workable for DEED staff.

SSB management has provided full support for the revised survey. This is due to less need to monitor staff performance due to removing responsibility for direct staff involvement, as well as commitment from SSB Director Chuk Hamilton.

Data collection began in May. Since the population base is relatively small in statistical terms, especially for a single vendor, the committee expects it will take about a year to obtain meaningful measures of the vendors. Preliminary aggregate data show good customer satisfaction, but some possible areas of actual training results that may need follow-up.

The committee will continue to work with SSB management during the coming year as more data are gathered and evaluated.

## **DeafBlind Committee**

*Liz McDevitt-Chair, Lynette Boyer, George Failes, Kathy Hagen, Craig Roissum, SSB staff-Pam Brown, Linda Lingen, Roselee Siegler, Sharon Ostrom*

The DeafBlind Committee has completed a very busy and productive year. The activities of the committee included the development of a DeafBlind Brochure, intended to describe the services available in an accessible format to people who are DeafBlind.

Another focus of the committee this past year was the development of a DeafBlind Needs Assessment Survey as well as a Satisfaction Survey for SSB customers who are DeafBlind. These two survey tools were blended into one survey. The survey was administered to customers over the summer. During the coming year, the committee will review results and make recommendations to SSB.

Another area of discussion included the development of suggestions and challenges on increasing the number of adjustment to blindness trainers in Minnesota with fluent ASL skills.

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

## **Senior Services Committee**

*RoseAnn Faber-Chair, Toni Amundson, Janiece Duffy, Frank Johnson, Larry Lura, and Coralmae (Coke) Stenstrom. SSB staff-Lyle Lundquist, Curt Martinson, Richard Strong, Sue Crancer*

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.

In federal fiscal year 2006, the Committee reviewed and revised its charge. The Committee discussed extensively the provision of support groups for seniors who are newly blind. Because there are a number of support groups in existence, the Committee recommended that the Senior Services unit develop and maintain a list of such groups for use by SSB staff when requests for referral to such groups are received from customers. A list of support groups offered by agencies and consumer groups has been developed and distributed to staff. It will be revised annually.

In August 2006, new requirements came to SSB from the federal partner - the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) - on how to account for the Independent Living part 704 dollars. These requirements place new and additional burdens on staff to gather more and more data on customers served.

In light of this increased federal reporting burden, it is SSB's plan to have all of its Independent Living 704 activities (save for support of the Statewide Independent Living Council, which would remain at its current level) to center on only one of the eight permitted expenditure areas: outreach to unserved or underserved persons. Staff perform these outreach activities and SSB has in place a reporting mechanism to document and appropriately charge these outreach efforts to the federal resources. The federal resources now used for direct services will be replaced with state-only resources (but without the federal reporting requirements). Customers would not see a change in service delivery and counselors would be focused more on customers and less on paperwork. Because services to customers would not be adversely affected, the Committee supports this change.

The goals of the Committee for federal fiscal year 2006 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; and
- 3) The development of a computer access and training project.

Goal one concerning customer satisfaction is ongoing and takes place once a customer has completed training and the 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. In Federal Fiscal Year 2006, two versions of a survey were developed and tested. In Federal Fiscal year 2007, the Committee will review and offer suggestions to refine this effort.

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.

Goal three involves computer access for seniors and is also 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 the year the SSU established and continues to have 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 for seniors whether they are computer users needing assistive technology to continue their interest or first time computer users needing introductory exploration of computers.

The Committee wishes to acknowledge the contributions made by long time Committee members and staff Toni, Amundson, Curt Martinson and Janiece Duffy who retired or completed terms during Federal Fiscal Year 2006.

## **The Child Committee**

*Elizabeth Bruber-Chair, Nadine Jacobson, Jean Martin, Liz McDevitt. SSB staff-Pam Brown, Darlene Kratt, Sharon Ostrom*

The Child Committee made recommendations for SSB and the Child Specialist throughout the 2005 – 2006 calendar year. The agenda items on the schedule included purpose and content of the parent needs assessment survey, recommendations for the website, newsletter, and parent informational packet.

The position of the SSB Child Specialist will change in October, 2006. The position is vacant and the Child Committee made specific recommendations for hiring the next Child Specialist.

I would like to thank the Child Committee members and the staff of SSB for the collaborative efforts made for supporting the blind and visually impaired child, age 0 – 14 years and their families.

## **Communication Center Committee**

*Wally Hinz-Chair, Susan Barton, Julie Bauch, Catherine Durivage, Carol Earle, Steve Jacobson, Jean Martin, Malcolm Mclean, Andy Virden. SSB staff-Dick Strong, David Andrews, Mary Archer, Angela Bodensteiner, Gwen Bighley, 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. Committee membership 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.

The product of this committee is a report to the SRC-B containing specific strategies for increasing and improving Communication Center services. During FFY 2006 the Communication Center Committee met every two months to receive updates and offer input on the projects, staffing changes, and other on-going work of the Communication Center.

Listed below are highlights and accomplishments of the Communication Center in FFY 2006:

- **Additional News Services** - At the beginning of the fiscal year, the committee chair appointed a task force to explore and make recommendations to the Communication Center on ways to improve the newspaper-by-phone services. The task force explored the option of adding one or two additional newspapers to the service, as well as a monthly publication. The Minnesota Monthly is now part of NFB-NEWSLINE(r), and efforts continue toward including the additional newspapers in NFB-NEWSLINE(r) and Dial-in-News.
- **High-end Braille Embosser** - The acquisition and full implementation of a new high-end braille embosser enables the Communication Center to expand its production capabilities and continue to provide high-quality output with faster turnaround.

- Annual Volunteer Recognition Events - The Communication Center conducted the annual volunteer recognition events to applaud the work of over 700 volunteers that make possible much of the work of the Communication Center. This year the major event honoring current volunteers was held at Como Park, with over 300 volunteers and their guests in attendance, making the event an outstanding success. The Volunteer Emeritus Recognition Event was also held at Como Park and was attended by nearly a dozen of the 52 members of this elite group: persons who have retired after giving over fifteen years of volunteer service to the Center.
- Continued Marketing and Outreach Efforts - The Senior Services Outreach Project, led by Ed Lecher, continued in SSB's effort to reach more seniors in need of Center services. That project, along with the hard work of Wally Hinz and Charlie Boone and their speaking engagements, has resulted in a 15 % increase of new customers of the Center during this past year.
- National and International Involvement - During the year staff and committee members were involved in a number of national and international activities including: the DAISY consortium, testing of new NLS format, National Braille Association, Braille Authority of North America, and the International Association of Audio Information Services. These efforts reflect continued leadership by staff members and Communication Center Committee members.
- Evolution of Textbook Production - Communication Center staff and a committee member attended an institute on digital production at the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) conference in July of 2006 to better understand e-text production as options are considered for the future activities and efforts of the Center in meeting the needs of students with disabilities in post-secondary educational programs.
- Braille Transcription of Tests - The braille transcription of Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment Tests continues to be a critical role fulfilled by the Center.
- Radio Talking Book Receivers - Ongoing efforts to secure a new radio receiver appear to be nearing fruition, with recent prototypes showing great promise.



## Task Forces

A variety of SRC-B task forces met and completed their assigned activities during the year. The Needs Assessment Task Force and the Service Record Documentation Task Force reports are included below. Other task forces were convened to work on items such as putting together the FFY06 annual report, updating the new member orientation packet, revising the committee/structure charters, and revising the budget/resource plan.

### Needs Assessment Task Force

*Jean Martin- Chair, Elizabeth Bruber, Jennifer Dunnam, Steve Jacobson, Pam Brown, Cathy Carlson, Richard Strong*

The members discussed the charge to the Task Force and reviewed the following materials:

- requirements for conducting a needs assessment found in the Rehabilitation Act
- a draft outline of action steps
- national transition study
- data available from SSB (case service expenditure categories; demographic data; estimate of DeafBlind Minnesotans)

Jean Martin shared with the group a definition of a comprehensive needs assessment taken from Rehabilitation Needs Assessment for Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies, Vol. I, which was published by RSA in 1991. It reads:

*Needs assessment is a continuing process for systematically gathering and synthesizing valid information on the needs of individuals that is relevant to the planning and development of vocational rehabilitation service delivery programs. Needs assessment is a proactive, intentional activity. Although incidental and casual sources of data may influence planning, needs assessment is carried out on an ongoing basis, in a systematic manner, as an integral part of the agency's planning function. (p. 2)*

The Task Force developed a Needs Assessment Process Framework. The Task Force recommends that SSB utilize this framework when carrying out the needs assessment activity as required in the Rehabilitation Act. The Task Force members consider the process for needs assessment to be continuous, ongoing, and drawing on a variety of sources of information.

### Needs Assessment Process Framework

Step 1: Identify the service needs of individuals.

Sources of this information might include: customer satisfaction survey results; federal standards and indicators; demographic data; disability incidence; ratio of people served to the general population.

Step 2: Identify services provided by SSB to customers.

Sources of this information might include: case service expenditure patterns.

Step 3: Identify concerns or gaps in services between what is needed and what is provided.

Sources of this information might include: customer satisfaction survey results; outreach efforts; trend data; training and staff development; customer service needs (supported employment, services from community rehabilitation programs, computers/assistive technology, etc); goals and priorities.

Step 4: Identify the results obtained.

Sources of this information might include: employment outcomes; closures without an employment outcome; comparison of findings of the VR Longitudinal Study with SSB results; progress on meeting goals and priorities; federal standards and indicators; customer satisfaction survey results and customer service improvements (phone calls returned, more productive relationships).

Step 5: Allocate/realign resources; make recommendations.

Step 6: Return to Step 1 and continue through the framework to conduct a needs assessment that is ongoing and systematic.

Approved by the SRC-B April 6, 2006

## **Service Record Documentation Task Force**

*Jennifer Dunnam- Chair, Bonita Kallestad, Rod Haworth, SSB Management*

The Service Record Documentation Task Force provided a report in October of 2005. At the August 2005 council meeting, discussion had occurred about a finding in the RSA 107 review that RSA wished SSB had consulted more with the SRC-B on the types of documentation to be kept on service records when revisions to SSB's policy manual were approved back in 2002.

In an effort to improve the record of the consultation that the Council had, this task force was formed. The changes made to the policy manual in 2002 were not substantial changes, but rather of wording and minor updates. The 2002 discussion was not specifically on types of service, documentation or any other specific policies.

Looking at references to documentation in the policy manual the task force found that "...the specifications in the policy manual regarding types of documentation to be adequate to assist counselors in meeting the federal requirements. The task force also recommends that at such time as future revisions are made to the policy manual more deliberate consultation between SSB and the Council should occur to ensure that requirements continue to be met. Additionally, at the next revision of the manual there should be specific consultation to determine whether additional information about types of documentation to be retained should be included in the manual to provide clearer guidance." The Council approved this finding in October of 2005.

## Appendices

### Appendix I Council Members

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Toni Amundson</b>               | Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor                |
| <b>Jan Bailey</b>                  | Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor                |
| <b>Connie Lee Berg</b>             | American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Projects |
| <b>Lynette Boyer</b>               | DeafBlind  |
| <b>Elizabeth Bruber</b>            | Parent of a child with multiple disabilities       |
| <b>Jim Collins</b>                 | Community Rehabilitation Programs                  |
| <b>Jennifer Dunnam, Chair</b>      | Disability Advocacy Group                          |
| <b>Chuk Hamilton</b>               | Director, State Services for the Blind             |
| <b>Rod Haworth</b>                 | Governor's Workforce Development Council           |
| <b>Steve Jacobson</b>              | Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services    |
| <b>Sam Jasmine</b>                 | Business, Industry, and Labor                      |
| <b>Bonita Kallestad</b>            | Client Assistance Project                          |
| <b>Rebecca Kragnes, Vice Chair</b> | Disability Advocacy Group                          |
| <b>Carol Leaders</b>               | Business, Industry, and Labor                      |
| <b>Michael Malver</b>              | Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services    |
| <b>Jean Martin</b>                 | MN Department of Education                         |
| <b>Liz McDevitt</b>                | Parent Information and Training Center             |
| <b>Fannie Primm</b>                | Business, Industry, and Labor                      |
| <b>Judy Sanders</b>                | Statewide Independent Living Council               |
| <b>Coralmae Stenstrom</b>          | Disability Advocacy Group                          |

**STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL  
FOR THE BLIND  
MEMBERS  
FFY 2006**



**Back row:** Jean Martin, Chuk Hamilton, Bonita Kallestad, Carol Leaders, Elizabeth Bruber, **Middle row:** Michael Malver, Lynette Boyer, Rebecca Kragness, Liz McDevitt, **Front row:** Jennifer Dunnam, Steve Jacobson, Fannie Primm, Jan Bailey **Not pictured:** Toni Amundson, Connie Lee Berg, Jim Collins, Rod Haworth, Sam Jasmine, Judy Sanders, Coralmae Stenstrom.

## **Appendix II State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind Work Plan**

### 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 agree 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 RCB meeting and provide feedback to the Needs Assessment & 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 RCB meeting. This group will also meet in the summer and make recommendations for the budget for next fiscal year at the August RCB meeting.

The Chair appoints a Task Force to review and update the RCB 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 RCB 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 Customer Needs Assessment & Goals and Priorities Committee.

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

#### June-2006

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

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

The Goals and Priorities Committee and SSB begin drafting goals and priorities for next fiscal year.

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

#### July-2006

The Goals and Priorities Committee and SSB provide joint draft of the goals and priorities update to SSB by July 10.

Council members must provide comments on the goals and priorities update to SSB by July 17.

SSB will summarize and distribute comments on the update no later than July 24 to ensure Council action at the August meeting.

The Budget Task Force meets and makes recommendations at the August meeting for the resource plan for next fiscal year.

#### August-2006

The 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. The Council acts on the recommended resource plan.

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

The Chair appoints a task force to create an Annual Report.

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

#### September-2006

## 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 MN. 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 30<sup>th</sup>.

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.