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MINNESOTA
STATE
REHABILITATION
COUNCIL
FOR THE
BLIND

2 0 1 3 A N N U A L R E P O R T

LETTER TO THE GOVERNOR FROM OUR COUNCIL CHAIR

Jamie Taylor, Council Chair
State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind
2200 University Avenue West, Suite 240
St. Paul, MN 55114

November, 2013

The Honorable Mark Dayton

Office of the Governor
130 State Capitol, 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor Dayton:

The role of the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind of Minnesota is to serve as a catalyst for the furtherance of the goals of State Services for the Blind, to be a **national leader in promoting the aspirations of persons who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind** in leading full and productive lives. Through the work of State Services for the Blind we are **building a better Minnesota** by providing resources, tools and technology to blind, visually impaired and DeafBlind Minnesotans as they pursue education, employment and active engaged lives across our state. This report showcases the work that the council has done in 2013 to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the services that SSB offers its customers throughout the great state of Minnesota.

EMPLOYMENT

We are proud that in 2013 **State Services for the Blind exceeded its goals for successful closure of employment cases**, with 101 of our customers finding new jobs. More than ever, this year the council has taken an active role in advising and supporting the Workforce Development Unit (WDU) of SSB.

- We solicited and received an in-depth report from WDU's Director detailing the work of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, their caseloads, effectiveness and strategies to overcome barriers to successful closures.
- Our employment committee reviewed employment outcomes and developed a strategy for a more proactive working relationship with WDU.
- The council continued its exploration of implementing more effective outreach strategies to Minnesota employers.
- In order to learn from our success stories, we heard from SSB customers who have benefited from SSB services in gaining and keeping employment.

ACCESS TECHNOLOGY

The plethora of access technologies now on the market holds significant promise for enabling our SSB customers to accomplish their educational, employment and personal goals. The council is working with SSB to ensure that:

- SSB's customers get the tools and the training they need in order to take advantage of the hardware, software, and virtual options available;
- We continue to advocate for accessibility, usability and universal design in schools, businesses and other venues;
- We monitor online learning options as SSB customers pursue educational goals;
- And we work to insure that employers have the knowledge and resources they need in order to create workplaces that are fully accessible.

OUR ACTIVE COMMITTEES

As you will read in this report, the committees of our council work closely with SSB and our constituents to improve the services SSB provides. In addition to these committees, our Budget Task Force and Needs Assessment Task Force both report to the council on a regular basis.

This year:

- The Communication Center Committee continued its work of assisting in extending the reach of the Communication Center in publicizing its services.
- The Customer Satisfaction Committee reviewed the customer satisfaction surveys on a quarterly basis and provided updates.
- The DeafBlind Committee worked on simplifying the language in materials that SSB Counselors give to DeafBlind customers.
- The Employment Committee worked closely with the Director of the Workforce Development Unit to assist in increasing the numbers of customers who successfully reach their employment goals.
- The Minority Outreach Committee continued to monitor the work of SSB in reaching under-served communities, and promoted the non-English versions of the transitions brochure.
- The Senior Committee continued to monitor the number of seniors served across the state through SSB's Senior Services Unit.
- The Transition Committee provided a pivotal role in assisting SSB in making a stronger connection with blind, visually impaired and DeafBlind students who are transitioning to work or further education.

The pages of this report will illustrate that again this year the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind provided a **critical link connecting Minnesotans who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind to State Services for the Blind of Minnesota**. In the guidance and support we offer to SSB, the council continues to be **innovative, engaged, and passionate** in our advocacy for our constituents across the great state of Minnesota.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie Taylor

MISSION AND VISION



Pictured: Seated L-R: Frances Whetstone, Jamie Taylor, Chris Marble Second Row L-R: Kathy Hagen, Rochelle Roehrich, Kristin Oien, Jeff Mihelich, Ken Rodgers, Steve Jacobson, Lisa Vala, Emily Zitek, Richard Strong Third Row L-R: Steve Ditchler, Michael O'Day, Jennifer Dunham, Angela Christle, Scott Eggen

MISSION AND VISION

MISSION STATEMENT FOR THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND

The Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind, working on behalf of Minnesotans who are blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind, 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 blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind receive the best possible services under the law.

VISION STATEMENT FOR THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND

The 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 quality 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.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Minnesota State Services for the Blind is guided by substantial input from The State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind. The council, whose membership is appointed by the governor, is fully engaged in making sure that Minnesotans who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind have the opportunities to achieve their goals and lead productive lives as contributing members to communities across our state.

Along with SSB staff I have been impressed and positively challenged this year by the steps the council took to refresh and renew its focus. Each member provides a critical link to the customers we serve, and an invaluable perspective on how we can best refine and improve our services.

In April, during its day-long planning and evaluation meeting, I shared with the council my frank assessment of the major challenges and significant opportunities SSB faces. They fall into four broad categories:

FINANCE, BUDGET AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The recent federal financial fiasco underscores the importance of our work to streamline processes and systems to optimize use of already tight resources, be they human or financial. As I noted to the council, while we have experienced significant increases in charges to SSB for operational expenses of state government systems, federal and state funding to us will, at best, remain flat.

Of increasing concern is how to serve the growing number of seniors living with vision loss given the ever-growing pressure on our scant resources. To address this emerging concern, SSB engaged the assistance of the Public and Nonprofit Leadership Center at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs. Their staff is now finalizing an array of creative options for our consideration. As 2013 draws to a close we will be reviewing their product and identifying actionable items in concert with the council's Senior Services Committee

SUCCESSION PLANNING

Like much of Minnesota, SSB's workforce is aging. This is also true for many vendors with whom we contract for services for our customers. We are working to ensure our staff are skilled in applying the new Unified English Braille code to their work. We are reviewing the competencies and skill requirements for personnel serving seniors. And, for each of the past five years, select SSB staff have been nominated for and admitted to the state of Minnesota's prestigious Emerging Leaders Institute. This multi-month program, which accepts only thirty participants per cohort, is designed to help this gifted and committed group of public employees become successful and effective leaders in tomorrow's workplace. We need to continue and expand current development efforts to ensure future staff has the knowledge, cultural awareness and competencies our customers require.

TECHNOLOGY IN THE WORKFORCE

For Minnesotans who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind, the ever-shifting technology landscape presents tremendous potential and substantial challenge. Increasingly, persons who are blind or visually impaired are denied jobs because proprietary or custom-configured in-house software isn't accessible. In addition to empowering our customers to keep their technology skills strong and up-to-date, we continue to assess how best to work with employers to ensure that software and other systems are designed from the ground up to be accessible. Input from council members, especially those with close ties to the business community, is needed to increase our access technology team's ability to develop and deploy strategies to address barriers such as these.

EMPLOYMENT

The 101 successful employment closures from our Workforce Development Unit – a number significantly up from previous years – demonstrate that Minnesotans who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind play a valuable role in driving Minnesota's economic engine. This year, 101 more SSB customers can answer proudly when asked that most common of questions: "What do you do for a living?"

While SSB supports customers to secure employment, we also strive to better serve working Minnesotans at risk of losing their job because of developing vision issues. We continually look to expand connections with employers and HR staff. We have begun working more closely with the council's Employment Committee to better serve our customers and this year they have played a critical role in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of our Workforce Development Unit and in shaping strategies for improving our services.

SUMMING UP

On December 2nd, 2013 I retired after 31 years with Minnesota State Services for the Blind. I am proud to have served a state organization and community with such a strong and vibrant commitment to civic engagement. In Minnesota, we share resources and extend opportunity with the understanding that our communities do better when we draw on the skills, creativity and hard work of all Minnesotans. Our State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind sets a standard across the country for advocacy and active citizen participation in their state rehabilitation agency.

"What do you do for a living," is a question that I, like anyone, have encountered enumerable times during my adult life. It's been a privilege to reply that I work at SSB; that I'm one of the hundreds of persons – employees and volunteers alike – dedicated to facilitating the achievement of personal and vocational independence by Minnesotans who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind. I can't imagine anyone having a better or more satisfying answer. I extend my thanks to each person who has served on the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind over the last 31 years. It has been a privilege and a true honor to work alongside you and to be guided by your counsel.



An SSB Customer Tells the Council Her Story

"It was probably the lowest point in my life," Elaine Compart told the SRCB at our June 2013 meeting.

Compart, a SSB customer who has worked with Rochester-area Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Angela Christle, recounted her struggle with vision loss and five years of ongoing medical procedures on both eyes. Listening to this energetic, warm, enthusiastic Wykoff, MN resident, it was hard to imagine that there was a time when she had felt so defeated.

"For four years I was fighting feelings of fear, frustration and loneliness. I was at such a low in my life – I just didn't know what to do. I needed help, but where?"

In addition to other changes brought on by vision loss, Compart faced the very real prospect of losing her job. For more than five years she had worked as the custodian at St. John's Lutheran Church and School. The staff were supportive and helpful, but Compart knew there were things she was missing because she could no longer see them.

Working with people to find nonvisual strategies to do their job is just the kind of service that SSB can provide. But, for too long, Compart had no idea that such services were available to her.

"The doctors just did not seem to care; they did not believe how this vision problem was affecting more than just my vision. What I still don't understand is why they did not refer me sooner????

Somehow the gap between the doctors and SSB needs to be filled. Someone needs to look out for the needs of the patients -- I can't be the only person with vision issues that's being left dangling."

Finally, someone mentioned the Rochester School for the Blind and SSB. Through classes and a support group, Elaine discovered resources and learned techniques that made her life possible again. "The classes were awesome," she said, "A true life-changing process."

Noir glasses (simple glasses that cut down glare) helped, as did a handheld magnifier and a CCTV, along with low-tech solutions like colored dots on her kitchen appliances.

The tools and training Compart received not only helped in her daily life, but just as importantly, gave her the ability to continue to do her job with her same high standards. When the glare of the wet floors made it difficult to see which areas still needed cleaning, she worked out a system for tracking what she had done and what remained. She worked with colleagues to alert her to cobwebs that needed removing or other hard-to-see items that needed attention. She used the technology she received through SSB, and especially the tools for creative strategizing she learned in working with SSB, to do her same job in a new way.

Elaine spoke to the council as part of our initiative to hear from SSB customers and staff to help us create a clearer picture of what is working well and what areas need strengthening. Her story led to a conversation about developing a more robust outreach plan to eye care specialists and the medical community so that other Minnesotans who are confronting vision loss do not feel as isolated and without support as Elaine had so unfortunately experienced.

In addition to helping the council think through ways that we might strengthen our role in advising SSB, each person who heard Elaine's story that evening was moved by her dedication to her work, her positive, can-do attitude, and the clear demonstration of the impact that people like Elaine and other SSB customers are having in the communities where they live and work.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

COMMUNICATION CENTER COMMITTEE

Overview

The product of this committee consists of reports to the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind containing specific strategies for increasing and improving Communication Center services. During FFY 2013 the Communication Center Committee met four times to receive updates and offer input on the projects, staffing changes, and other ongoing work of the Communication Center.

During 2012, a major change was made to the format of committee meetings to stimulate more discussion and interaction. Staff reports, which have for many years been provided orally at meetings, are submitted to members in advance. In 2013, we continued using this format and refined it some to increase participation.

Listed below are highlights and accomplishments of the Communication Center and this committee in FFY 2013:

- **Evolution of Textbook Production.** Changing technology makes this an on-going concern of the Communication Center. The DAISY format allows recorded and electronic braille books to be navigated much like hard-copy books, by page, chapter, and other significant divisions. After years of development, the Communication Center now offers books in this format as a standard option. In addition, a project to offer books as electronic texts has resumed. This approach has the potential of getting books to customers who have braille displays or can use synthetic speech faster and cheaper.
- **Support of National Library Service Functions.** The Communication Center is the agency in Minnesota that distributes and repairs the equipment used to read books from the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, a division of the Library of Congress. During the past three years, use of the new digital talking book player has increased dramatically as production of new cassette books has ended in favor of the new digital technology. Still, cassette players are widely used, and the Communication Center has the challenging responsibility to keep these machines running a while longer. A new joint initiative undertaken during 2012 is exploring other ways the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library in Faribault and the Communication Center can work together to use the staff of each more efficiently to serve their common customers. This effort has resulted in a unified phone system and customer database allowing staff from either organization to handle calls and answer questions from customers about equipment.
- **Radio Talking Book Receiver upgrade.** During the past year, the new digital Talking Book Radio receivers were distributed to listeners in Rochester, Mankato and Grand Marais, the final three locations to be converted to the new digital signal. This completes the process of moving from an analog to a digital network which has been underway for several years.
- **Modernization of the Radio Talking Book Service.** In addition to making the operation of this service more efficient, new methods to get programs to customers have been developed. Programs are archived on a secure web site and can be accessed by customers at times that fit their schedules. Also, programs can now be delivered on NLS digital cartridges playable on the new National Library Service digital machines which, as noted above, the Communication Center distributes. During this past year, a process was initiated to make books recorded for the Radio Talking Book broadcasts available on cartridge to be distributed through the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book library in Faribault, thereby reaching more customers.
- **Braille Production.** Nearly a million print pages were converted to braille to support Minnesota students in K-12 and in post-secondary institutions. Over 940,000 braille pages were produced directly or distributed from other sources during this year. This effort has a direct impact on the quality of education of blind Minnesotans and, ultimately, their potential for employment.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- **Increasing the Communication Center's Catalog Presence.** Work has been done to make the content of the Communication Center's library visible in a standard library cataloging system. While these books are only available to those with a reading disability, it allows searches to be executed from standard library interfaces.
- **NFB-Newsline and Dial-in News Service.** Improvements The Communication Center continues to administer NFB-Newsline service in Minnesota. This service, supported by the Telecommunication Access Minnesota fund, now has added the ability to distribute newspapers to digital devices as well as to the telephone. For the first time ever, a blind person with an electronic braille display can read daily newspapers in braille.
- **Annual Volunteer Recognition Event.** The Communication Center held the annual volunteer recognition event to applaud the work of nearly 700 volunteers that make possible much of the work of the Communication Center. This year the major event honoring current volunteers was an amazing comedy event at the Maplewood Community Center. Almost three hundred people enjoyed this event, which is funded by the Hamm Family Fund of the Saint Paul Foundation, to recognize the importance of volunteers to the success of this program.

- **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, National Braille Association, and the Braille Authority of North America. The supervisor of the Communication Center's Radio Talking Book section, Stuart Holland, was recently elected president of the International Association of Audio Information Services, and their national conference was held here in Minnesota last May.
- **Staff Changes.** During the past fiscal year, new staff members assumed critical roles as a result of retirements and other changes. Two of these positions were filled by persons who were blind or visually impaired. At the end of FFY 2013 the Center was nearly fully staffed which is optimal for providing quality services to its customers.

Respectfully Submitted,

Steve Jacobson

Committee Members: Steve Jacobson – Chair, Elizabeth Bruber, Catherine Durivage, Jeff Mihelich, Jennifer Moller, Kristin Oien, Carla Steinbring, Ryan Strunk.

Staff: Richard Strong, David Andrews, Gwen Bighley

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION & GOALS AND PRIORITIES COMMITTEE

PART I

Overview

This committee exists to carry out specific duties contained in federal regulation for the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. These include:

1. Conduct a review and an analysis of the effectiveness of and consumer satisfaction with the functions of the Department of Employment and Economic Development; Vocational Rehabilitation services provided within the state (except adjustment to blindness and technology services), and the employment outcomes of persons served.
2. In collaboration with SSB, evaluate the extent to which SSB achieved its goals and priorities, strategies used, and factors that impeded success and performance on the federal standards and indicators.
3. Jointly with other committees of the council, and in partnership with SSB, develop and, as necessary, revise an annual statement of goals and priorities.

PART II

Customer Satisfaction Survey Review

The Committee reviewed the Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS) results through March 31, 2013.

Five survey items were analyzed to compare the results for years ending 3/31/10, 3/31/11, 3/31/12, and 3/31/13. While there has been some fluctuation in results, no significant changes have taken place from year to year.

Summary	YE 3/31/10	YE 3/31/11	YE 3/31/12	YE 3/31/2013
Q1: Overall satisfaction with services provided	84%	80%	87%	84%
Q2: Extent to which services have met expectations	80%	89%	76%	77%
Q3: Comparison with "ideal" set of services	80%	81%	80%	80%
Q4: Satisfied that counselor (staff) understood customer's needs	89%	90%	88%	83%
Q5: How satisfied are you with the time it usually took to get your answer	78%	81%	79%	79%

SSB's results on the Customer Satisfaction Survey are also computed by the Minnesota Department of Economic Development utilizing the Minnesota Customer Satisfaction Index (MnCSI). Simply put, this index summarizes overall satisfaction with services by applying a formula to the responses for Questions 1, 2, and 3 on the survey. Using the MnCSI makes it possible to compare the customer satisfaction ratings of SSB with those of other agencies in Minnesota and with industry in general.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Customers Served	Apr11-Mar12	Jul11-Jun12	Oct11-Sep12	Jan12-Dec12	Apr12-Mar13
MNCSI	70.3	69.6	70.8	72.4	72.4
N	256	254	260	247	235

The committee continued to track the VR-specific questions which were added to the survey in 2010. The data for FFY13 were as follows:

Responses	Apr-Jun12 (53)	Jul-Sep12 (65)	Oct-Dec12(58)	Jan-Mar 13 (59)
QVR1: Satisfied that customer given enough info to make good choices on employment plan	87%	76%	72%	85%
QVR2 Satisfied that customer had an active role in decisions about services	90%	84%	81%	92%

On the survey, each customer is asked 2 of 3 open-ended questions: "What would you like the program to START doing?" or "What would you like the program to STOP doing?" or "What would you like the program to KEEP doing?" The committee reviewed the verbatim comments in response to these open-ended questions and tracked the categories of comments receiving the four highest percentages from quarter to quarter.

OEQ4: What would you like [SSB] to START doing?

Comments	Apr-Jun12 (32)	Jul-Sep12 (39)	Oct-Dec12 (55)	Jan-Mar13 (58)
Highest	Staff improvements 44% (17)	Help Finding Job 54% (21)	Misc 47% (26)	MISC 48% (28)
2nd	Help Finding Job 41% (13)	Staff Improvements 36% (14)	Help finding job 42% (23)	Help finding job 33% (19)
3rd	Misc. 34% (11)	Misc. 36% (14)	Staff Improvements 24% (13)	Staff improvements 24% (14)
4th	Program improvements 15% (5)	Program improvements 18% (7)	Program Improvements 16% (9)	Program improvements 12% (7)

OEQ5: what would you like [SSB] to STOP doing?

Comments	Apr-Jun12 (23)	Jul-Sep12 (28)	Oct-Dec12 (58)	Jan-Mar13 (56)
Highest	Misc. 83% (19)	Misc. 75% (21)	Misc 86% (50)	Misc 89% (50)
2nd	Staff Issues 17% (4)	Gen. job issues 29% (8)	Gen. Job issues 12% (7)	Gen. job issues 13% (7)
3rd	Gen. job issues 13% (3)	Staff issues 25% (7)	Staff issues 10% (6)	Staff issues 9% (5)
4th	N/A 0% (0)	Process issues 14% (4)	Process issues 0% (0)	Process issues 0% (0)

OEQ6: what would you like [SSB] to KEEP doing?

Comments	Apr-Jun12 (20)	Jul-Sep12 (25)	Oct-Dec12 (48)	Jan-Mar13 (31)
Highest	Help finding job 60% (12)	Help finding job 48% (12)	Help finding job 44% (21)	Help finding job 39% (12)
2nd	Staff Strengths 40% (8)	Misc. 48% (12)	Staff strengths 29% (14)	Staff Strengths 35% (11)
3rd	Education/Training 20% (4)	Info & resources 40% (10)	Misc 27% (13)	Misc 26% (8)
4th	Misc. 20% (4)	Staff strengths 20% (5)	Education/training 23% (11)	Education/training 23% (7)

In addition, the members of the committee also read the verbatim comments to determine if trends or issues specific to SSB arise which may not be apparent from these categories. No significant trends were identified from this data.

As a result of a legislative audit of the entire Workforce Center System, which provided feedback on areas that may be underrepresented, four new questions were added to the customer satisfaction survey in July of 2010. The questions specifically examine customers’ satisfaction with how services impact their vocational process (career exploration, knowledge of job seeking skills, interviewing, etc). Some of these new questions may not apply to individuals SSB is serving, depending on where they are in the vocational rehabilitation process.

Responses	Apr-Jun12 (53)	JUL-SEP12 (65)	Oct-Dec12(58)	Jan-Mar13 (59)	Last 4 Quarters (235)
QS1 Satisfied that services helped customer find job *	57%	63%	34%	29%	36%
QS2 Satisfied that services helped customer with career planning *	66%	76%	66%	60%	67%
QS3 Satisfied that services helped customer connect w/employers who were hiring*	49%	51%	31%	38%	38%
QS4 Satisfied that services helped customer improve job-seeking skills*	62%	68%	46%	54%	58%

* For the complete Customer Satisfaction Survey results see: http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/About_Us/Customer_Satisfaction/Job_Seeker_Satisfaction/Results_by_Program_5.aspx

PROGRESS ON FFY13 GOALS, PRIORITIES, AND STRATEGIES:

GOAL #1: Improve number and percent of closed cases achieving employment after receiving services.

PRIORITY #1.1: Employment Outcomes—By the end of FFY 2013, SSB will meet RSA Indicator 1.1 by increasing for the two year period (FFY2012 and FFY 2013) the number of individuals achieving employment over the base period of FFY2010-FFY2011.

Status: This priority was accomplished. There were 101 individuals who achieved employment which represents an increase of 20 over the two year base period.

During FFY 2012 and 2013, the strategies for meeting this priority are—

1. By August 31 of each year, each counselor and their supervisor will meet to review the potential of each customer for successful employment by the end of the next FFY. Each counselor with at least two years of experience will be expected to identify at least six individuals for whom successful closure is realistic during the next FFY.

Status: This strategy was met.

Between January 1 and January 31 of each year, supervisors and counselors will review the projections, taking into account any changes in the caseload. As appropriate, the supervisor will revise the outcome goal and customers identified as potential successful closures. Supervisors will monitor progress of designated customers toward their employment outcome during required monthly meetings with each counselor and provide assistance as needed. Recognition of counselors who met and who exceeded their individual outcomes goals will occur at the February staff meeting each year.

Status: Recognition of the six counselors who met and five counselors who exceeded their individual outcome goals occurred at the February staff meeting.

2. Staff new to SSB have little, if any, experience with blindness, and a paucity of understanding of the capabilities of persons competent in the skills of blindness. Therefore all new WFD staff will successfully complete Introduction to Blindness—Phase 1 and Phase 2 training on the essential aspects of blindness and visual impairment within three months of hire and before any caseload activity is assigned.

Status: All new Workforce Development Unit hires complete the Introduction to Blindness—Phase I and II training. Five staff members completed this training during FFY2013.

PRIORITY #1.2: Employment Rate—SSB's performance on RSA Indicator 1.2 will increase annually from the 2010 baseline of 50%, reflecting an increase in the percentage of persons closed achieving employment after receiving services. Status: The FFY2013 Indicator 1.2 was 55.49%. This represents a decrease from 59.78% in FFY 2012.

The strategies for meeting this priority are—

1. By December 31, 2012, SSB will establish strategic relationships with at least two employers with in the distinguished industry clusters of healthcare and education in Minneapolis and St. Paul. **Status:** SSB has established strategic relationships with four employers in the industries of healthcare and education. Relationships have been established with Gillette Children's Hospital, Minneapolis Children's Hospital, Hennepin Community and Technical College and the University of Minnesota.
2. By December 31, 2012, review and evaluate the self-employment/entrepreneurship program. **Status:** The review and evaluation of the self-employment/entrepreneurship program has been completed and work to revise the program is underway. A counselor handbook and customer handbook are being developed and rollout is expected at the spring 2014 staff meeting.

3. By November 1, 2012, SSB will examine the WDU case review system and determine if enhancements can be made to contribute to higher employment outcomes.

Status: The examination of the WDU case review system was completed by November 1, 2012. Upon completion of the review, work began on revising the electronic system. Issues of accessibility have delayed the completion of the updated electronic system. The case review system has since undergone another examination and a completely new format has been proposed which would have Workforce Development Unit (WDU) supervisors reviewing cases on a monthly basis.

PRIORITY #1.3: Increase work experience, job shadowing opportunities, internships and enrichment activities--WDU staff will aggressively pursue work experience, job shadowing opportunities, internships and enrichment activities for SSB customers.

Status: In FFY 2013, SSB counselors have put an emphasis on pursuing customer work experience, job shadowing opportunities, internships and enrichment activities for their customers

The strategies for meeting this priority are—

1. By December 31st 2012, develop a mechanism to gather WDU Staff's pursuit of work experience, job shadowing opportunities, internships and enrichment activities for its customers.
Status: A formal mechanism to gather information on these efforts has not yet been developed.
2. Establish a baseline by September 30, 2013, of the pursuit of work experience, job shadowing opportunities, internships and enrichment activities.

Status: In the summer of FFY 2013, 231 enrichment activities were offered to 101 students and 86 students were engaged in work related activities. Of the 15 students who did not participate, 6 were sick, 2 students' cases were closed, 5 students were not able to be located, and 2 were pregnant and not pursuing outside activities.

PRIORITY #1.4: Increase customer satisfaction with services provided—By the end of FFY2013 the annual overall satisfaction with services provided by SSB will be at or above 85%. (Q1 on the Customer Satisfaction Survey, "What is your overall satisfaction with the services provided?" The scale is from 1 to 10 where "1" means "very dissatisfied" and "10" means "very satisfied". A response equal to or greater than "6" fall in the "satisfied" range).

Status: For FFY 2013, the overall annual satisfaction with services provided was ___% (to be filled in when July-September survey data are available. This priority [was/was not] met.

The strategies for meeting this priority are—

1. Customer satisfaction surveys will be administered quarterly to SSB customers as part of the DEED customer satisfaction initiative. The surveys are conducted by an external organization.
Status: Ongoing. See survey information on previous pages of this report.
2. SSB and the SRC-B Customer Satisfaction & Goals and Priorities Committee will continue to review and analyze the data on a quarterly basis including specific customer comments.

Status: Completed. See survey information on previous pages of this report.

PRIORITY #1.5: Continue to insure every customer has access to customer satisfaction information needed to make an informed choice in selecting a vendor for Adjustment To Blindness (ATB) training. During FFY 2013, all customers surveyed under strategy #1 will report they have been provided access to information they needed to make an informed choice about the provider of ATB services.

Status: In FFY 2013 all but one customer reported that they had been provided access to information they needed to make an informed choice about the provider of ATB services. The one customer felt there was only one ATB training facility that was DeafBlind friendly which eliminated choice.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

The strategies for meeting this priority are—

1. SSB and the Vendor Outcomes and Measures Committee of the SRC-B developed and implemented a customer satisfaction survey for all customers who complete adjustment to blindness training. During FFY2013, each SSB customer will be surveyed six months after completion of adjustment to blindness training or at time of case file closure, whichever comes first. Each month an estimated ten to fifteen customers will be contacted to complete the telephone survey of eighteen questions.

Status: Ongoing

2. The data gathered from the completed customer satisfaction surveys will be formatted, posted externally on the SSB website, and made available in an accessible format for customer review when selecting a service provider to meet their rehabilitation needs. ATB providers will be able to use the results for continuous improvement of their services. The results will be reported to the SRC-B and will be used to identify customer needs and areas for service improvements.

Status: The last report posted was from October 2011 - September 2012. Survey data for the period of April 2012 to March 2013 was not posted due to insufficient survey sample size.

GOAL #2: In the targeted groups, increase the number of individuals served and the vocational outcomes achieved.

PRIORITY #2.1: Minority Service Rate— By the end of FFY2013, SSB will address RSA Indicator 2.1, as follows: The ratio of customers from the minority population exiting after receiving services under an IPE to all customers from the minority population exiting will exceed 80% of the same ratio calculated for customers from the non-minority population. Current (FFY2011) performance level is 30.1%.

Status: SSB continues to have less than 100 persons of minority background exiting after receiving services. The percentage has increase to 77%.

The strategies for meeting this priority are—

1. During FFY2013, SSB staff will conduct at least two marketing and outreach activities to minority communities.

Status: Ongoing. SSB had representation at the Hmong Resource Fair and visited the Red Lake and White Earth Vocational Rehabilitation Programs for the annual technical assistance meetings.

2. Guidelines will be completed and shared with CRPs, vendors, and adult basic education programs by September 30, 2013.

Status: The document was reviewed by the committee. There were a few changes, and the guidelines will be reviewed at the next committee meeting. Discussion with the committee will determine next steps for this document.

3. During FFY2013, SSB staff will be informed of current marketing and outreach activities to minority communities and strategies in serving these populations.

Status: Ongoing activity. An SSB staff member sends information on current marketing and outreach activities to minority communities by email to SSB staff.

PRIORITY #2.2: Deafblind Outreach and Service— Enhance effective communication between SSB and individuals who have a hearing and vision loss, including persons who are DeafBlind.

Status: SSB and the Deafblind Committee have continued their efforts to enhance effective communication.

The strategies for meeting this priority are—

1. All new WFD staff will receive one-on-one training on the DeafBlind Procedures Manual to include communication styles and communication issues as part of the orientation that occurs within the first three months of hire. All WFD staff will receive an annual review of the communication methods at their October staff meeting.

Status: Ongoing

2. The Plan to increase effective communication between counselors and Deafblind customers and the Plan to increase the number of Deafblind competitively employed will continue as written until June 2013. In June 2013, the Deafblind needs assessment will be administered. This needs assessment will contain questions specifically designed to determine the effectiveness of the Plan to increase effective communication and the plan to increase the number of competitive employments

STATUS: The DeafBlind Committee is finalizing the questions for the DB needs assessment. The assessment will be administered in the Summer of 2013 with results ready for review by the committee at their meeting in September or October.

3. To increase and improve communication between Deafblind customers and SSB, the Deafblind Committee of the SRC-B, in cooperation with SSB, will continue to review standard written communications at least once per year to determine their effectiveness with ASL users. Additional materials will be developed as determined by the Deafblind Committee.

Status: Ongoing

4. During FFY 2013, strengthen the collaborative efforts of SSB, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services of the Department of Human Services, Department of Education and the Department of Health to improve statewide services to DeafBlind individuals. As a result of the DeafBlind needs assessment survey in June 2013, strategies for additional collaborative efforts will be developed and incorporated in the Goals, Priorities and Strategies for FFY 2014.

Status: See Strategy 2.

PRIORITY #2.3: Transition Services--Increase the number of students who apply at ages 14-15 from the base line of 12 students in 2011.

Status: In FFY2013 the number of students who applied for services increased to 39.

The strategies for meeting this priority are—

1. Continue working statewide with Special Education teachers, teachers of the blind, visually impaired, or Deafblind and other IEP team members in designated school districts to facilitate regular information meetings with SSB counselors.

Status: Completed. Kristin Oien presented on the IEP process at the October 2012 All Staff. Jayne Spain of MDE will present on the Transition Toolbox to staff at the February 2013 WFD meeting. Additionally, SSB staff met with staff from Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) and discussed how VRS works with transition students. Two SSB counselors have been invited to a meeting of the teachers of the Blind and Visually Impaired (BVI) Regions 5 and 7. Two other staff will be presenting on transitions and SSB at that meeting. SSB's transition services will be presented on at a BVI teacher workshop at the invitation of Metro Educational Cooperative Services Unit (ESCU), an educational cooperative that works with the 48 school districts in the metro area.

2. A new format for communicating information about SSB to transition students and their families will be developed by September 30, 2013.

Status: Completed. A bi-annual Transition Newsletter has been developed. The January edition was distributed on January 14, 2013.

3. Working collaboratively with the Minority Outreach Committee, develop outreach strategies for teachers of the blind, visually impaired and DeafBlind to provide information to students and their families from minority communities about SSB by September 30, 2013.

Status: Completed. Brochures on Transition Students and SSB were developed in several languages with the Minority Outreach Committee and distributed to BVI teachers as well as to minority communities' meetings & events.

PART IV

STANDARDS AND INDICATORS

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Federal Program Evaluation Standards

The federal government measures vocational rehabilitation agency performance, in part by using six “Standard 1” performance indicators. SSB’s performance on each indicator is illustrated on the corresponding chart. SSB has met or exceeded five of six of the Standard 1 indicators since FFY 2011.

Standard 1: Employment Outcomes

- 1.1 The number of successful case closures compared to the preceding two years’ number of successful closures.
- 1.2 The percentage of individuals exiting the program during the performance period who have achieved an employment outcome after receiving services.
- 1.3 The percentage of customers who exit the SSB VR Program in competitive employment at or above the state minimum wage.
- 1.4 The percentage of individuals who have significant disabilities who obtain competitive employment at or above the state minimum wage.
- 1.5 The ratio of average hourly earnings of all individuals successfully closed to the average hourly earnings of all employed individuals in the state.
- 1.6 The difference in the percentage of individuals at application versus closure who reported their income as the largest single source of support.

FFY 2013 SSB Performance on Standard 1 Performance Indicators

Indicator	Minimum Requirement	SSB Performance
Standard 1: Employment Outcomes	Meet 4 of the 6 Indicators	5 of the 6 Indicators Were Met
Indicator 1.1	2	20
Indicator 1.2	68.90%	55.49%
Indicator 1.3	35.40%	98.35%
Indicator 1.4	89.00%	99.45%
Indicator 1.5	0.59	0.6713
Indicator 1.6	30.40%	44.00%

- Performance for blind agencies is based on two years of data.
- FFY 2013 performance data is not official until approved by RSA.
- The federal government also measures vocational rehabilitation agency performance by using one “Standard 2” performance indicator. Indicator 2.1 reports the service rate for individuals with disabilities from minority background as compared to those from nonminority backgrounds. When a VR program had fewer than 100 individuals from a minority background exit the VR program during the reporting period, the standard is not calculated. Since FFY 2004, SSB has not had to calculate this standard.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Dunnam

Committee Members: Jennifer Dunnam--Chair, Steve Jacobson, Tom Scanlan.

SSB staff: Jon Benson, Jennifer Beilke, Heidi Warwick, Carol Pankow.

DEAFBLIND COMMITTEE

Overview

This committee exists to support and advise SSB regarding its services to individuals who are deaf/hard of hearing and blind/visually impaired.

This committee provides input to the Customer Satisfaction & Goals and Priorities Committee and the full council for consideration in the development of annual goals and priorities in conjunction with SSB.

The DeafBlind Committee has been meeting monthly since last fall. The committee spent some time catching up on what's new in the community, as well as changes at SSB. Below is a list of items we worked on:

- The committee spent a considerable amount of time developing the DeafBlind survey, The survey consists of questions that will be administered by a neutral party who works at SSB. The survey was administered during the summer of 2013, and is being reviewed by the committee which will make recommendations to the council.
- SSB Counselor Katy Thorpe talked about her amazing experience at the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC). She stated that she was able to socialize with DeafBlind students. She discovered that the students are very independent with an "I can" attitude. HKNC empowers their students to do things for themselves.
- Katy also attended a MN Collaborative Planning meeting sponsored by MCDHH for year 2013. This is a collaboration of several agencies to develop and implement an educational plan for deaf as well as DeafBlind students from birth through age 21. We are trying to make sure that SSB is well represented at the Minnesota Collaborative Planning meetings.
- The DeafBlind Committee brought up the issue of installing Audible Pedestrian Signals (APS) on every corner in downtown St. Paul and Minneapolis. It was suggested that people could contact MnDOT to request APS's. One person at MnDOT to contact is: bruce.lattu@state.mn.us Mary Hartnett, Executive Director of the Minnesota Commission of Deaf, Feaf Blind and Hard of Hearing, suggested that this be recommended to be part of the MCDHH Strategic Plan for the next 5 years.

- We discussed how best to continue the priority of maintaining a collaborative effort between agencies serving the DeafBlind. The committee felt very strongly that this was a priority worth keeping.

Presentation and Information from Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans (MCDHH)

The committee invited Mary Hartnett, Executive Director of MCDHH to attend several of our meetings to further discuss the MCDHH Employment Taskforce. This is one of the ways that SSB works with other state agencies in a collaborative manner. There are 26 members on the MCDHH Employment Taskforce representing the Department of Education, VRS, SSB, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, etc. The Taskforce has three committees: Accessibility, Work Skills and Employer Relations. Mary then described the goals of each committee as follows:

1. **THE ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE:** One goal that this group is working on is to make college entrance exams fairer for Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard-of-hearing (HOH) people. This group found out that the test used to determine if a person can get into college is not fair for Deaf, DeafBlind or HOH people. MCDHH is now video-taping people's stories about this test to share with the National College Board. This committee will work with the Acuplacer coordinator to make changes to the test. The second goal for this committee is to make Minnesota's Workforce Centers (WFC) more accessible. Many Deaf, DeafBlind and HOH people do not get the help they need/want at the WFC's. Instead they are referred to Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) or State Services for the Blind (SSB). They cannot get into WFC classes or get generic services. The Director of the WFC system is willing to work with MCDHH to change this. Both SSB and VRS need to be involved with this committee to be sure that the WFC's are accessible to Deaf, DeafBlind and HOH people.

2. **EMPLOYER RELATIONS COMMITTEE:** This group discovered that there is discriminatory language in at least 60% of state job descriptions. Some examples of this language include: to be an accountant, the employee needs good oral skills; to be an administrative assistant (clerical position), the employee needed to be able to lift 50 pound feed bags and stack them; to be an engineer, the employee needed to be able to speak even if the applicant had the qualifications for the job! The state Human Resources (HR) division and the Affirmative Action division are working with this committee to change this discriminatory language. Students working with MCDHH as interns are developing a model Affirmative Action Plan. Interns are also working on developing an executive order for the Governor to sign. This order will specify that 10% of all state employees should be people with disabilities. This will bring Minnesota back to where it was in 1999. At that time, 10% of state employees were people with disabilities. Now only 3.8% of state employees are people with disabilities. This executive order follows one issued by President Obama.
3. **WORK SKILLS COMMITTEE:** One major issue for Deaf, DeafBlind and HOH people is learning and using independent living skills. Under discussion is closer collaboration with the Statewide Independent Living Council to better ensure that deaf, DeafBlind and HOH Minnesotans have access to independent living skills. This committee is also working with a number of agencies including the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU); Adult Basic Education (ABE); and community employers to develop specialized training programs to teach skills that are needed now to become employed. SSB and VRS counselors need to be added to this planning process to make the training programs accessible. (SSB Counselor Katy Thorpe is a member of this committee.) This effort is called FastTrack.

This MCDHH taskforce is very relevant to a lot of DeafBlind customers at SSB and this committee wants to make sure that SSB is represented on this taskforce as they discuss and make recommendations.

Conclusion

I want to say thank you to the council for allowing us to keep with the charge of its priorities. As you can see we have done a lot of work this past year, and I would not have been able to do this on my own. Thanks to all the committee members, guest speakers and SSB staff.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynette Boyer

Committee Members: *Lynette Boyer—Chair, Lee Clark, Adrienne Haugen, Michael O'Reilly and Jamie Taylor.*

SSB staff: *Lindsey Hanson, Natasha Lemler, Linda Lingen and Katy Thorpe.*

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

Overview

This committee exists to provide advice and propose strategies to increase the quantity and quality of employment outcomes for individuals served through the state vocational rehabilitation services for the blind system.

The Employment Committee met on the following dates during FY 2013: 12/6/12, 1/14/13, 2/15/13, 5/3/13, 7/19/13 and 8/21/13.

Numerical Benchmarks

The Committee began its work by attempting to find numerical benchmarks to assess SSB's performance in helping blind Minnesotans attain employment compared to other similar agencies across the country. The Committee compared various SSB statistics with those for other agencies for the blind on the RSA website. However, the committee soon found this to be onerous and not helpful. Part of the reason for this was the belief that other agencies were calculating various statistics differently than

SSB, making cross-agency comparisons difficult. In addition, the RSA database is massive with 99 measures of performance making it difficult to identify a small number of statistics to use as a benchmark.

The Committee then narrowed the search by looking at the ten key measures of performance as defined by the RSA. The Committee settled on more closely examining two of the factors: the "Rehab Rate," which at the time stood at 50.9%, down from 69.2% the year before, and the "Mean Cost of Rehab," which at the time was \$33,230.00, up from \$19,485.68 the year before. Both measures were significantly worse than the national average for state agencies for the blind.

At its May meeting, the Committee reviewed more specific information related to the Mean Cost of Rehab. According to the spreadsheet provided by SSB, SSB spent \$449,462.71 on an individual who obtained employment working 20 hours per week making 200 dollars a week. The second highest expenditure was \$287,254.79 for an individual that obtained employment working 10 hours per week and making 202.00 dollars a week. The Committee encouraged SSB to look more closely at these numbers to ensure they were accurate and determine what the money was spent on.

In the July meeting, SSB provided a general breakout of the costs that are part of the Mean Cost of Rehab. Based on the information provided, the main costs are adjustment to blindness training, post-secondary education and job placement. It seems that the largest increase last year was in the cost of post-secondary education.

Adaptive Technology and Job Placement

During the July and August meetings, there was a discussion of the frustration that exists when a client has a job offer, but the adaptive technology is not compatible with the employer's home grown computer software system. The Committee encouraged SSB to have someone from the adaptive technology area meet with the SRC-B board to further discuss the challenges related to making technology accessible at different employers. A representative from SSB's technology unit did attend the October 2013 SRC-B board meeting for an extended question and answer session related to technology and job placement.

Successful Closures for FY 2013

Over the course of several meetings, SSB staff provided updates on the successful placement of blind, visually impaired and DeafBlind individuals. The Workforce Development Unit substantially exceeded its goal for successful closures for the year, increasing the number of such closures over the preceding year by more than 20%.

Possible Action Items for FY 2014

The Committee reviewed the research article "Blind and Visually Impaired Adult Rehabilitation and Employment Survey: Final Results" By Edward C. Bell, Ph.D. and Natalia M. Mino. The Committee discussed the literature review in the article, which contained a section on feedback from employers regarding what is most likely to make the placement of a blind person successful. Factors included: the individual being comfortable with his or her disability, being an ambassador for blindness by eliminating awkwardness in relationships, insisting on being held to the same standard as other employees, possessing updated Orientation and Mobility, braille, and adaptive technology skills, and having a backup strategy in case a system fails. During the interview the individual must demonstrate competence and have specific ideas on how to manage the details of work and transportation challenges. This article review spawned a Committee discussion of additional ways that the Employment Committee may partner with SSB to increase employment opportunities for the blind (see some of the suggestions below).

The Committee has discussed several possible action items to pursue in collaboration with the Workforce Development Unit for FY 2014. Some of the possibilities include:

- Developing mentoring between blind persons that are employed and those looking for work;
- Arranging meetings between SSB staff and HR managers to hear what makes a placement successful from the employer's perspective;
- Arranging mock interviews with HR professionals or hiring managers so that clients could improve interviewing skills;
- Meeting with successfully placed customers to find out what made the experience effective;

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Arranging internships for high school and college aged clients with prospective employers;
- Creating a survey to give to successfully placed customers to find out what made the process work;
- Inviting speakers that have successfully placed blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind individuals in jobs;
- Partner with other community organizations that support employment opportunities for the disabled.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael O'Day

Committee Members: *Michael O'Day--Chair, Angela Christle, Ken Rogers, Chris Marble, Dick Davis, Emily Zitek, Steve Ditschler, and Lisa Vala.*

SSB Staff Member: Mike Newman.

MINORITY OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Overview

This committee exists to recommend specific strategies for increasing and improving services to individuals from minority backgrounds. This committee provides input to the Customer Satisfaction & Goals and Priorities Committee and the full Council for consideration in the development of annual goals and priorities in conjunction with SSB.

Outreach Efforts

SSB successfully conducted outreach activities with training and advocacy agencies who serve persons from racial minorities. SSB also participated in trainings and outreach set up by various Hmong agencies as well as with the Red Lake and White Earth reservations.

Guidelines for working with customers who are English Language Learners:

These guidelines completed as of September 30, 2013. After a final committee review, they will be posted internally for use by SSB staff. These guidelines will be distributed upon request to Community Rehabilitation Program vendors, and adult basic education programs who are teaching blind customers who have English as a second language. An orientation to these guidelines will be provided during FFY 2014 at Workforce Development Unit and Senior Service Unit staff meetings.

Cultural Diversity Information

The SSB intraweb includes information regarding cultural diversity for five dominant groups of racial minorities in Minnesota which was prepared by the Minority Outreach Committee in 2009. It was decided that the material on this website will be reviewed by the Minority Committee of 2014 and updated as necessary. Training will be provided to the workforce development unit and the senior services unit at their respective staff meetings in 2014. Any other unit requesting a review of this information will be provided with one at a unit staff meeting in 2014. In addition, all new staff will be oriented to this information during their new staff training process.

Employment Outcomes

Data on employment outcomes for customers from minority backgrounds will be addressed as follows: The ratio of customers from the minority populations exiting after receiving services under an IPE to all customers from the minority population exiting will exceed the same ratio calculated for customers from the non-minority population. The current 2013 performance level is .77.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen Hagen

Committee Members: *Kathleen Hagen – Chair, Connie Berg, Kotumu Kamara, Judy Sanders, Ken Trebelhorn*

SSB staff: *Jon Benson, Janna Hanson-Parkes, Mary Kolles, Meredith Larson and Linda Lingen*

SENIOR SERVICES COMMITTEE

Overview

The Senior Services Committee exists to assist State Services for the Blind in order to improve and expand services to blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind Minnesotans who are not interested in employment. The majority of this group is seniors. These customers face significant barriers to independence, but they can benefit from services which help maintain or increase their independence. Activities include identifying unmet needs, recommending services necessary to meet these needs and identifying strategies to remove or reduce barriers to their independence.

The Senior Services Committee met four times during the past year with excellent attendance by all members. Our primary concern always is making certain that State Services for the Blind, SSB, is providing superior services to its elderly and independent living customers WITH ADEQUATE FUNDING. Committee members eagerly receive regular reports from Lyle Lundquist, Ed Lecher and Director Richard Strong. We were pleased that funding during the most recent legislative session remained at fairly acceptable figures to permit services to remain fairly stable.

We look forward to continuing our committee work during the next fiscal year with special emphasis placed on providing feedback and advice related to the recommendations laid out in the study conducted by the Humphrey Institute of the University of Minnesota.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joyce Scanlan

Committee Members: *Joyce Scanlan—Chair, Amy Baron, RoseAnn Faber, Harry Krueger, Pat Barrett, Kathy Hagen, Frances Whetstone.*

SSB staff: *Lyle Lundquist, Ed Lecher, Richard Strong, Sue Crancer.*

TRANSITION COMMITTEE

Overview

This committee provides specific advice and counsel regarding services to transition-age youth (ages 14-21). This committee provides input to the Customer Satisfaction & Goals and Priorities Committee and the full council for consideration in the development of annual goals and priorities in conjunction with SSB, and monitors those goals and priorities throughout the year. The 2013 Transition Committee was tasked with Priority # 2.3: Increase the number of students who apply at ages 14 and 15 from the baseline of 12 students in 2011. The following report lists the strategies we developed and the actions taken to address each strategy.

OUR GOAL WAS MET

Thirty-nine new Transition Students applied for services.

Strategies

STRATEGY #1

Continue working statewide with Special Education teachers, teachers of the blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind and other IEP team members in designated school districts to facilitate regular information meetings with SSB counselors.

How this strategy was addressed:

Informational meetings with SSB counselors include SVN meetings, Special Education Director meetings where the Transition Timeline information was disseminated, as well as transition opportunities for BVI transition aged students statewide. There has been a wealth of information sharing and collaboration with SSB counselors, including SSB involvement with the Minnesota Resource Center for BVI Advisory Committee, the BVI listserv, SSB 101, increased sharing of data targeting transition between SSB and MDE, Low Vision Clinics, The

Summer Transition Program (STP), Family Transition Weekend at MSAB, audio services provided with brochures and an SSB liaison to MSAB.

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STRATEGY #2

A new format for communicating information about SSB to transition students and their families will be developed by September 30, 2013.

How this strategy was addressed:

The goal of this strategy is to increase family understanding of SSB and the workforce unit by the development of a bi-annual newsletter to students and their families. The newsletter was sent out on January of 2013 and June of 2013 to approximately 120 families. It was also on the Blind/Visually Impaired listserv for the Minnesota Department of Education. All staff of SSB also received it. The newsletter will continue with January and June 2014 editions.

SSB is continuing outreach to transition students and families through informational fairs. SSB will continue to evaluate Informational fairs, SSB 101, MSAB informational fairs, and disseminate all relevant information through the NAPVI organization. Invitations will be sent in October 2013 to Transition families for the November 3, 2013 SSB 101 event.

STRATEGY #3

Working collaboratively with the Minority Outreach Committee, develop outreach strategies for teachers of the blind, visually impaired and DeafBlind to provide information to students and their families from minority communities about SSB by September 30, 2013.

How this strategy was addressed:

An attractive brochure was designed in collaboration with the Minority Outreach Committee. It continues to be distributed to teachers and prospective transition students and their families. It is produced in several different languages to accommodate all Minnesotans. The brochures have been widely distributed and are in their second printing.

Respectfully Submitted,
Elizabeth Bruber

Committee Members: Elizabeth Bruber- Chair, Kristin Oien, Diane Donalik, Rebecca Kragness, Lisa Vala, Candace Whitaker

Staff: Mary Kolles, Chad Bowe

VENDOR OUTCOMES COMMITTEE

Overview

In 2013 the committee continued the survey of 20 items given to each SSB customer after completing specific adjustment-to-blindness training with a vendor. Since the population base is relatively small in statistical terms, especially for a single vendor, the committee was concerned that the highest return possible is needed. The company surveying for the Customer Satisfaction & Goals and Priorities Committee also surveys for this committee, providing the maximum response rate by contacting people at night as well as during the day.

The survey is split into two parts to reflect the very different training provided for Senior Services and Workforce Development. The survey results are published in semiannual reports covering 12 months of activity. These two separate reports better reflect the needs of each unit and provide more accurate information to the users of the reports. The reports contain extensive tables for each vendor meeting the minimum statistical requirements for meaningful results.

To reduce the complexity and volume of the full table-laden reports, the committee also produced a condensed report for each service unit with just explanatory text and a summary of vendor ratings according to skill area. This report can be used as an introduction to the full respective report to narrow focus on the desired training.

Both reports for each unit are available in print, braille, audio, and on the SSB website so that all customers, SSB staff, vendors, and the public have access to the results.

The data collected showed good customer satisfaction, but some areas of training need improvement. The best results were achieved in travel and computer. The areas that were weakest in the results were in the areas of challenging the student, increasing self-confidence, and reading/writing braille.

SSB management continued to provide full support for the survey.

Respectfully Submitted,
Tom Scanlan, Out-going Chair

Committee Members: Robert Hobson – Chair
SSB Staff: Jennifer Beilke

APPENDIX

STATE SERVICES FOR THE BLIND PERFORMANCE ON STANDARDS 1 AND 2

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

Federal Fiscal Year	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004
Ind 1.1: Change in employment outcomes (>=0) 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.	20	1	3	-13	-3	-11	-47	-5	1	-74
Ind 1.2: Percent of employment outcomes (>=68.9%) Of all individuals who exit the VR program after receiving services, the percentage who are determined to have achieved an employment outcome.	55.49%	59.78%	59.19%	50.64%	48.17%	43.94%	46.60%	48.74%	43.97%	40.91%
Ind 1.3: Competitive employment (>=35.4%) 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.	98.35	96.91	94.41%	92.40%	98.11%	97.70%	94.05%	93.54%	94.09%	93.22%
Ind 1.4: Significant Disability (>=89.0%) 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.	99.45	98.15	97.52%	98.74%	100.00%	100.00%	98.85%	97.70%	98.65%	99.55%
Ind 1.5: Earnings ratio (>=.59) 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).	0.6713	0.668	0.74	0.8	0.668	0.648	0.713	0.717	0.650	0.645
Ind 1.6: Self support (>=30.4%) Of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive employment, 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.	40.00%	40.13%	33.59%	34.50%	36.54	32.94	35.06	30.87	35.43	36.82
Number of indicators in standard 1 that were passed	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	4
Number of primary indicators (1.3 to 1.5) in Standard 1 that were passed	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Ind 2.1: Ratio of Minority to Non-Minority Service Rate (>=.80)**	0.77	0.7128	0.3013	0.288	**	**	**	**	**	**

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