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Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP)

BRS will use the following objectives to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities:

105. Work with WIOA core partners to ensure that individuals with disabilities are effectively supported in the newly designed state employment system.

106. Implement its strategic plan for delivering Pre-Employment Transition Services.

107. Focus on timely progress through each step of the case management process.

108. Maintain a dedicated staff resource to manage the BRS training program, and maintain a separate line item within the Bureau’s budget to offer necessary training.

109. Continue to use social media to connect job seekers with opportunities to pursue jobs with employers.

110. Develop materials on resources, labor market information and training/education programs to post on the BRS and Connect-Ability websites to provide consumers consistent access to information.

111. Continue to dedicate a specific unit of VR staff to support employers as dual customers to create more business partnerships and more employment opportunities through direct job placement, the use of On-the-Job (OJT) Trainings and Industry Specific Training and Placement Programs (ISTPPs).

112. Participate in cross agency trainings through the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) to strengthen state agency partnerships.

113. Continue to develop and disseminate Distance Learning Modules for staff and consumer use. (Page 221) Title IV

Beyond the collaborative arrangements for third party funding with other state agencies, the Vocational Rehabilitation Program continues to identify and work with a growing number of private Community Rehabilitation Providers throughout the state. Working relationships have been established with providers such as Goodwill Industries of Hartford/Springfield, Mindscape Industries, the Kennedy Center, Marrakech, and C.W. Resources to provide extended services to
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ensure the long—term stability of job placements within supported employment settings.

Staff from the Bureau participates in meetings and training seminars organized by the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE). This organization links community providers, employers, state agency representatives and other resources together to exchange information on job placement strategies, funding sources and employer job leads. Bureau staff have presented at meetings of this organization on blindness related topics such as adaptive technology so that other providers in attendance would be aware of the options that exist for bringing about a successful job placement when accepting a referral from BESB for a client who is seeking a job placement with supported employment services. (Page 250) Title IV

Customized Employment

7. Satisfy the documentation requirements of section 511 of WIOA and 34 C.F.R. 397 for students with disabilities who seek subminimum wage from employers who hold special wage certificates under the Fair Labor Standards Act, 29 U.S.C. 214 (c), including the provision of documentation of notice that pre-employment transition services were available to that individual under 34 C.F.R. 361.48, documentation of an application for vocational rehabilitation services and the result thereof, and, if the individual was found eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, documentation that the individual had an IPE, was unable to achieve the employment outcome specified in the IPE, and had a closed case record meeting the requirements of 34 C.F.R. 361.47;

8. Collaborate with the SDE to provide trainings to schools about Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) careers and Customized Employment for youth with disabilities. (Page 192) Title IV

15. Facilitate partnerships between BRS and LEA, including the identification of a contact person in each organization, as mutually identified by the parties, to facilitate communication;

16. Collaborate with BRS and LEA to develop new pre-employment transition services;

17. Assist BRS with training schools about STEM careers and customized employment for youth with disabilities;

18. Assure that IEPs developed by LEA for youth with disabilities aged 16 or over include plans for the provision of educationally-related “transition services” as defined in 34 C.F.R. 361.22(b)(4) and 34 CF.R. 300.43 (Page 193) Title IV

67. Both the quantitative and qualitative data show that the delivery system’s capacity to serve individuals with most significant disabilities is extremely limited. This is especially true where Supported Employment is concerned, and even more so for Customized Employment which is virtually non-existent in Connecticut. There was agreement that the causes include insufficient funding, inconsistent policy and programming across state agencies and limited staff proficiency.

68. These same factors play into BRS’ own challenges in serving individuals with most significant disabilities. Dedicated BRS funding for Supported Employment is in fact limited, as
Connecticut (CT) WIOA Matrix

are system resources for long-term supports. A financial literacy pilot program for SI/SSDI recipients ended in December 2016. BRS has yet to expand customized employment training, but is working actively with system partners to improve services for this population going forward, consistent with the WIOA requirements. (Pages 205-206) Title IV

BESB VR Response: BESB VR agreed with this recommendation. The SRC, in collaboration with the Advisory Board dedicated significant time during the year in finalizing the policies that govern the administration of BESB’s VR and Children’s Services Programs. For the BESB VR policies, the primary focus was to update the language to reflect the changes that occurred at the federal level through the passage of WIOA and its accompanying regulations. Several new policies were required, included Pre-Employment Transition Services and Customized Employment. The BESB Children’s Services policies required updating to reflect recent changes in state statutes as well as updating of policies related to services for Transition-age youth. Both policy manuals underwent a public comment period with public hearings. The SRC held a special meeting to review and deliberate on the public comments received and to finalize the policies that became effective on July 1, 2017 for both Programs. The finalized policies may be viewed at www.ct.gov/besb. (Pages 243) Title IV

BESB VR further recognizes the great potential that customized employment holds for individuals with multiple, significant impediments to employment. BESB VR explored the option of committing time for staff training in this model, but found the time commitment to be beyond the availability of the existing staff. BESB VR is looking forward to utilizing a fee for service model with community rehabilitation providers that can offer this service after staff in their organizations receive the training and credentialing to provide it. (Page 288) Title IV

Supported Employment refers to competitive integrated employment, including customized employment, that is individualized and customized consistent with the strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice of a client with a most significant disability, and that includes ongoing support services. Supported employment services may be considered for individuals for whom competitive integrated employment has not historically occurred, or for whom competitive integrated employment has been interrupted or intermittent, and where there is a need for extended services after the transition from support provided by the Bureau, in order for the client to perform this work. Supported employment may also be provided in the form of transitional employment services for individuals with the most significant disabilities due to mental illness, in addition to legal blindness or lessened visual acuity.

Supported Employment Services are ongoing support services, including customized employment, and other appropriate services: (A) Organized and made available, singly or in combination, in such a way as to assist an eligible individual to achieve competitive integrated employment; (B) Based on a determination of the needs of an eligible individual, as specified in an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE); and (C) Provided by the Bureau for a period of not more than 24 months, unless under special circumstances the eligible individual and the rehabilitation counselor jointly agree to extend the time to achieve the employment outcome identified in the IPE; and (D) Following transition to extended services, as post-employment services that are unavailable from an extended services provider, and that are necessary to
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maintain or regain the job placement or advance in employment. (Pages 301-302) Title IV

Braiding/Blending Resources

Connecticut’s American Job Center (AJC) One—Stop system is the vehicle through which service delivery and targeting, leveraging and braiding of available resources is coordinated. Connecticut has a history and tradition of innovative collaboration among multiple partners and stakeholders to coordinate services and resources at the local level through its One—Stop system. To establish an overarching framework for consistent service and resource coordination going forward, CETC adopted a vision and guiding principles for Connecticut’s AJC One—Stop system, based on proposals developed by the Service Design and Delivery Work Group, comprising experienced staff from key workforce system partners.

Vision: Comprehensive American Job Centers in Connecticut will provide excellent customer service to jobseekers, workers and businesses, in Centers that reflect innovative and effective service design, operated with integrated management systems and high—quality staffing, to achieve desired outcomes. (Pages 88) Title I

Thus far in 2018, the Bureau has expended $2.4M through the first quarter of FFY 2018. Based upon clients presently being served and expenditure patterns, the Bureau projects a POS expenditure of $10.8M in general VR services, with an additional expenditure of $2M in Pre-Employment Transition POS for a total cost of services of $12.8M.

The Bureau projects a POS expenditure of $10.4M in general VR services, with an additional expenditure of $2M in Pre-Employment Transition POS for a total cost of services of $12.4M. This continued reduction in POS costs is considered possible through the reduction in clients served as a result of implementation of OOS, a recent competitive procurement of CRP services that will result in lower per-service unit costs across a myriad of community-based rehabilitation services, collaboration with and leveraging of American Job Center services, and the continued effort to develop and refine in-house services as a mechanism to supplant outsourced vendor services wherever cost effective to do so. (Page 212) Title IV

For many years BRS has successfully employed a four year budget projection model. Over recent years, this model displayed increasing costs that were outpacing annual funding levels. The reason for this discrepancy in annual aggregate federal grant, state appropriation and program income revenue versus expenditures, was multi-faceted and did not occur as a result of large scale program expansion. Rather, the imbalance can be attributed to marked increases in employee fringe rates set by the CT Office of the State Comptroller, decreases in state appropriation to the VR program, and escalations in POS costs. Over recent years this structural funding deficit was masked by historically large federal re-allotment awards. At the conclusion of FFY 2016, BRS received a much smaller percentage in re-allotment funding relative to what was requested than it had in the preceding six years. This smaller than requested re-allotment award, coupled with the impact of the WIOA required 15% Title I set-aside for Pre-Employment Transition Services, exacerbated BRS concerns over the potential shortfall in funding. A budget mitigation plan was immediately implemented to, as gradually as possible, drive program operating costs downward to a more sustainable level. To mitigate the challenges related to
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unavailability of funding in future years, internal controls were put in place to influence the largest category of POS costs. By increasing oversight on purchasing, and encouraging staff to increase the internal provision of assessment and job readiness services to the extent possible, the amount of expenditures to contracted Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) for these services was reduced. As a result of this tactic, the Bureau realized a $1.4M decrease in spending related to services purchased from CRPs in FFY 2017 as compared to FFY 2016. In FFY 2019 the Bureau intends to continue to pursue reductions in POS costs through a number of approaches. It is anticipated that resultant contracts from a recent competitive procurement of CRP services will result in lower per-service unit costs across a myriad of community-based rehabilitation services. Collaboration with and leveraging of American Job Center services, along with the continued effort to develop and refine in-house services as a mechanism to supplant outsourced vendor services, wherever cost effective to do so, should also continue to lower overall POS costs. (Page 217) Title IV

DEI/Disability Resource Coordinators

(CT DEI Youth)

In October 2016 Connecticut received a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Disability Employment Initiative (DEI). CTDOL’s Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) administers the three-year, six month $2,500,000 award funded jointly by USDOL’s Employment and Training Administration and Office of Disability Employment Policy. Broad objectives are to increase education, training and employment opportunities for youth with disabilities ages 14-24, and to expand the workforce system’s capacity to serve eligible beneficiaries in the Social Security Administration’s Ticket to Work Program. The initiative features strong partnerships and collaboration among key agencies; service coordination through an Integrated Resource Team approach; integrated services and resources including blended, braided and leveraged funding and resources; and innovative asset development strategies. Services are offered in four of Connecticut’s workforce regions. Participating WDBs employ Disability Resource Coordinators to implement project activities and coordinate services. Integrated Resource Teams address individual needs and provide increased support for youth with disabilities. Partners include the Departments of Rehabilitation Services, Labor, Education, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Social Services, and various other public and private sector representatives.

CT DEI Youth efforts focus on:

- Increasing the number of and improving the outcomes for youth with disabilities participating in career pathways programs;
- building partnerships; working with chambers of commerce from each region to provide opportunities through their memberships for paid work experiences and employment;
- utilizing available programs and supports such as technology, tutorials, sign language interpreters and other curricula modifications to accommodate learners with disabilities;
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- utilizing DEI funds to provide paid work experiences and internships;

- aligning systems at the state level through the CETC Service Design and Delivery Committee; and

- increasing credential attainment in, but not limited to, Information Technology, Healthcare and Advanced Manufacturing industry sectors. (Pages 53-54) Title I

Transform System Capacity: • Re—imagine delivery of customer services to individual jobseekers and workers in the American Job Center One—Stop system. Develop and implement streamlined service flow with efficiently aligned and integrated processes implemented by coordinated service teams representing the full range of contributions from system partners and stakeholders, consistent with principles and criteria developed by the WIOA Transition Service Design and Delivery Work Group. Build on lessons learned from implementation of the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) and Secure Jobs pilots as models for innovative and effective multi—partner service coordination. (Pages 68) Title I

In October 2013, Connecticut was one of eight states to receive a grant under USDOL’s Disability Employment Initiative (DEI). Awarded to OWC, the three—year $3,058,706 grant promotes strategic approaches to enhance employment services for individuals with disabilities served by the public workforce investment system.

As a critical innovative feature of this grant, Disability Resource Coordinators establish key partnerships across multiple workforce and disability service systems, coordinate services, and leverage funding to meet the needs of jobseekers with disabilities in the American Job Centers, assess and recommend solutions to physical, programmatic or communications accessibility workplace barriers. Working with DEI Case Managers, jobseekers with disabilities gain access to a wide range of employment assistance, including assessments, career readiness skills, training and education services. As required by DEI, two local WDBs — Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board and Capital Workforce Partners (North Central area) — became active Employment Networks (ENs) in the Social Security Administration’s Ticket to Work Program, thereby expanding the Connecticut workforce system’s capacity to serve eligible beneficiaries. DEI also requires the State’s participation in an evaluation process to measure the project’s impact on outcomes for jobseekers with disabilities.

The DEI grant provides for extensive staff training to build the capacity of Connecticut’s One—Stop system to serve jobseekers with disabilities. In PY 2014, American Job Center staff received training on disability awareness and etiquette, universal design, cognitive limitations, mental health, American Sign Language, deafness and deaf culture. This common, cross—agency staff training will be continued as a key feature of Connecticut’s coordinated workforce system efforts going forward. Up—to—date assistive technology has been purchased and installed for the American Job Centers. Through DEI, CTDOL has collaborated successfully with several State agencies and community organizations to plan four regional Diverse Ability Career Fairs across Connecticut. The first was held in Rocky Hill in April 2015. Forty—eight employers participated, seeking to fill entry—level to advanced positions in a variety of industries including manufacturing, finance, healthcare, transportation, distribution, and
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education. More than 600 job seekers attended the event. The second Diverse Ability Career Fair took place in Waterbury in October 2015. Two remaining career fairs are planned for 2016. (Page 123) Title I

The DEI experience in Connecticut is consistent with the long—established commitment of the state’s One—Stop system to recognize and meet the rights and needs of individuals with disabilities to access the facilities, programs and services of the workforce system. CTDOL, the Department of Rehabilitation Services (Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, and Bureau of Education and Services to the Blind) and the local WDBs have partnered together effectively for years to address the challenges confronting these valued customers. Lessons learned from these agency—to—agency, staff—to—staff shared experiences, and from the formal evaluation of the DEI experience, will be used to inform effective collaboration among key partners going forward in each local area to meet the objective of accessibility for all individuals and jobseekers. (Page 124) Title I

Financial Literacy/Economic Advancement

• Strong recruitment strategies focused on outreach to populations under-represented in local, state, and national Registered Apprenticeship programs;

• Educational and pre-vocational services that prepare individuals to meet the entry requisites of one or more Registered Apprenticeship programs (e.g. specific career and industry awareness workshops, job readiness courses, English for speakers of other languages, Adult Basic Education, financial literacy seminars, math tutoring, etc.); and

• Assists in exposing participants to local, state and national Registered Apprenticeship programs and provides direct assistance to participants applying to those programs; (Page 40) Title I

Out of School Youth ages 16 to 24 and In School Youth 14-21 that meet specific eligibility requirements, may qualify for the following Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act services. • Tutoring, study skills training and instruction leading to secondary school completion, including • dropout prevention strategies; • Alternative secondary school offerings; • Paid and unpaid work experiences that have academic and occupational education as a component • of the work experience: ? Summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout • the school year; ? Pre-apprenticeship programs; ? Internships as defined in § 680.170 of the regulations and job shadowing; and ? On-the-job training opportunities; • Occupational skill training with priority consideration for training programs that lead to • recognized post-secondary credentials that align with in-demand industry sectors or occupations; • Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities • and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster; • Leadership development opportunities, including community service and peer-centered activities • encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors; • Supportive services; • Adult mentoring for the duration of at least 12 months that may occur both during and after • program participation; • Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation; • Comprehensive guidance and counseling, including drug and alcohol abuse counseling, as well as • referrals to counseling, as appropriate to the needs of the individual
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| youth; • Financial literacy education; • Entrepreneurial skills training; • Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors • or occupations available in the local area*, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services; and • Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to post-secondary education and training. (Page 137-138) Title I |

For Out of School Youth, engagement, financial literacy, adult mentoring will be critical pieces. In addition, CT DOL will encourage the WDBs and subrecipients to develop plans which pay special attention to services which engage and attract:

• English language learners (working closely with Adult ED/ESL partners and contextualized learning opportunities including IBEST models) • Youth involved with the justice system (working closely with Court Support Services Division and community partners to support reduced recidivism and improved outcomes for such youth) • Homeless, pregnant or parenting or youth (linking youth with housing and child care as available in the community, to stabilize pathways to self—sufficiency) • Youth with disabilities (working closely with Vocational Rehabilitation partners to serve these youth in more seamless ways) (Page 139) Title I

Barriers to services

67. Both the quantitative and qualitative data show that the delivery system’s capacity to serve individuals with most significant disabilities is extremely limited. This is especially true where Supported Employment is concerned, and even more so for Customized Employment which is virtually non-existent in Connecticut. There was agreement that the causes include insufficient funding, inconsistent policy and programming across state agencies and limited staff proficiency.

68. These same factors play into BRS’ own challenges in serving individuals with most significant disabilities. Dedicated BRS funding for Supported Employment is in fact limited, as are system resources for long-term supports. A financial literacy pilot program for SI/SSDI recipients ended in December 2016. BRS has yet to expand customized employment training, but is working actively with system partners to improve services for this population going forward, consistent with the WIOA requirements. (Page 205-206) Title IV

a. Individualized Financial Capability Coaching is available to BRS consumers at age 18 who receive Social Security Benefits. Participants receive Benefits Counseling to understand the impact of earnings on benefits and an opportunity to plan for the future using the following topics and tools:

171. One-on-one Financial Coaching;

172. Personal Financial Education Sessions;

173. Work vs Benefits Discussion;

174. Goal-Setting Support;
BRS initially intended to fund a pilot specifically tailored to meet the needs of individuals receiving Social Security benefits through an award to the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS), a private non-profit agency. Although BRS was not able to fund this pilot, significant technical assistance was provided. CAHS was able to develop internal capacity and is now equipped to provide financial literacy services free of charge to individuals with disabilities in CT state wide which include the following: financial literacy and instruction to budget a household, create realistic goals, understand credit scores (and demonstrate actions to maintain or improve them), increase self-sufficiency, obtain employment/increase wages, and go off of SSDI and/or SSI benefits with an emphasis on acquiring new checking, savings or equivalent accounts. (Page 230-231) Title IV

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School to Work Transition

DORS is the designated state agency for the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) and the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS).

Consumers with disabilities who need help finding employment may apply for assistance at the applicable DORS offices. They may seek help with their job search when their disability poses a barrier and when they need VR services to help them prepare for, enter into or maintain gainful employment in a competitive setting. Services may include vocational counseling, benefits counseling, job search assistance, skill training and career education, school-to-work transition services, on-the-job training in business and industry, assistive technology services for mobility, communication and work activities, vehicle and home modifications, supported employment services, restoration services for a physical or mental condition and assistance accessing transportation options. Once eligibility has been determined, consumers work with a VR counselor to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) to identify the target employment goal and the services that DORS can provide to assist them in reaching that goal.
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The IPE also identifies the consumer’s responsibilities to help reach the desired job goal. (Page 104) Title I

SDE provides transition and supportive services for students with special needs up to age 21. At 18 a student doesn’t need to officially withdraw in writing, but it is the policy of our Education Dept. to require 18 year olds to get a written withdrawal form. (This is because it forces the system to apprise the family that if they have an IEP and withdraw, they lose all entitlements to IEP services. 17 year olds can return to school, and reinstate IEP within 90 days. Those who withdraw from school in writing are only eligible for services under ADA, not other special education services. There are exceptions to this policy for certain students.)

Until our draft policy is adopted and there is a clarification, CT DOL is using these definitions used for purposes of unemployment benefits: "School" means an established institution of vocational, academic or technical instruction or education, other than a college or university. "Regularly enrolled student" means an individual who has completed all forms and processes required to attend a school, college or university and who will attend prescribed classes at the times they are offered. (Page 141) Title I

SDE and BRS have staff that serve on each other’s advisory committees (Transition Task Force and BRS Transition Committee). Program staff attends common training regarding the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), secondary transition services and WIOA. SDE and BRS collaborated to develop a statewide CT Transition Community of Practice (COP) with a broad stakeholder base as a single portal for transition resource development, professional development, and interagency collaboration. SDE and BRS initiated statewide strategic planning with agencies, school districts, families and other stakeholders. (Page 191-192) Title I

1. The responsibilities of BRS under the formal interagency agreement are as follows:

2. Collaborate with the SDE in coordinating, providing, and documenting the provision of pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities;

3. Provide vocational rehabilitation services to students and youth who meet the eligibility criteria of BRS;

4. Work with the Local Education Authority (LEA) to make the best effort to develop an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) for each student eligible for adult VR services before the student leaves the school setting;

5. Provide consultation and technical assistance to aid LEA in planning for the transition of eligible students; (Page 192) Title I

18. Assure that IEPs developed by LEA for youth with disabilities aged 16 or over include plans for the provision of educationally-related “transition services” as defined in 34 C.F.R. 361.22(b)(4) and 34 CF.R. 300.43. Educationally-related transition services shall also include
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such activities identified by the LEA as are based on the child’s needs, consider the child’s preferences, and are designed to facilitate movement from school to post-secondary activities, including employment;

19. For each student with a disability with an IEP or Section 504 Accommodation Plan that the LEA has reason to believe may pursue subminimum wage employment following their exit from the school system, SDE shall assure that LEA document the provision of transition services in accordance with the documentation requirements of 34 C.F.R. 397.30(b)(1), including, at a minimum, the child’s name, a description of the service or activity completed, the dated signature of the responsible educational official documenting the completion of the required service or activity, and the dated signature of the responsible educational official who transmits the documentation of the provision of transition services to BRS upon the request of BRS; (Page 193) Title IV

Assist the LEA in providing transition planning for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and implementation of their individual educational programs (IEPs) under section 614(d) of the IDEA;

2. The responsibilities of SDE under the formal interagency agreement are as follows:

Coordinate with BRS to provide training and technical assistance regarding the IDEA, transition and IEP requirements for special educators and vocational rehabilitation counselors, including but not limited to presenting at statewide events and supporting the statewide transition website of the Connecticut Transition COP. (Page 194) Title IV

The Bureau provides supported employment and extended services to consumers with significant disabilities, as appropriate. Vocational Rehabilitation counselors work with each individual consumer to identify necessary services. In the process of developing an Individual Plan for Employment (IEP), the counselor and consumer make decisions about the need for supported employment or extended services. When the services are deemed necessary, the counselor and consumer identify a source of long-term funding and meet with a representative case manager, if appropriate. Once long-term supports are obtained, the plan can be executed. Supported employment and extended services are provided in partnership with our statewide network of Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP’s). These arrangements are based on fee-for-service contracts. We use a series of strategies to accomplish the goals of supported or extended employment, including the following:

- The statewide Ongoing Employment Supports Committee is a resource for identifying supported employment funding opportunities on a case by case basis;
- Cooperative agreements with CRPs, American Job Centers and Independent Living Centers (ILCs) allow for additional employment supports through the Ticket to Work program; and
- The Interagency Employment Practice Improvement Collaborative for staff in BRS, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), and CRPs is designed to increase successful employment outcomes to an underserved target population. (Page 196) Title
BRS will procure transition services for students with disabilities that include placement with employers to participate in work-based learning experiences and work place readiness training, as defined in WIOA. The scope of services will include social skill development, independent living and instruction in self-advocacy, peer mentoring, and assistive technology. Upon graduation, youth will benefit from transition services to prepare for, seek and maintain employment and secure supports needed to be successful. (Page 197) Title IV

BRS maintains a computerized record system for personnel needs, resources, and training. In addition to this information, the Bureau annually uses a caseload management program and results of ongoing needs assessments to analyze personnel needs.

BRS assisted 8,330 consumers in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2017. With 61 VR counselors, the ratio of VR counselors to all consumers is 1:113; the ratio of VR supervisors to consumers is 1:1,388. The ratio of all staff to consumers is 1:76. Of the 8,330 total annual consumers, 2,554 developed an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Based on the same number of VR counselors, the ratio of staff to all consumers with an IPE is 1:42; VR supervisors to consumers with an IPE is 1:42; and all staff to consumers with an IPE is 1:23. (Page 198) Title IV

If services cannot be provided to all eligible individuals who apply, the Director of BRS will implement an Order of Selection (OOS) as set forth in this Section. After determining eligibility, counselors must assign a priority category and follow the Order of Selection set forth below for the provision of services. Individuals determined eligible, and with an approved Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) prior to the date of implementation of the Order of Selection, will continue to receive services. The Bureau will notify all eligible individuals of the priority categories in the Order of Selection. Eligible individuals in priority categories not currently being served will be notified in writing of their assignment to a particular category and advised of their right to appeal their category assignment. (Page 216) Title IV

Priority 1: BRS will assist as many individuals determined to be Priority 1 as possible to achieve service and outcome goals.

Priority 2: This priority category will be closed upon implementation of the Order of Selection, with only those individuals with an approved IPE at that time receiving services. An exception will be made for individuals determined to be of this priority needing specific services or equipment to maintain employment. Review of the Bureau’s capacity to serve these individuals will be reviewed quarterly with the category being re-opened for the number of individuals that resources are projected to reasonably allow.

Priority 3: This priority category will be closed upon implementation of the Order of Selection, with only those individuals with an approved IPE at that time receiving services. An exception will be made for individuals determined to be of this priority needing specific services or equipment to maintain employment. Review of the Bureau’s capacity to serve these individuals will be reviewed quarterly with the category being re-opened for the number of individuals that resources are projected to reasonably allow.
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resources are projected to reasonably allow. (Page 218) Title IV

BRS has met quarterly with SDE and representatives from the Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs), Department of Developmental Services Education Liaisons and Transition Consultants, now called, CT Transition Alliance, to continue providing current transition information. BRS, SDE and the CT Community of Practice (CT COP) maintain partnership with the IDEA National Transition Community of Practice. This partnership led to the creation of a state stakeholder run website called CTTransition.Org. The CT COP represents a core team of stakeholders and initial practice groups that include the BRS Transition & Level Up committees and the Transition Task Force. The CT COP continues to uphold the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability (NCWD) Guideposts for Success as a framework for secondary transition activities and information. This is the same framework BRS has used for Transition since 2010.

As a result of these efforts, BRS assisted 280 Young Adults with Disabilities achieve successful employment outcomes in FFY 2017. (Page 227) Title IV

G. COORDINATION WITH

BESB VR Response: BESB VR agreed with this recommendation. During FY 2017, the SRC continued its initiative for BESB VR whereby a standing agenda item for SRC meetings consists of a “VR Success Story”, in the form of a presentation by a BESB VR client who has achieved an employment outcome. Typically explaining the type of work they are involved in and how BESB VR supports helped them with that work, BESB VR and SRC members continue to respond positively to this initiative, as it provides the SRC with an opportunity to hear value-added and diverse perspectives on BESB VR’s ability to support clients and employers in the workplace.

SRC Recommendation 4: Support initiatives that develop leadership qualities in transition-age youth who are blind.

BESB VR Response: BESB VR supported this important recommendation. The SRC continued its support and sponsorship of the Youth Leadership Forum (YLF), an annual week-long leadership training program for transition-age youth with disabilities to learn team-building, self-advocacy and task management skills. The SRC is an ongoing co-sponsor of this program and considers its co-sponsorship to be very important and worthwhile. (Page 242) Title IV

At the direct service level, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors participate in Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings of clients who are in middle school or high school and assist in the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEP’s) for students. The services that are detailed in the IEP of each student are factored into the development of each client’s Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), which must be developed within ninety (90) days of the determination of eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services, or by the time the client exits high school, whichever comes sooner. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor involvement begins as early as age 14, with referrals to the Program initiated by the Education Consultants of the Bureau’s Children’s Services Program and Teachers of the Visually Impaired that work
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directly for school districts. The client is assigned to one of the two Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors that are exclusively dedicated to serving pre—employment transition services eligible clients. Assignments are based on geographic location of the client. (Page 247) Title IV

A final point that emerged from the SRC focus group was regarding programming for individuals with multiple disabilities, such as having both visual and mobile impairment. The group concluded that BESB collaborates with other disability-centered agencies; additionally, the VR program does allow for modifications to be made on a case-by-case basis. Collaborative IPEs with VR plans represent a new area of engagement for BESB. These collaborative efforts are commendable and, to the fullest extent possible, should be expanded. Investigating new sources of collaboration would be a worthwhile endeavor. (Page 267) Title IV

BESB VR Update: In recognition of the extensive need for transition-age youth to acquire knowledge of careers in demand, and to learn of the successes of adults who are legally blind, BESB VR organizes and conducts career exposure programs, mentoring programs, college days and skills acquisition events, seeking out role models who are legally blind and employed or enrolled in higher education to participate in these events and programs. The BESB VR Transition Coordinator and the Pre-Employment Transition Counselors work directly with school district staff to incorporate these activities into the Individualized Education Program (IEP) or service plan of the students to emphasize the inclusion of these career development strategies as a critical component of the overall education process. BESB VR also utilizes job shadowing to expose transition-age youth to actual employment situations. Real work experiences for students with disabilities are crucial for the development of positive worker traits as well as developing self-confidence and money management skills. In the past fiscal year, 45 students participated in paid work experiences. Through a collaboration with United Technologies facilitated by the Chair of the SRC, 9 students participating in National Mentoring Day, gaining insight and exposure to careers in the aerospace industry. (Page 271) Title IV

BESB VR Update: The two Pre-Employment Transition Counselors participate in Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings of students with disabilities and assist in the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEP’s) for these students. The services that are detailed in the IEP of each student are factored into the development of each client’s Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), which must be developed within ninety (90) days of the determination of eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services, or by the time the client exits high school, whichever comes sooner. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor involvement can begin as early as age 14, with Pre-Employment Transition Services commencing at age 16. Referrals to BESB VR are most commonly initiated by the Education Consultants of BESB’s Children’s Services Program and Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments that work directly for school districts. (Page 286) Title IV

Supported Employment Services are ongoing support services, including customized employment, and other appropriate services: (A) Organized and made available, singly or in combination, in such a way as to assist an eligible individual to achieve competitive integrated employment; (B) Based on a determination of the needs of an eligible individual, as specified in an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE); and (C) Provided by the Bureau for a period of not more than 24 months, unless under special circumstances the eligible individual and the
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rehabilitation counselor jointly agree to extend the time to achieve the employment outcome identified in the IPE; and (D) Following transition to extended services, as post-employment services that are unavailable from an extended services provider, and that are necessary to maintain or regain the job placement or advance in employment. (Page 301-302) Title IV

For individuals who have been found eligible for services, an IPE shall be developed as soon as possible, but not later than a deadline of 90 days after the date of the determination of eligibility, unless the Bureau and the eligible individual agree to an extension of that deadline to a specific date by which the IPE shall be completed. If the Bureau is operating under an order of selection, this timeframe will apply to each eligible individual to whom the Bureau is able to provide services.

The Bureau will conduct an assessment for determining vocational rehabilitation needs, if appropriate, for each eligible individual or, if the Bureau is operating under an order of selection, for each eligible individual to whom the Bureau is able to provide services. The purpose of the assessment is to determine the employment outcome, and the nature and scope of vocational rehabilitation services, including the need for supported employment services, to be included in the IPE. The IPE will be designed to achieve the specific employment outcome that is selected by the individual consistent with the individual’s unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice, and results in competitive, integrated employment. The IPE will be amended, as necessary, by the individual or, as appropriate, the individual’s representative, in collaboration with a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor employed by the Bureau if there are substantive changes in the employment outcome, the vocational rehabilitation services to be provided, or the providers of the vocational rehabilitation services. For a student with a disability, the IPE will consider the student’s Individualized Education Program or 504 services. (Page 302) Title IV

For a client for whom an employment outcome in a supported employment setting has been determined to be appropriate, the IPE or subsequent amendment developed to include supported employment must identify: (A) The supported employment services to be provided by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program; (B) The extended services needed by the eligible individual, which may include natural supports; (C) The source of extended services, or to the extent that the source of the extended services cannot be identified at the time of the development of the IPE, a description of the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that such a source will become available; (D) Periodic monitoring to ensure that the individual is making satisfactory progress toward meeting the weekly work requirement established in the IPE by the time of transition to extended services; (E) The coordination of services provided under an IPE with services provided under other individualized plans established under other federal or state programs; (F) The extent that job skills training is provided, and identification that the training will be provided at the job site; and (G) Placement in an integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice of the individual. (Page 303) Title IV

Ongoing Support Services in supported employment are identified based on a determination by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program of the individual’s needs as specified in an IPE, and are furnished by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program from the time of job placement until
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Transition to extended services, unless post-employment services are provided following transition, and thereafter by one or more extended service providers throughout the individual’s term of employment in a particular job placement or multiple placements if those placements are being provided under a program of transitional employment. These services include an assessment of employment stability and provision of specific services or the coordination of services at or away from the worksite that are needed to maintain stability based on: (A) at a minimum, twice-monthly monitoring at the worksite of each individual in supported employment; or (B) if under special circumstances, especially at the request of the individual, the IPE provides for off-site monitoring, twice monthly meetings with the individual, consisting of:

(1) Any particularized assessment supplementary to the comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs; (2) The provision of skilled job trainers who accompany the individual for intensive job skill training at the work site; (3) Job development and training; (4) Social skills training; (5) Regular observation or supervision of the individual; (6) Follow-up services including regular contact with the employers, the individuals, the parents, family members, guardians, advocates or authorized representatives of the individuals, and other suitable professional and informed advisors, in order to reinforce and stabilize the job placement; (7) Facilitation of natural supports at the worksite; (8) Any other service identified in the scope of vocational rehabilitation services in Bureau policy. (Page 304) Title IV

Career Pathways

The CSDE shall not use more than 12.5% of the funds awarded under this subtitle for State Leadership activities. The CSDE will deliver a majority of its State Leadership and professional development services through the Adult Training and Development Network (ATDN). The CSDE’s professional development model supports the implementation of the goals of Connecticut’s Adult Education State Plan and consists of professional development basics and activities related to the implementation of career pathways. (3) The CSDE will provide technical assistance to local grantees in: • the development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on scientifically valid research available and appropriate, in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition, distance education, staff training and content standards; • the role of eligible providers as a one-stop partner to provide access to employment, education, and training services; and • assistance in the use of technology, including for staff training, to eligible providers, especially the use of technology to improve system efficiencies. Although serving students with low literacy skills or who are English language learners or individuals with disabilities, including learning disabilities was not rated by most local programs as being one of their strongest needs, providers did express that they need assistance with curriculum materials and teaching strategies/best practices for students who are non-literate in their native language and with developing a scope and sequence curriculum for low level literacy skills and individuals with disabilities. Another area identified on the survey as a need is technical assistance in helping local programs identify instructional practices which will enable students to pass the new GED tests. Most programs felt confident in teaching reading, writing, speaking and English language acquisition, but one program stated staff needs help in ways to improve the depth of math instruction. The CSDE will also provide technical assistance in serving adults with special learning needs and disabilities including disability awareness sessions, resource and instructional materials, accommodation and instruction
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planning workshops, train-the-trainer sessions, referral information and telephone consultation concerning program issues. (Page 176-177) Title II

108. Maintain a dedicated staff resource to manage the BRS training program, and maintain a separate line item within the Bureau’s budget to offer necessary training.

109. Continue to use social media to connect job seekers with opportunities to pursue jobs with employers.

110. Develop materials on resources, labor market information and training/education programs to post on the BRS and Connect-Ability websites to provide consumers consistent access to information.

111. Continue to dedicate a specific unit of VR staff to support employers as dual customers to create more business partnerships and more employment opportunities through direct job placement, the use of On-the-Job (OJT) Trainings and Industry Specific Training and Placement Programs (ISTPPs).

112. Participate in cross agency trainings through the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) to strengthen state agency partnerships.

113. Continue to develop and disseminate Distance Learning Modules for staff and consumer use. (Page 221) Title IV

BRS is committed to assisting individuals with the most significant disabilities to achieve competitive employment outcomes. Efforts have been initiated and specialized training has been offered on how to work with underserved target groups (mental health disorder, substance abuse, learning disabilities, Deafness, Autism Spectrum) has been provided, or is scheduled to be provided. Trainings are comprised of both in-person and online modules.

Goal 4: To create effective partnerships designed to advance employment for Connecticut citizens with disabilities.

Priority areas:

0. Businesses

In FFY 2016, BRS negotiated 117 On-the-Job Training (OJT)s opportunities. BRS also contracted with the following Industry-Specific Training and Placement Programs (ISTPPs):

- Southeastern Employment Services/Lowes Distribution Center
- Community Enterprises/Mohegan Sun
- Community Enterprises/Walgreens Retail Stores
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- Ability Beyond/Walgreens Retail Stores
- Ability Beyond/Crowne Plaza (Page 228) Title IV

**Apprenticeship**

Given the knowledge, experience and expertise of its key partners and stakeholders, Connecticut’s workforce system is well positioned to implement innovative workforce and talent development strategies.

Connecticut’s workforce development efforts are supported and encouraged by the strong relationships among executive leadership in key State agencies and key administrative and program staff in each organization.

State, regional and local partners have a demonstrable track record of successful collaboration on applying for and winning significant national competitive grant awards that address strategic priorities, developing innovative partnerships responsive to employer priorities, and effective sharing of information and best practices i.e. the Disability Employment Initiative and The American Apprenticeship Initiative., (Page 57) Title I

Assistive Technology continues to be among the highest training priorities for staff in BESB VR, particularly since adaptive equipment is so often a component of success on the job for clients served by BESB VR. One of the Rehabilitation Technologists attended and presented at a national conference on technology at California State University at Northridge (CSUN) in 2017. Additionally, staff have attended trainings in the use of the Braille Note Touch, Zoomtext, Microsoft Office with JAWS, Google Docs and Windows 10 with JAWS, along with online training on using JAWS for Windows with Career Index Plus.

Additional areas of staff training in the past year have included a required seminar on the new ethics standards issued by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification that all BESB VR staff participated in, a Supported Employment resources conference attended by the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, the Supervisor and Director, Business Engagement training sessions attended by the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Apprenticeship opportunities, and Life Care Planning attended by individual staff. (Page 258) Title IV

Expansion of the availability of adaptive technology in training programs, core services and apprenticeship programs is another category where there is considerable activity. BESB VR staff brings their knowledge of blindness related technology accommodations into discussions with the partners so that solutions can be identified and implemented in the planning stages of new initiatives, ensuring equal access to services. BESB VR also provides support for the adaptive technology laboratory located at the Southeastern Connecticut Community Center of the Blind, making it possible for clients of BESB located in that region to receive local training in the use
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of adaptive technology. (Page 289) Title IV

Work Incentives and Benefits

In October 2016 Connecticut received a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Disability Employment Initiative (DEI). CTDOL’s Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) administers the three-year, six month $2,500,000 award funded jointly by USDOL’s Employment and Training Administration and Office of Disability Employment Policy. Broad objectives are to increase education, training and employment opportunities for youth with disabilities ages 14-24, and to expand the workforce system’s capacity to serve eligible beneficiaries in the Social Security Administration’s Ticket to Work Program. The initiative features strong partnerships and collaboration among key agencies; service coordination through an Integrated Resource Team approach; integrated services and resources including blended, braided and leveraged funding and resources; and innovative asset development strategies. Services are offered in four of Connecticut’s workforce regions. Participating WDBs employ Disability Resource Coordinators to implement project activities and coordinate services. Integrated Resource Teams address individual needs and provide increased support for youth with disabilities. Partners include the Departments of Rehabilitation Services, Labor, Education, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Social Services, and various other public and private sector representatives. (Page 53-54) Title IV

67. Both the quantitative and qualitative data show that the delivery system’s capacity to serve individuals with most significant disabilities is extremely limited. This is especially true where Supported Employment is concerned, and even more so for Customized Employment which is virtually non-existent in Connecticut. There was agreement that the causes include insufficient funding, inconsistent policy and programming across state agencies and limited staff proficiency.

68. These same factors play into BRS’ own challenges in serving individuals with most significant disabilities. Dedicated BRS funding for Supported Employment is in fact limited, as are system resources for long-term supports. A financial literacy pilot program for SI/SSDI recipients ended in December 2016. BRS has yet to expand customized employment training, but is working actively with system partners to improve services for this population going forward, consistent with the WIOA requirements.

Agency Performance

69. The disability types likely to be classified as most significantly disabled and require long-term supports (communications, Intellectual Disabilities/Developmental Disabilities and mental health impairments) represented 80% of BRS consumers in 2016. The disability type comprising the largest proportion served by BRS was mental health impairment, and yet the agency’s rehabilitation rate for individuals with mental health impairments was by far lowest of all disability categories. (Page 205-206) Title IV

The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) is the designated state Vocational Rehabilitation unit for individuals who are blind within the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), which is the designated state agency. The Commissioner on behalf of, and for
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the benefit of, the Bureau executes cooperative agreements at the designated state agency level.

The Bureau is in a cooperative agreement with the Social Security Administration (SSA) that makes it possible to seek and receive reimbursement for certain costs associated with clients of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program that have achieved earnings at or above substantial gainful levels and have therefore transitioned off of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The process to seek reimbursement requires a combination of cooperative agreements at the state level. Client benefit status verification is obtained through an agreement with the Department of Social Services (DSS). A cooperative agreement with the Connecticut Department of Labor (DOL) makes it possible to review wage records of individuals who are participating in BESB’s Vocational Rehabilitation Program to determine if their earnings are above substantial gainful activity (SGA) levels and would therefore qualify the Bureau to request cost reimbursement from SSA. Cost reimbursement would be for the cost of BESB purchased services as well as fees for administrative and tracking costs associated with a client’s case. In federal fiscal year 2014 BESB received $122,689 from SSA under this program. (Pages 244-245) Title IV

Employer/Business

DORS has liaison counselors who work closely with the American Job Centers, which enables staff to make referrals for services within each agency’s programs. When appropriate, DORS consumers may be eligible for training offered on DOL’s eligible training provider list. Consumers take an active role in the process of pursuing these trainings, and VR Counselors are available to provide assistance. If there is a barrier to the DORS consumer accessing the trainings as a similar benefit to what DORS offers, the DORS counselor can approve payment to fund the DOL training. When DORS consumers access these DOL services, their names are automatically entered into the CTHires database. (Page 96) Title I

BESB VR Update: The service delivery to the clients is divided into five regions throughout the state. At least one Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is assigned to each of the five regions. The state is divided in half (East and West) for rehabilitation technology services, with one technologist covering each region. The Rehabilitation Technologists each conduct assessments for clients who are in need of adaptive technology to participate in VR services. There is also one Rehabilitation Teacher who serves the entire state, providing independent living skills training and adaptive technology training with screen readers.

There is one Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Coordinator that covers the entire state and works with the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors on case management strategies. This position also provides coordination of job development activities and employer engagement across the state.

The service delivery model also includes one Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor who works primarily with college students. This Counselor has established close working relationships with the offices of Disability Services at public and private institutions of Higher Education that clients from BESB VR are attending. Through this approach, consistent coordination of support services can be achieved. The assignment of a specific Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to
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the college students also ensures consistency and timeliness with the financial aid application process. (Page 254) Title IV

BESB VR further addressed case management activities through the reestablishment of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Coordinator position, which had been vacant for several years. A major focus of this position was to assist the Counselors with case management strategies. Utilizing the newly developed case management computerized dashboard, the Coordinator, Supervisor and the Counselors are able to track the timely movement of client services and timeframes for case status changes. The dashboard is capable of analyzing trends by caseload to further assist in identifying where additional activity is required. Over time however, it has been found that utilizing the Counselor Coordinator for case management reviews has created an overlap of duties with the Supervisor’s position. Diminishing staff resources in BESB VR has necessitated a reexamination of the best use of this role. With the impending retirement of two counseling staff, BESB VR intends to shift some of the Coordinator’s responsibilities to align with the priorities of BESB VR, with a primary focus on statewide employer engagement strategies, and a secondary role of managing a reduced caseload of clients while they are attending institutions of higher education in order to maintain a single point of contact with Disability Coordinators at these facilities. (Pages 283-284) Title IV

Data Collection

Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) DORS has a contract with a software provider to maintain a case management system for the vocational rehabilitation programs. This system runs locally on servers housed within DORS and contains case information relevant to individual consumers and reportable data. The vendor has maintained an active relationship with the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) who governs data collection for public vocational rehabilitation programs. Changes are currently underway with a new vendor to manage data collection required by WIOA. RSA data elements will be adjusted to be compatible with the WIOA—Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) document.

WIOA Annual State and Local Area Reporting Reporting processes for the WIOA Annual State Performance Report will involve CTDOL obtaining electronic files for each report period from the three Connecticut State agencies for each of the six WIOA core programs. The WIOA Annual Local Area Performance Report is a subset of the WIOA Annual State Performance Report, covering only the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. Individual records in each of these electronic program files will be matched against the CTDOL database that stores the WIOA unique identifiers to determine if such identifier already exists. If it exists, the unique identifier will be appended to the record. If it does not exist, CTDOL will assign a unique identifier for each participant and will append it to the participant record. This process will ensure a common unique identifier across the six WIOA core programs, and will ensure that this unique identifier will be the same for every period of participation. (Page 102) Title I

For Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2018, the BRS projects that it will serve 5,473 eligible consumers in Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs) under Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act. This represents a 7% decrease from FFY 2017, when 5,891 consumers received services in IPEs under
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Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.

BRS had a spike in consumers being served in IPEs in FFY 2016. This coincides with BRS’ implementation of WIOA requirements surrounding Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and the establishment of Pre-ETS Counselor positions to exclusively serve this population of students. These Counselors became connected directly to school systems throughout our state and began working to identify and serve potentially eligible students in our communities during that year. Such efforts created an influx of youth who both entered and advanced within our system. BRS also tightened policies and procedures in FFY 2016 around IPE development within 90 days, further contributing to the increase in consumers being served. In FFY 2017, BRS’ production trended back closer to recent norms, and thus realized a decline in IPE development of 3.1% as compared to FFY 2016. A contributing factor associated with this decline was a decrease in new applicants by 3.1%. (Page 210) Title IV

CT anticipates implementing an Order of Selection as of October 1, 2018. After that date, BRS plans to initiate new IPE’s and serve all eligible clients in Category 1, as well as eligible consumers requiring specific services to maintain employment. This will be in addition to all clients being served under IPE’s on 9/30/18. The projected overall numbers of clients to be served under an IPE in FFY 2019 is 5,263. The proposed case service budget is $12,402,500. The expected services provision by priority category is as follows:

OOS Category 1: 68% or $7,074,500
OOS Category 2: 26% or $2,704,000
OOS Category 3: 6% or $624,000

Based on successful employment closures in FFY 2017, CT BRS projects employment closures as follows:

OOS Category 1: 68% or 816
OOS Category 2: 26% or 312
OOS Category 3: 6% or 72

Total Projected Successful Outcomes: 1,200. (Pages 217- 218) Title IV

Measure: Documentation of Vocational Rehabilitation adaptive technology consultations and recommendations for equipment to make the One-Stop centers accessible to individuals with significant disabilities.

Strategy: Develop strategies to align technology and data systems across One-Stop partner programs.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
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<tr>
<td>Documentation of Vocational Rehabilitation staff participation in statewide meeting regarding the development of a common-front end data collection system.</td>
<td>Develop allocation formulas to distribute funds to local areas for adult and youth programs.</td>
<td>Documentation of Vocational Rehabilitation staff participation in cost allocation formula reviews that follow prescribed federal requirements.</td>
<td>Prepare annual performance reports.</td>
<td>Vocational Rehabilitation report on performance measures distributed.</td>
<td>Develop statewide workforce and labor market information system.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocational Rehabilitation staff provide data on job placements for clients served by the program.</td>
<td>Develop strategies to align technology and data systems across One-Stop partner programs.</td>
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<td>Develop strategies to align technology and data systems across One-Stop partner programs.</td>
<td>Documentation of BESB VR staff participation in statewide meeting regarding the development of a common-front end data collection system.</td>
<td>BESB VR staff have reviewed the CT Hires data collection system and identified strategies that could make certain data fields more accessible for BESB VR staff to use. At this point however, there are no immediate plans to implement a “common-front end” data collection system for the partner agencies to use due to the uniqueness of each of the partner’s current data collection software and the cost that would be incurred across the programs to develop such a universal data collection system.</td>
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**511**

The Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium MOA enables BRS to create and host the Connect-Ability Distance Learning Initiative (DLI) which provides over 50 free online e-learning modules for job seekers with disabilities, employers, Community Rehabilitation Providers CRP), vocational rehabilitation staff and others. Modules are accessible and some are available in Spanish or American Sign Language. BRS also uses the DLI as a training registration platform for staff trainings. This year we added a new module in order to provide Career Counseling for sub-minimum wage employees in Connecticut.

**Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination: Section 188**

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners), will comply with section 188 of WIOA (if applicable) and applicable
provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) with regard to the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. This also must include a description of compliance through providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. Describe the State’s one-stop center certification policy, particularly the accessibility criteria.

Connecticut’s One—Stop system currently provides and will continue to ensure physical and programmatic access to facilities, programs, services technology and materials for individuals with disabilities in a variety of ways. With respect to physical accessibility, all five of Connecticut’s comprehensive One—Stop American Job Centers, along with the Danielson American Job Center, are designated ADA—compliant. All five comprehensive American Job Centers provide adequate public parking for individuals seeking to use the facilities and have been determined to provide adequate accessible parking options for jobseekers with disabilities. Each of the comprehensive American Job Centers is located on a public bus route. Four of the five comprehensive American Job Centers feature power assisted front doors. The CTDOL Facilities Unit is committed to pursue installation of power—assisted doors for the fifth office, in New London, when its current lease expires. A planned move of the New London AJC in April 2018 to a new comprehensive AJC in Montville will address any issues with accessibility. (Pages 122-123) Title I

**Vets**

Required one-stop partners: In addition to the core programs, the following partner programs are required to provide access through the one-stops: Career and Technical Education (Perkins), Community Services Block Grant, Indian and Native American programs, HUD Employment and Training programs, Job Corps, Local Veterans’ Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program, National Farmworker Jobs program, Senior Community Service Employment program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (unless the Governor determines TANF will not be a required partner), Trade Adjustment Assistance programs, Unemployment Compensation programs, and YouthBuild.

The various entities, partners and stakeholders comprising Connecticut’s extensive informal workforce development system have planned and implemented a broad array of innovative initiatives addressing Connecticut’s workforce development priorities. Following is an illustrative sample of selected recent noteworthy efforts:

(A) The State’s Workforce Development Activities Provide an analysis of the State’s workforce development activities, including education and training activities of the core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required and optional one-stop delivery system partners. (Page 37) Title I

Intensive services include: comprehensive and specialized assessments of skill levels and service needs; development of an individual employment plan to identify the employment goals,
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appropriate achievement objectives and appropriate combination of services for the participant to achieve the employment goals; group counseling; individual counseling and career planning; and short-term prevocational services that may include development of learning skills, communication skills, interviewing skills, punctuality, personal maintenance skills, and professional conduct to prepare individuals for unsubsidized employment or training. Veterans and eligible spouses who do not qualify to receive intensive services from a DVOP may receive these services from other AJC staff.

Local Veterans’ Employment Representatives (LVER) conduct outreach to area employers to assist veterans in gaining employment, and they facilitate the employment, training, and placement services furnished to veterans in the state’s AJCs. LVERs are available to • Plan and participate in job and career fairs; • Conduct job searches and workshops, and establish job search groups, in conjunction with employers; • Coordinate with unions, apprenticeship programs and businesses or business organizations to promote and secure employment and training programs for veterans; • Inform Federal contractors of the process to recruit qualified veterans; • Promote credentialing and licensing opportunities for veterans; and • Coordinate and participate with other business outreach efforts. (Page 121) Title I

Mental Health

Recommendation 5: The SRC has a continued interest in all of the state agency collaborative projects including the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)/BRS agency collaborative regarding services and employment options for consumers with psychiatric issues, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS)/BRS agency collaborative, and the Bureau of Education Services for the Blind (BESB)/ BRS agency collaborative. Please provide updates at the SRC meetings about any achievements that have been attained, the strategies that have been developed to improve outcomes, the training that is available to staff, and any activity that will occur as a result of BRS’ attendance at the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) conference. (Page 186) Title I

69. The disability types likely to be classified as most significantly disabled and require long-term supports (communications, Intellectual Disabilities/Developmental Disabilities and mental health impairments) represented 80% of BRS consumers in 2016. The disability type comprising the largest proportion served by BRS was mental health impairment, and yet the agency’s rehabilitation rate for individuals with mental health impairments was by far lowest of all disability categories.

70. Individuals with most significant disabilities represented 56% of BRS consumers in 2016, a slight decline from 60% in the two previous years. Transition-age youth made up 70% of BRS consumers with most significant disabilities.

71. Eighty-one individuals with most significant disabilities received Supported Employment services from BRS in 2016, down 39% since 2014. It was unclear from data and key informant feedback what types of services were provided to the balance (1,783) of consumers with most significant disabilities. The rehabilitation rate for individuals receiving Supported Employment services declined slightly from 51% to 47%. VR Supported Employment Foundations Training
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was expanded to two days to increase staff capacity to deliver this service. (Page 206) Title IV

166. VR Supported Employment Foundations Training is provided to new VR Counselors. Senior VR counselors are also invited to the training to get a refresher on the current SE environment as well as provide technical assistance to the training.

167. In addition, a BRS and DMHAS protocol document remains in place for both agencies to provide technical assistance on Supported Employment Policy and Procedures for both agencies. Both agencies participated in a combined training for VR staff, mental health staff, and CRP staff on an ongoing basis. (Page 229) Title IV

For individuals who are deaf and blind, BESB works closely with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) for the coordination of services. Through a cooperative agreement, individuals who are deaf and blind can receive coordinated services from both public vocational rehabilitation programs. Through case conferencing, a determination is made as to which program will assume lead case management responsibilities, with the other program providing support services as needed. For clients who are receiving case management services through BRS, BESB offers vocational consultations, orientation and mobility services, and rehabilitation teaching assistance.

For clients who are blind and have developmental disabilities, the Bureau coordinates services with the State Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to bring about successful job placements with long—term supports. Each Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor works closely with DDS to establish a strong working relationship and a close collaboration of services with the DDS case manager.

BESB’s Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors also coordinate services with the State Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) for individuals who are blind and have a mental health diagnosis and/or addiction. (Page 245) Title IV

In addition to the collaborative relationship with DDS, BESB has developed a working relationship with the State of Connecticut, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). Through this arrangement, individuals who have a mental health diagnosis, acquired brain injury, or an addiction diagnosis along with legal blindness can access supported employment opportunities, with DMHAS providing the third party funding. (Page 253) Title IV

BESB VR Update: Collaboration through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) occurs on a continual basis through joint training programs and initiatives. Staff members from BESB VR participate in transition work groups including the Transition Taskforce that is facilitated by staff from the State Department of Education. There is also a Community of Practice group that focuses on best practices and emerging trends in transition services to youth with disabilities. This multi-agency initiative includes representatives from BESB VR as well as the State Department of Education, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Department of Developmental Services and the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS). (Page 259) Title IV
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RTW/SAW

Unemployment Insurance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (UI RESEA): CTDOL meets the reemployment needs of many UI claimants through the Unemployment Insurance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (UI RESEA) program, which serves claimants who are either profiled as most likely to exhaust benefits or receiving Unemployment Compensation for Ex-service members (UCX). Selected claimants report for services in the Bridgeport, Hamden, Hartford, Montville and Waterbury American Job Centers. DOL’s RESEA program design includes an increased UI presence in the AJCs and the extensive involvement of UI staff. Ongoing staff training includes an emphasis on enhancing the skills needed to assist claimants with their reemployment efforts; RESEA program representatives have been trained to effectively access labor market information specific to a claimant’s job skills and employment prospects, develop a reemployment plan to meet the claimant’s needs and determine appropriate referrals to reemployment services or training. CTDOL completed more than 9,000 initial RESEAs during the 12-month period ending December 31, 2017, and expects to complete a significantly higher number during the subsequent 12 months. (Page 79) Title IV

CTDOL provides a Claimant’s Guide to Unemployment Benefits to all initial unemployment claim filers. This guide contains all necessary information related to a person’s eligibility for unemployment benefits as well as a listing of the American Job Centers throughout Connecticut and information about the employment services they provide to job seekers. As a result of filing for Unemployment Insurance, UI claimants are registered with the State’s employment service in the form of a registration in CTHires, the state’s web-based workforce development system that provides case management and labor exchange services and the state job bank. Claimants will receive a welcome email from CTHires after filing which explains the services available and encourages them to utilize the system for their job search.

CTDOL administers the work test for UI claimants through the UI RESEA program. All claimants selected to participate will report to an American Job Center for a review of their UI eligibility and efforts to find work. Any claimant determined to have an eligibility issue or insufficient work search efforts will have a stop entered on his or her unemployment claim and the eligibility issue is addressed by the Adjudicator in the American Job Center. All claimants who attend the initial one-on-one RESEA appointment will receive a customized reemployment plan, jointly developed with the RESEA representative, and be required to participate in at least one additional mandatory employment service activity. Services include referrals to employment readiness workshops, résumé critiques, career counseling, WIOA orientation sessions, or any other service available in the American Job Center. (Page 151) Title IV

Describe the development and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated State unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

BRS sends announcements for Counselor positions to all regional CORE-accredited institutions of higher education that train VR Counselors. We have initiated contacts with these universities
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so that we can continue to find well-qualified staff for the vacancies we anticipate in the future. In addition to the Connecticut-based CORE institution listed above, we are in close contact with the regional institutions from which we have traditionally (Page 200) Title IV

*All enclosed information is cited directly from final state plan as of June 30, 2019

Find your local state plans here:

https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/wioa/state-plans/index.html