

Department of Human Services

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

MISSION

The Department of Human Services Vocational Rehabilitation program assesses, plans, develops and provides vocational rehabilitation services to Oregon's increasingly diverse individuals to become independent through positive employment outcomes.

The program

This is a state and federal program authorized by state law (ORS 344.511 et seq.) and the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, amended in 1998.

All working-age Oregonians with a disability legally entitled to work, with the exception of individuals with blindness, are potentially eligible for services. Individuals who experience a medical, cognitive or psychiatric diagnosis that results in an impediment to employment typically are eligible for services. Recipients of Social Security disability benefits are presumed eligible for services.

Approximately 96 percent of all eligible clients currently served by OVRs are persons with severe disabilities. These individuals typically experience multiple functional limitations requiring several services provided over an extended period.

We have counselors with expertise in the fields of autism, deafness and hearing impairments, mental health, motivational intervention, spinal injury, and traumatic brain injury; and,

general caseload managers who provide consultation and technical assistance to agency staff.

Individuals we serve

Vocational Rehabilitation employees provide direct services through a network of local offices across Oregon. For a list, see <http://cms.oregon.gov/dhs/Pages/localoffices/index.aspx>

Services are provided by rehabilitation counselors and support staff who deliver direct client services through 34 field offices and multiple single employee outstations in one-stop career centers and other human services agencies across the state. The demographics in Oregon are changing and our services are adapting accordingly in order to meet the diverse needs of consumers seeking services in order to provide culturally specific services to consumers and to diversify the workforce delivering those services in order to achieve better outcomes.

Our numbers:

- Helped 15,207 individuals and obtained 1,146 employment outcomes. (2011)
- Contract with 39 school districts and consortia on behalf of 115 schools for approximately 1,400 students each year.
- Assisted 104 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and 25 individuals with psychiatric disabilities obtain supported employment outcomes.

- Provided comprehensive services to 2,065 individuals, resulting in those individuals experiencing greater independence. During October 1, 2010 through September 30, 2011. An additional 11,863 consumers received information and referral services.

SERVICES

This program is designed under four primary areas; basic services, youth programs, supported employment, and independent living.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) – These are basic services provided to individuals whose disabilities present societal challenges to employment. A rehabilitation counselor conducts a comprehensive assessment to evaluate vocational potential, including diagnostic and related services necessary for the determination of eligibility for services as well as the nature and scope of services to be provided. Vocational counseling and guidance builds on this assessment and helps the client identify a vocational goal. The counselor, in partnership with the client, develops an individualized plan for employment and authorizes services and training in support of the plan while maintaining a counseling relationship with the client.

Youth Transition Program (YTP) These services bridge the gap between school and work by providing coordinated vocational rehabilitation services while the student is in school and ensuring a smooth transition to adult services and employment after completion of school. OVRs currently contracts with 39 school districts and consortia on behalf of 115 schools to provide and coordinate these services. Transition specialists work with students in their home schools. Youth with disabilities that complete high school and transition

to work or postsecondary education or some mix do so at rates that exceed national averages through our Youth Transition Program. This nationally recognized school-to-work transition approach is a best practice for young people with disabilities. We partner with local school districts, the Department of Education, and the University of Oregon (which provides technical assistance, training and program evaluation).

Supported Employment Services (SES) These services targets individuals with the most significant disabilities who, with intensive training, job coaching and the provision of ongoing supports, can obtain and retain competitive employment in the community. Basic vocational rehabilitation services are provided on a time-limited basis for each client. The Mental Health Program, Developmental Disability Program, other community programs, families and private employers are responsible for the follow-along services once we completed placement and training services. Supported Employment Services combine traditional VR services and support services provided by job coaches, typically at job sites.

The Independent Living Program Services are available through seven Centers for Independent Living (CIL). The CILs are consumer controlled nonprofit organizations. This is a federal program established in Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Oregon's State Independent Living Council was

established by Governor's Executive Order 94-12, in 1994. We have the responsibility to:

- receive, account for, and disburse funds received by the State under Title VII, chapter 1;
- provide administrative support services for a program under part B of chapter 1;
- keep records and provide access to such records as the Rehabilitation Services Administration Commissioner finds necessary; and
- submit such additional information or provide such assurances as the Commissioner may require.
- In addition, under the Title I Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Section 101(a)(18)(A)(ii)(II) requires there to be funding provided by Title I in support of the State Independent Living Council's resource plan.

Centers for Independent Living- Centers must provide at least four core services – information and referral, independent living skills training, peer counseling, and both systems and individual advocacy. CILs also provide a range of services based on local needs, many of which compliment services provided through other state and federally funded programs. As an example, benefits planning as an incentive to work, mentoring for individuals transitioning to less restrictive living environments, or training for individuals utilizing state-funded home care workers. Services are provided through a peer-mentoring model, with an emphasis on self-help, self-advocacy, and consumer responsibility. Specialists support clients as they work to achieve identified goals. Specialists are individuals who have experienced disabilities, and who have successfully overcome barriers to independence, employment and community involvement. Services are provided at the most appropriate location for the consumer's need – at a Center for

Independent Living office, the consumer's home, or other community setting. The mentoring approach provides consumers with trusted advisors who understand their barriers and model the skills and qualities consumers are working to achieve.

Vendor report cards improve the quality of jobs and return on investments with our contracts through a “vendor report card”. Beginning in 2013, the report card will publish data about the number and quality of jobs vendors have developed as compared to dollars spent. Report cards support consumers to make informed choices about service providers. The cards will be used with providers to identify areas of best practice, need for program improvement, and determine whether or not to continue contracting with a provider.

Client Status Indicator (CSI), a computer based tool that monitors critical elements of case flow and compliance, work that had previously been completed by staff. This tool will allow for more frequent reviews and feedback opportunities for staff; identification of training issues; and reduced audit findings.

Developmental Disabilities – Employment First initiative, we will support DHS' Developmental Disabilities program to improve service equity and provide additional focused assistance for their Employment First initiative. A number of these individuals have significant barriers to employment and our counselors and service providers will need additional skills and expertise to assist. Services will focus on community-based employment. This will require significant changes in

service design, delivery, and coordination with education, DD services, community providers and employers.

Work Incentive Network (WIN). WIN is an evidence based practice, providing benefits and work incentives planning to individuals with significant disabilities who want to obtain, maintain, or increase their employment but not lose other benefits and medical coverage. This allows people on disability benefits to become employed, gain more levels of self-sufficiency, become engaged in their communities and live a higher quality of life.

Serving Employers, One of the most significant barriers to employing people with disabilities involves overcoming employer concerns about the costs and efforts associated with hiring someone with a disability. We provide outreach services, training and technical assistance to employers to help overcome this barrier. Our efforts have resulted in an additional 118 jobs for Oregonians in small businesses and larger organizations, such as Walgreens and Lowes.