

Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Director's Report
February 19, 2014

I. Staffing:

A. Vacancies:

1. Orientation & Mobility Instructor in the Bangor office. This position became vacant in early November. We have begun recruiting through contacting various university personnel preparation programs, and will likely post the position next month.

B. New Hires:

1. VR Counselor position in the Portland office. Steve Freeman began in this position in early January. Steve has years of experience as a VR Counselor in both the public and private sector.

II. Employability Skills Program:

DBVI is planning to hold its third offering of the ESP in early November. As a reminder, this program is designed to assist those clients who are chronically unemployed or underemployed, or are otherwise stuck in their efforts to obtain a job.

III. Public Education and Outreach:

DBVI is ramping up its efforts in public education and outreach to both potential referral agents and to minority communities. At the direction of the DBVI Director, each regional office is putting together a plan for such activities in their particular region. This plan will be coordinated with any similar effort being made by our two large contract partners, Catholic Charities and The Iris Network.

IV. Business Enterprise Program (BEP):

- A. The new vending only location at Washington County Community College is going well. This site is being run by an experienced operator and is being used as a business training site for a current DBVI client.
- B. There still may be a chance that some type of food service opportunity may be incorporated into the new building in Portland that will house DOL and DHHS. Final plans are due out soon and we should know about this business opportunity by the time of the next SRC meeting.

V. Immersion Model Blindness Rehabilitation and Training Center Update:

DBVI staff has just about completed answering the various questions related to this project posed by the DOL administration. We plan to submit the document to the Bureau of Rehab. Services Director and the DOL Deputy Commissioner by the end of next week.

VI. Promotional Video for Public Vocational Rehabilitation in Maine:

DBVI, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation Program are working collaboratively to create a video that will briefly describe what public VR is in Maine, and how people with disabilities can benefit from working with these programs. We are also working with our regional Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Center on this project. One component of this video will have three or four clients filmed on the job, as well as interviewed about their work and the role public VR played in their successful employment. We will be trying to showcase clients of differing ages and disabilities and types of work in this video. At least one of these clients will be from DBVI. We are just now working on a brief and loose narrative that will need to be tightened up before it becomes the final narrative of the video. As you will see in Appendix A, we began with three basic questions for each of our three agencies to answer. So far we have the first draft that was assembled just using information from our brochures and web sites, then my revisions to that draft, concluding with further revisions suggested from DVR. As stated above, we have a long way to go, although there are not many differences between the DBVI and DVR draft. The revisions suggested by the DBVI Director are denoted by an asterisk (*) at the beginning and end of each suggested revision. The suggested revisions of the DVR Director are denoted by two asterisks (**) at the beginning and end of each suggested revision. We will mesh these two versions with that of the Director of the Wabanaki VR Program and try to come up with one narrative that describes public VR. The goal is to begin filming clients in April.

VII. Budget Related Issues:

- A. DBVI finally received our remaining grant award notices as a result of the recent federal budget being completed and signed by the president. Although our IL Older Blind and Supported Employment (\$225,000 and \$48,000 respectfully) program funding remained stable between 2013 and 2014, our Title I funds have been reduced an additional \$50K from the 2013 sequestration amount.
- B. DBVI, DVR, and DOL management will be meeting to review the current split of Title I funds from RSA. The current split is 18.5% for DBVI and 81.5% for DVR. This percentage was arrived at by looking at actual Title I expenditures of both programs for the two years preceding the creation of DBVI as a second Designated State Unit for RSA programs. None of the other grants were split in this manner, and funding of positions within the Bureau that did work for both programs was also not split in this manner.

VIII. Recent Activities:

- A. DBVI staff has been involved in a committee that is reviewing our rules around services to clients pursuing post-secondary training. This group is looking at drafting suggested revisions of a MOU with Maine's university system.
- B. DBVI Director recently joined the Assistive Technology Advisory Council. DBVI has a dedicated seat on this council.

IX. Upcoming Activities of the Director:

- A. Attending and presenting at the American Foundation for the Blind Leadership Conference, February 27-March 1.
- B. Attending the spring meeting of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, April 7-9.
- C. Attending the spring meeting of the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind, April 9-11.

Respectfully Submitted by
John Mc Mahon, Ph.D.
DBVI Director

Appendix A

Draft of Narrative for Promotional Video

The three versions of this draft have been placed in this appendix in chronological order.

Draft 1:

The three questions the video will answer:

➤ **What Is Vocational Rehabilitation, including Native American VR, DBVI, and DVR?**

Vocational Rehabilitation, or “VR,” is a public program that helps people who have disabilities get and keep a job.

In Maine there are three ways VR services are available. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired are programs of Maine Department of Labor, and the Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation Program is directed by the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians.

➤ **Whom does VR serve?**

VR helps people who have physical, sensory, mental, or emotional disabilities. VR programs are available anywhere in Maine.

To be eligible to receive VR services, an individual must apply for services and must:

- have a disability that keeps them from getting, keeping or returning to a job; and
- need VR services to find or keep a job.

➤ **What should people expect from VR?**

Vocational Rehabilitation in general

Every person’s rehabilitation plan will be different because every person’s vocational needs are different.

The process starts with an application to one of the three VR agencies. There will be a determination of eligibility, then working with a VR Counselor, then developing an individualized plan and carrying out the plan.

After receiving an application, VR will determine eligibility within 60 days, or sooner. Then, the VR counselor will help you make informed choices about jobs and careers. VR will explore with you different career opportunities by finding out your interests and aptitudes. You and your VR counselor need to work together to develop a plan that will lead to a job. To prepare a good plan, you and your counselor will discuss:

- skills and abilities you have;

- the types of jobs you want to consider;
- where you are willing to work and live; and
- what transportation is available.

The more flexible you can be, the more likely you are to find a job.

VR services are also available to assist students who have disabilities, starting at age 14, to transition from high school to work.

An individual might receive services from more than one of Maine’s VR programs, as appropriate to the individual’s situation. The specialized services available through DBVI and Native American VR are as follows:

DBVI – For individuals who are blind or visually impaired, DBVI provides skills training the individual needs for independence in preparation for starting, going back to, or continuing a career. These services might include:

- individual counseling and guidance, and vocational assessment;
- orientation and mobility instruction to develop independent travel skills;
- other training, devices, treatment, job placement and follow-up services to enable you to succeed in a job; or

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Services VR can provide

VR can provide information about the skills and training you need for careers that interest you. VR has information about the labor market to help you see what type of work is available.

If you need training, VR can locate or develop specific training programs with special accommodations for you. VR can also help with re-training or education needed to get a new job.

VR may buy tools, uniforms or basic equipment needed to start a job. VR may buy a lot of job-related things you may need to find or keep a job.

Sometimes VR can assist with payment for some medical or psychological services.

Some people use a Job Developer in looking for work; others may get a Job Coach who gives close supervision and support on the job until the person learns all the job skills.

Generally services end 90 days after a person gets a job.

Costs – It does not cost you anything to apply for services. There is no charge for diagnostic services, vocational evaluation, counseling, or job placement assistance. If you are eligible for services, your counselor will ask you about your income and expenses. Depending upon your income, you may be asked to contribute to the cost of VR services. VR cannot pay for any services you received before you applied to VR.

Draft Two with DBVI Director’s Suggested Revisions:

**Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to live independently; enjoy self-determination; make choices; contribute to society; pursue meaningful careers; and enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of American society.*

**Public vocational rehabilitation programs are available to assist people with disabilities to achieve these goals.*

The three questions the video will answer:

- **What Is Vocational Rehabilitation *in Maine, including Native American VR, DBVI, and DVR?**

Vocational Rehabilitation, or “VR,” is a public program that helps people who have disabilities get and keep a job *and promotes independence.

In Maine there are three ways VR services are available. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired are programs of Maine Department of Labor, and the Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation Program is directed by the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians.

- **Whom does VR serve?**

VR helps people who have physical, sensory, mental, or emotional disabilities. VR programs are available anywhere in Maine.

To be eligible to receive VR services, an individual must apply for services and must:

- have a disability that *creates a barrier that keeps them from getting, keeping or returning to a job *or being independent; and
- need VR services to *reduce the impact of the disability so that the individual can find or keep a job.

- **What should people expect from VR?**

Vocational Rehabilitation in general

Every person's rehabilitation plan will be different because every person's vocational needs are different.

The process starts with an application to one of the three VR agencies. There will be a determination of eligibility, then working with a VR Counselor, then developing an individualized plan and carrying out the plan.

After receiving an application, *eligibility of the individual will be determined within 60 days, or sooner. Then, the *individual will work with the VR counselor to make informed choices about *possible jobs and careers *and the services that are necessary to achieve the goal of the individual's employment plan. *Your VR *counselor will *also explore with you different career opportunities by finding out your interests and aptitudes. You and your VR counselor *will work together to develop a plan that will lead to a job. To prepare a good plan, you and your counselor will discuss:

- skills and abilities you have;
- the types of jobs you want to consider;
- where you are willing to work and live; and
- what transportation is available.

The more flexible you can be, the more likely you are to find a job.

VR services are also available to assist students who have disabilities, starting at age 14, to transition from high school to work *and becoming an independent member of the community.

An individual might receive services from more than one of Maine's VR programs, as appropriate to the individual's situation. The specialized services available through DBVI and Native American VR are as follows:

DBVI – For individuals who are blind or visually impaired, DBVI provides *blindness skills training the individual needs for independence in preparation for starting, going back to, or continuing a career. These services might include:

- individual counseling and guidance, and vocational assessment;
- orientation and mobility instruction to develop independent travel skills;
- instruction in alternative communication, organizational, and independent living skills
- other training, devices, treatment, job placement and follow-up services to enable you to succeed in a job; or

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Services VR can provide

VR can provide information about the skills and training you need for careers that interest you *and how to bridge your skills with your disability. VR has information about the labor market to help you see what type of work is available.

If you need training, VR can locate or develop specific training programs with special *disability-specific accommodations for you. VR can also help with re-training or education needed to get a new job.

VR may buy *disability-specific assistive technology, or tools, uniforms or basic equipment needed to start a job. VR may buy a lot of job-related things you may need to find or keep a job.

Sometimes VR can assist with payment for some medical or psychological services.

Some people use a Job Developer in looking for work; others may get a Job Coach who gives close supervision and support on the job until the person learns all the job skills.

Generally services end 90 days after a person gets a job.

Costs – It does not cost you anything to apply for services. There is no charge for diagnostic services, vocational evaluation, counseling, or job placement assistance. If you are eligible for services, your counselor will ask you about your income and expenses. Depending upon your income, you may be asked to contribute to the cost of VR services. VR cannot pay for any services you received before you applied to VR.

Draft Three with DVR Director's Suggested Revisions:

**Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to live independently; enjoy self-determination; make choices; contribute to society; pursue meaningful careers; and enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of American society.*

**Public vocational rehabilitation programs are available to assist people with disabilities to achieve these goals.*

The three questions the video will answer:

- **What Is Vocational Rehabilitation *in Maine, including Native American VR, DBVI, and DVR?**

Vocational Rehabilitation, or “VR,” is a public program that helps people who have disabilities get and keep a job **while promoting independence to obtain and maintain access to their individual communities.

In Maine there are three ways VR services are available. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired are programs of Maine

Department of Labor, and the Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation Program is directed by the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians.

➤ **Whom does VR serve?**

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To be eligible to receive VR services, an individual must apply for services and must:

- have a disability that *creates a barrier that keeps them from getting, keeping or returning to a job ** which affects their independence; and
- need VR services to *reduce the impact of the disability so that the individual can find or keep a job.

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Every person's rehabilitation plan will be different because every person's vocational needs are different.

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- the types of jobs you want to consider;
- where you are willing to work and live; and
- what transportation is available.

The more flexible you can be, the more likely you are to find a job.

**VR services are also available to assist students who have disabilities, starting at age 14 (For DBVI and two years before graduation for the General VR program and the Wabanaki VR program.) These transition services will assist students as they transition from high school to work with the goal of becoming independent members of their communities.

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