

Montana Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan

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Photo by Tammy Hogan
Taken near Lambert, Montana

PROMOTING WORK AND
INDEPENDENCE FOR
MONTANANS WITH
DISABILITIES

Effective FY 2008

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Attachment 4.2 (c)

**Summary of Input and Recommendation of the State
Rehabilitation Council; Response of the Designated State Unit;
and Explanation for Rejection of Input or Recommendations**

The Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Council Mission Statement:

The Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Council advises and works with the Vocational Rehabilitation Program to improve policies, programs, delivery of services to consumers, and methods for reaching potential consumers and employers.

The Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Council (Council) provides input and advice to Montana Vocational Rehabilitation (MVR) in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act. The Council holds meetings at least quarterly. These meetings are accessible and open to the public and are held in various locations statewide. The Council has three standing committees—Transitions Committee, Public Awareness Committee, and Native American Committee. Policy and program issues are discussed at both the Council meetings and the committee meetings. Some Council members meet with the MVR management staff to help develop the strategic plan and determine the agency's priorities.

The following is a summary of specific input and recommendations from the Council.

1. Reconnect and strengthen the existing connections with Parents Lets Unite for Kids (PLUK). Ask PLUK to provide an overview of their services to the full Council.

MVR Response: At the April 2007 meeting, Roger Holt, co-director of PLUK, gave the Council an overview of PLUK. PLUK serves anyone, not just parents and children. Last year they received over 10,000 calls. Family support consultants in eight offices statewide work directly with families. PLUK also has a technology lab and they work closely with MonTech, the state assistive technology program. The PLUK website is: www.pluk.org.

2. Support the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, which will provide extended health care coverage to employed consumers.

MVR Response: The state was awarded a Medicaid Infrastructure Grant in January 2006. This grant funds activities to determine the feasibility of starting a Medicaid Buy-In program in Montana and sets up the mechanism to implement the program. Medicaid Buy-In allows workers with disabilities to pay a monthly premium for Medicaid insurance.

The state received a “conditional” two year grant, and may now apply for four more years of funding. To be eligible for the additional funding, the state must show that the Medicaid program pays for personal assistance services for people at work. However, the state may opt to apply for a “no cost extension” for next year because of the large amount of unspent funds. If this were to occur, the state would apply for the four year grant next year.

Grant activities so far include:

- Contracting with the University of Montana Rural Institute to survey employers and people with disabilities
- Contracting with independent living centers to conduct focus forums and gather information from people with disabilities on barriers to going to work
- Contracting with George Washington University to do a cost benefit analysis for the program
- Funding four benefits planning workshops this spring and another four in the fall
- Hosting a one-day conference on “Empowerment of Native Americans with Disabilities” last fall
- Contracting with Reservations (\$35,000 each) for benefits planning and best practices on employment
- Starting a Business Leadership Network
- Developing a website
- Meeting with a coalition of 15 people for planning activities

To implement the Medicaid-Buy In program, the state will need to get approval from the 2009 Legislature. Vocational Rehabilitation supports the Medicaid Buy-In program and hopes that it can be implemented after the next Legislature.

3. Ensure that all VR Counselors that serve the Reservations participate in some type of cultural sensitivity training that is specific to the reservation that they serve.

MVR Response: MVR agrees. Two MVR counselors that serve the Blackfeet, Rocky Boy, Fort Belknap and Fort Peck Reservations attended the “Building Effective Government and Business Relations with Indian

Tribes workshop in January 2007. This conference included “Conversations with Tribal Representatives” which enabled these counselors to learn about issues that are specific to the Reservations they serve.

When the MVR Council holds a meeting on a Reservation, the counselors that serve that Reservation will be invited to the Council meeting.

4. Strengthen and expand connections with the business community to improve employment opportunities for consumers.

MVR Response: Activities in the past year to expand connections with the business community are as follows:

- MVR staff toured potential employment sites in two regions
- MVR participated in a variety of employment related activities in the past year which included Jobs Jamboree, Career Fairs, WIA training academies, Chamber of Commerce meetings, Job Service Employment Committee (JSEC), Community Management Teams (CMT), Bitterroot Economic Development District and Workforce Centers
- MVR developed and updated our public relations materials which included Power Point presentations, display materials, and the creation of MVR posters and banners

5. Designate one Council meeting to be held on a Montana Reservation.

MVR Response: MVR agrees. The July 2007 Council meeting will be held on the Blackfeet Reservation. Council members will have an opportunity to attend North American Indian Days, which will be held at the same time. This Pow Wow features Native American dancers and drummers combining culture, dance, and music

6. Contact the Crow Agency to discuss the possibility of them applying for the 121 grant.

MVR Response: MVR agrees. The MVR liaison to the 121 Projects met with the Tribal grant writer for the Crow Tribe in March 2007 to discuss the 121 Project grants. This was a timely visit, as RSA had just recently publicized the RFP for the 121 grants, and the MVR liaison was able to give

them a copy of the RFP, as well as information for assistance in writing the grant.

7. Encourage MVR representatives to attend the Consortia of Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) each year.

MVR Response: MVR agrees. The MVR Program Manager attended the annual CANAR conference in Washington, DC in February 2007. If funding is available, a counselor will be selected to attend the mid-year CANAR conference to be held in Savannah, GA in August 2007.

8. MVR's policy/procedures for deciding if MVR pays for a consumer's masters degrees needs to be clarified.

MVR Response: At this writing, MVR is in the process of reviewing and clarifying this procedure to ensure that it is in compliance with the Rehabilitation Act. Our current procedure is:

- Prior to commitment to an IPE containing a specific employment goal requiring post-graduate work, MVR will complete an individualized assessment to determine the extent of rehabilitation need.
- A person may be eligible for post-graduate training when services are required for overcoming a substantial impediment to employment.
- A person who can work and advance without significant impediment in a professional field consistent with the person's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice is not eligible for post-graduate training.
- Financial need may not be the sole basis for determining eligibility for post-graduate, tuition, books and fees. When the consumer requests a goal requiring post-graduate training, the conclusions of the individualized assessment regarding the need of services shall be reviewed by the counselor's supervisor prior to signing the IPE.

10. Keep the Council informed on transition activities.

MVR Response: MVR agrees. The MVR transition coordinator presented at the October 2006 Council meeting. She discussed both the activities on the state level (National Governors Association grant, transition training,

contact between MVR and all Montana High Schools) and on the local level (individual visits to high schools, job club for transitioning students, information source for PLUK, counselor visits to Montana Youth Leadership Forum, etc.). MVR received a new Transitions Development Counselor position from the 2007 Legislature. This counselor will be expected to present at least one time per year to the Council regarding specific field activities.

11. Continue to improve the annual Governor's Report

MVR Response: MVR agrees. At the October 2006 Council meeting, a facilitator was brought in to facilitate the discussion for this year's Governor's report. Topics that were discussed were:

- What accomplishments do we want to include in the report?
- What do we want the Governor to know and understand about MVR services?
- What do we want the Governor to consider based on our advise and expertise in order to support services for all people with disabilities?
- What has the committee, as a whole, accomplished in addition to what the Council committees have done?

The Council agreed that the Report to the Governor should continue to be short and concise with highlights of the year incorporated, as well as "Stats at a Glance".

MVR Council quarterly meeting minutes are available for review on the MVR website at: <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/dsd/advisorycouncils.shtml>

Attachment 4.8 (b)

Cooperation and Coordination With Other Agencies and Other Entities

- 1) Cooperation with Agencies that are not in the Statewide Workforce Investment System and with Other Entities
- 2) Coordination with Education Officials
- 3) Cooperative Agreements with Private Non-profit Vocational Rehabilitation Service Providers
- 4) Evidence of Collaboration Regarding Supported-Employment Services and Extended Services

Cooperation and Coordination

4.8(b)(1) - Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Investment System

Cooperation, collaboration, and coordination with agencies not in the statewide workforce system are usually expressed through cooperative agreements or memorandums of understanding. MVR presently has agreements with the following entities:

- Montana's Section 121 Vocational Rehabilitation Projects
- Mental Health
- Developmental Disabilities Program
- Montana Small Business Development Centers (SBDC)
- The Commissioner of Higher Education
- Office of Public Instruction

Section 121 Vocational Rehabilitation Projects

MVR presently has cooperative agreements with five of the six Section 121 Vocational Rehabilitation Projects (Confederated Tribes of the Salish & Kootenai Reservation, Fort Belknap Reservation, Fort Peck Reservation, Rocky Boy's Reservation and the Blackfeet Reservation). A cooperative agreement was sent to the remaining 121 Project (Northern Cheyenne reservation), but as of this date has not yet been signed by this Tribe.

The purpose of these agreements is to establish procedures to assure continued coordination between the 121 Vocational Rehabilitation Projects and MVR. These agreements are implemented for the sole purpose of enhancing, to the greatest extent possible, the delivery of rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities living in the state of Montana and residing on or near the six reservations that currently have a Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Project.

Mental Health

This cooperative agreement has provisions that include:

- 1) To make available the required supported employment/follow-along services from MVR's Community Rehabilitation Programs certified mental health providers. Follow-along services may be provided through Community Based Psychiatric Rehabilitation and Support, and through Case Management services.
- 2) To serve persons identified as eligible for mental health service under Medicaid or the Mental Health Service Plan.
- 3) To strengthen supported employment services to Montana citizens eligible for vocational rehabilitation supported employment services and for community mental health services funded by the Addictive and Mental Disorders Division.
- 4) To provide cross-training and technical assistance between our agencies.
- 5) To establish and evaluate annual goals for our interagency work towards coordinated vocational and support services.

Developmental Disabilities Program

This Cooperative Agreement has provisions that include:

- 1) To strengthen supported employment services to Montana citizens eligible for vocational rehabilitation supported employment services and who receive services through the Developmental Disability (DD) provider organizations.
- 2) To contract with developmental disability provider organizations to provide adult sheltered and supported employment work services through funds made available to them from the State general fund and Medicaid home and community waiver.
- 3) To make available the required supported employment, extended/follow along services from MVR's Community Rehabilitation Program's enrolled DD providers. Long-term follow-along services are made available by DD provider organizations through a long-term sign off cooperative agreement with MVR. This sign off is between the provider organization and MVR. It is incumbent upon DD provider organizations to negotiate and secure any approving authority from the DDP. MVR agrees DD provider organizations will provide copies of the long-term follow-along sign off cooperative agreement documents to the DDP Regional Managers. The DD provider organization sign offs commits the provider to making available this service, but does not

commit funds. In terms of funding source and availability, DDP resource commitments are made between DDP regional managers and provider organizations.

- 4) For those residing in the Montana Developmental Center (MDC) who have been identified as being in need of vocational/supported employment services, those needs must be included in the community placement plan. The costs for long-term follow-along need to be included in the resources allocated, and need to be made available to reimburse an enrolled provider for long-term follow-along services after discharge from MDC.

Montana Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs)

The purpose of this agreement is to establish guidelines and procedures to be used by the Montana Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) and the MVR Program in coordinating the services of both programs on behalf of individuals with disabilities who desire to pursue the goal of self-employment. This agreement outlines each party's role and responsibilities, referral procedures, information exchange methods, forms used, and implementation, evaluation, amendments and termination procedures.

Business Enterprise Program (BEP)

The Montana Business Enterprise program has five active and three unplaced vendors. The program expanded to include cafeterias in state buildings in addition to the one on a federal site. Two vocational rehabilitation consumers received training and placement during FY 2007. Legislation passed that allowed the Business Enterprise program to establish vending at rest stops along Montana interstates. Three additional cafeterias will become available next year.

Department of Agriculture

The Montana-Idaho AgrAbility and Farm Safety Project is part of a nationwide network of USDA-Extension Service Programs commonly known as AgrAbility. The project is a joint effort of the Extension Service and the Easter Seal Society, and Montana has offices at Montana State University-Bozeman and the Northern Rocky Mountain Easter Seal

Society in Great Falls. MVR plans to contact the Montana Idaho AgrAbility program within the next year to see if there are ways we can collaborate.

State Use Contracting Programs

Montana state agencies may purchase supplies and services from sheltered workshops or work activity centers. Such purchases are exempt from competitive bidding laws and rules. The Montana Department of Administration maintains a list of certified sheltered workshops or work activity centers located in the state. The list includes the supplies and services provided by each sheltered workshop or work activity center.

Cooperation in Training Activities

MVR routinely collaborates with other organizations to provide training opportunities for MVR staff. The following is a list of collaborating organizations:

- University of Montana - Rural Institute on Disabilities
- Montana State University – Billings
- Montana Center on Disabilities
- Region VIII Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program (RCEP)
- Region VIII Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program (CRP-RCEP)
- Utah State University
- Montana Youth Leadership Program (MYLF)
- Centers for Independent Living
- Brain Injury Association of Montana
- Client Assistance Program
- Montana Addictive and Mental Disorders Division
- Developmental Disabilities Program
- Disability Determination Services
- Social Security
- Rocky Mountain Rehab
- Fort Belknap Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program
- Western Washington University
- MAXIMUS – Ticket to Work Training

4.8(b) (2) - Coordination with Education Officials

Office of Public Instruction (OPI):

The Office of Public Instruction, Special Education Division is responsible for special education services for children ages three (3) through eighteen (18) and provide general supervision for students in the nineteen (19) through twenty-one (21) range. They provide technical assistance to Montana School Districts so they can prepare students with disabilities to move successfully from school to the appropriate post-school environment. Students' measurable post secondary goals are identified as part of the Transition Individual Education Plan (IEP). These goals are based upon the student's preferences, interests, and strengths. Appropriate services planning and IEP development based on post secondary goals, academic preparation for post secondary education and training, vocational and career evaluation, job shadow experiences and vocational classes.

Montana Vocational Rehabilitation (MVR):

The Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Program provides services to eligible individuals who have disabilities and impediments to employment. MVR insures that necessary services are identified for eligible students with disabilities as they leave the school setting and begin activities leading toward an employment outcome. Appropriate services are individualized and include planning, assessment for VR eligibility, comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs, identification of employment goals, development of an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), and provision of vocational services, including post-employment services if necessary that are appropriate to the individual needs of the consumer.

Purpose

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding is to enhance the working relationship between MVR and OPI to provide more effective services to individuals with disabilities in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Within this

agreement are strategies for the two agencies to work collaboratively in evaluating, serving and planning for a seamless transition from school for students eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation services (eligible students), as they make the transition from school to adult education, adult services, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, independent living and community participation.

This MOU has provisions which include:

1. Joint training between staff of both agencies

2. Referral procedures: OPI shall assist school districts to refer all students with disabilities to MVR no later than six months prior to the student's sixteenth birthday, in order for MVR to participate in the development of the student's IEP. For students enrolling closer to graduation or age twenty-one, school districts are urged to make referrals to MVR as soon as they are identified.

- i. OPI shall assist local school districts refer students with disabilities who are not on an IEP to MVR at least one year before their anticipated graduation dates.
- ii. MVR shall encourage former students who are still eligible for IDEA services to enroll again in school for further study and training to enhance their opportunities for employment.

3. Roles and responsibilities

- i. Related Services – OPI shall assist local school districts to coordinate vocationally related services with MVR for eligible students. Coordination should commence in the early stages of transition to afford the maximum vocational benefit to the student. Vocationally related service coordination and corresponding agency responsibilities should be identified in the IEP and included on the student's IPE when appropriate.
- ii. Related Services – (Vocational) After the eligible individual leaves the local school district, MVR will continue to provide vocational services, i.e., vocational assessments, career exploration, job shadowing, vocational guidance and counseling and other required services as documented in the individual IPE.

- iii. Consultation – The MVR Counselor shall assist school districts in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post school activities. The MVR Counselor shall act as a consultant for the student, parents and the school district during IEP/transition meetings that are scheduled before MVR has an open case on the student. When requested by the local school district, MVR shall ensure that MVR Counselors/staff participate in the evaluation process of students who have applied for MVR services and in the development of the IEPs for eligible students.
- iv. Transition Coordinator – MVR’s Transition Coordinator shall coordinate with Montana OPI Transitions Specialists to develop and promote a seamless transition system. MVR also has a full time Transition Counselor in the Missoula District who will schedule office hours at the high schools and will be available to offer consultation to special education and 504 coordinators, teachers, school administration, parents, advocacy groups and others regarding the role of MVR in transition. The MVR Transition Counselor shall meet with staff and other interested parties in other school districts as invited to share best practices and facilitate communication between the parties. MVR staff will also be available to provide information on changes in the law or MVR policy regarding transition services.
- v. Contact Persons: OPI and MVR shall each designate a contact person for coordinating joint training programs and as the lead person to offer assistance in understanding and using the respective programs.

4. Sharing of statistical data

5. Technical Assistance to school districts

MVR enjoys a close working relationship with our education counterparts at OPI. We meet regularly to discuss transition services and how each entity can facilitate information for students, parents, and advocacy groups. In addition, a member of OPI sits on the Council and the Council has a transition sub-committee that works specifically on transition issues across the state.

MVR facilitates transition from school to vocational rehabilitation services, including the development of the Individualized Plan of Employment (IPE) for each student with a disability who:

- 1) receives special education services and is determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services before the student leaves the school setting, or
- 2) does not receive special education services but has a disability pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and who may be receiving services and/or accommodations

This is accomplished by:

- MVR counselors inform school staff as to services that are available to students with disabilities and eligibility requirements. MVR counselors then follow up on referrals in a timely fashion in order to determine eligibility prior to graduation.
- MVR has co-authored a letter with OPI to disseminate information concerning contacts between school districts and MVR Offices. This letter is mailed annually after it is updated each fall.
- MVR maintains a list of contacts on its website for easy reference by both school personnel and MVR staff.
- MVR counselors are assigned to work with each of the high schools in Montana. They meet with the appropriate school personnel and students who may need transition services.
- MVR counselors are committed to attending transitions training and conferences on an ongoing basis. Additionally, each regional office selects a counselor to attend the annual Montana Youth Leadership Forum to provide information about vocational rehabilitation and to answer questions related to the program.
- MVR supports the National Governors' Association efforts to better coordinate transition services.

- MVR obtained an FTE in Montana for a state-wide transitions development counselor. This position will be responsible for overall systems change activities in the arena of school to work transitions and in demonstrating direct consumer transitions services.
- MVR has created a brochure that is specific to transitioning high school students.
- MVR will consistently attend the Council for Exceptional Children Conference beginning in the spring of 2007.

Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE)

The purpose of this memorandum of understanding (MOU) is to develop and adopt principles which will guide the planning and delivery of support services to individuals with disabilities who are mutual clients of MVR and students enrolled in the Montana University System (MUS).

This MOU has provisions which include:

1. MVR and the units of the MUS maintain different requirements for determination of eligibility, documentation of disability, and the provision of services or accommodations. This MOU does not require either MVR or MUS to alter its policies for providing services or supports, and this MOU is not to be used as a basis for determining eligibility for MVR or MUS services.
2. The units of the MUS through the guidance of the OCHE are required to provide services and accommodations to MVR clients to the same extent as they are provided to other students with disabilities, in accordance with Montana state law, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (PL 101-336) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (PL 93-112, as amended).
3. MVR is not prohibited in this agreement from contracting with units of the MUS to provide services or support for MVR clients beyond those required to assure equal access to equal educational opportunities.
4. The MOU will provide both parties with the opportunity to enhance communication and the exchange of information regarding services offered by MVR and the various campuses of the MUS.

5. MVR and the units of the MUS will work together to enhance cross-referrals of individuals with disabilities, as appropriate to each individual's needs. Personal information about the individual will not be shared without an appropriate release of information.
6. The MUS will not require students who have a disability to apply for MVR funding before providing services or support. For students who have applied for MVR services, the MUS will not deny or delay the provision of services or support while MVR is in the process of determining eligibility for services.
7. MVR services are provided pursuant to an individualized plan for employment (IPE) which is developed jointly by the rehabilitation counselor and the eligible individual. In those situations where referral has been made to campus disability support services, the appropriate disability services staff may also be involved in helping to develop the IPE.
8. The MVR rehabilitation counselor and the MUS campus disability support services staff will respect the individual's right and responsibility to fully participate in all decisions regarding his or her vocational future. The IPE shall be developed and implemented in a manner that allows the individual an opportunity to exercise informed choice in selecting an employment outcome, the specific vocational rehabilitation services that are to be provided, the entity that will provide those services, and the methods that will be used to procure the vocational rehabilitation services.
9. MVR clients who attend a unit of the MUS may need reasonable accommodation, including auxiliary aids or services in order to have equal access to the programs and services offered at that particular institution.
10. The provision and cost of reasonable accommodations are the responsibility of the particular unit of the MUS. For individuals with disabilities who are mutual clients of MVR and students at a unit of MUS, and are otherwise qualified for such aids or services, the funding source for auxiliary aids and services will be determined on an individual case-by-case basis.

4.8(b)(3) - Cooperative Agreements with Private Non-profit Vocational Rehabilitation Providers.

The designated state unit does not have formal cooperative agreements with our private non-profit providers of vocational rehabilitation services in Montana. Rather, MVR operates on a purchase-of-service basis and we have identified private non-profit rehabilitation providers who meet qualification standards established by the designated state unit and who provide services on a purchase-of-service basis to our clients.

We meet with this provider group regularly to talk about fee structures, services provided, and to discuss outcome measurements and consumer satisfaction for each of these entities. Because these are individualized purchase-of-services, there is no formal cooperative agreement.

The majority of services purchased by MVR from Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) are directly from the vocational rehabilitation counselor utilizing an authorization process. The amount of services purchased depends upon the amount and type of services needed by a consumer. Agencies eligible to receive authorizations must be approved vendors and must be current service providers of the Department or have CARF Accreditation.

MVR is currently in the process of revising the fee structure for our CRP's. Anticipated date of implementation is July 2008. MVR will no longer utilize the audit-based, cost reimbursement system at that time.

4.8(b)(4) - Evidence of Collaboration Regarding Supported Employment Services and Extended Support Services.

In Montana, supported employment is for individuals with the most significant disabilities who require support services (job finding, job placement and job coaching) geared to help the individual secure competitive employment in an integrated employment setting. MVR works closely with state agencies and other organizations with regard to providing supported employment and extended support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Mental Health: MVR has a negotiated cooperative agreement with the Addictive & Mental Disorders Division. The cooperative agreement

provides for: cross-training and technical assistance between our agencies, establishment and evaluation of annual goals for interagency work towards coordinated vocational and support services, and to make available the required supported employment/ extended support / follow-along services from MVR's Community Rehabilitation Programs certified mental health providers.

Developmental Disabilities Program: MVR has had a long and productive relationship with the Developmental Disabilities Program (DDP), and that program continues to sign off for extended support services for persons with significant disabilities. MVR and DDP are located in the same division, and communication between the two programs is excellent. The cooperative agreement provides for: cross-training and technical assistance between our agencies to make available the required supported employment, extended/follow along services from MVR's Community Rehabilitation Programs enrolled DD providers, and for DDP to be responsible for contracting with developmental disability provider organizations to provide adult supported employment work services through funds made available to them from the state general fund and the Medicaid home and community waiver.

State Certified Community Rehabilitation programs: MVR works with a number of community based organizations across the state. Eighteen of these organizations are certified as extended support service provider to assure quality in service delivery for our consumers. MVR has certified programs in the mental health arena as well as the developmental disabilities arena to provide these services at the local level. MVR works with the Community Medical Center WORC Center to provide extended services to persons who suffer from traumatic brain injury.

Extended Support Services: The extended support service program is the state of Montana's funding source that makes long-term support services available to individuals as they work in either a sheltered or community-based employment setting. The extended support service program is administered and managed by Rocky Mountain Rehab, p.c. (RMR) of Billings, Montana through a contract with the Department of Public Health and Human Services, Disability Services Division.

Attachment 4.10

Procedures and Activities Regarding the Establishment and Maintenance of a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

Data System

Comprehensive System for Personnel Development (CSPD) information is contained in the Montana Vocational Rehabilitation (MVR) CSPD database. This database manages information on training offered throughout the year. Information can be sorted by staff person, training event, or CRC number.

Data from the federal RSA-2 shows that the number of person-years for VR staff has decreased over the past five years. This is because of state-imposed vacancy savings. The chart below shows the distribution of personnel (using the RSA-2 definition) over the years:

Montana VR Staffing by Type of Staff (data from RSA2)				
	2003	2004	2005	2006
Administrative	7	6	7	5
Counselor	39	39	37	37
Staff supporting counselor activities	41	41	40	40
Other	0	0	0	0
Total Staff	87	86	84	82

Looking at budgeted personnel, MVR employs 39.5 FTE (43 bodies) counselors, 4 rehabilitation teachers, 4 orientation and mobility instructors, and 5 regional administrators. These are the only staff who require certification or a CSPD plan leading to certification. In FY 2006, MVR served 7,771 Montanans with disabilities, which means that each counselor FTE served 197 consumers. Unfortunately, the population in western Montana continues to grow, while the population in eastern Montana decreases. The 7 counties in the Missoula region (Flathead, Lake, Lincoln, Mineral, Missoula, Ravalli, Sanders) increased 24.5% between the 1990 census and the 2000 census. In addition, census data shows that these counties increased in population another 7.5% (19,964 people) between the 2000 census and July of 2005.

Although the population in other parts of the state is steady or declining, there is not a “pocket” where the decline is large enough to take away a counselor. Montana has such large travel distances for counselors to meet with consumers that this is not possible. During the 2007 Legislature, Montana VR received an additional counselor position to work specifically with transition age youth in western Montana. This position is a “hybrid”

which will spend approximately half time with counseling duties and half time with program officer duties. We expect that the new counselor will relieve some of the large caseloads in Missoula, but the area is still growing, and the caseloads will continue to increase.

When all the positions are filled, MVR has enough staff to provide vocational rehabilitation services to the state.

In the next 5 years, Montana VR will continue to investigate the feasibility of increased counselor staffing to meet the transitions needs of Montana's youth with disabilities. MVR would like to see a transitions counselor in each of its four regional offices. In addition, in the next five years, Missoula will need another counselor. Of course, population growth and client demographics will be closely monitored. If our counseling staff increases, it would be likely that additional support staff would also be necessary. Also in the next 5 years, Montana VR will experience significant turnover in upper management positions, including the state director, chief of field services, and at least one regional administrator. Montana VR has been anticipating this turnover and is addressing it through the Futures program, which is discussed elsewhere in this plan. This will create a need for hiring more counselors as employees are promoted through the system. In addition, normal staff turnover means that new staff will need to be hired each year.

(1) Recruitment and Retention

MVR continues to review, on a yearly basis, the reported training needs of its entire staff. This is part of our overall maintenance of the Comprehensive System for Personnel Development. Of particular concern to MVR is the implementation of a system of personnel development that will ensure an adequate supply of qualified rehabilitation personnel for the designated state unit. Montana's Vocational Rehabilitation Council has had an opportunity to review and make comments on the development of the plans and policies regarding qualified personnel.

Currently Montana has identified 97.3%, or 36 of the 37 professional counseling and supervisory staff as Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CRC), qualified to sit for the CRC, or under a CSPD Plan. The agency

director is a CRC. At this time there are eight counselors pursuing the requirements necessary to qualify to sit for the CRC examination.

Montana's personnel policy has been rewritten so applicants who have achieved the CRC status receive a higher priority for hiring than those without it. In addition, Montana vigorously recruits for master's level degrees in rehabilitation counseling when there are vacancies. MVR has a good working relationship with the Rehabilitation Counseling Graduate Programs at Montana State University – Billings and Utah State University. Both of these institutions have sought input from MVR related to curriculum development and how best to prepare students to work in the public VR program. MVR has successfully recruited and hired graduates of these two programs, who were well prepared to sit for the CRC examination.

MVR also tracks the current enrollment of MVR staff in the following educational programs: Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling through the Distance Education Program at Utah State University (USU) in Logan, Utah (four staff), and the Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling Program at Montana State University (MSU) in Billings, Montana (one staff). Three additional staff are researching these two programs to determine which they will attend. USU graduates 25 to 30 individuals per year in their vocational rehabilitation masters program, and MSU-Billings graduates 10 to 12 individuals per year in their rehabilitation counseling program.

Turnover of rehabilitation counselors in Montana has been manageable. The agency continues to have qualified professionals applying for rehabilitation counselor positions – especially in our larger cities. MVR will continue to recruit the highest quality staff available. MVR projects turnover will remain constant, with some difficulty recruiting master's level rehabilitation counselors in some regions of the state. Individuals coming to MVR without a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling will be hired on the condition that they will develop a CSPD Plan to meet the standard.

Through the extensive efforts of the Blind and Low Vision Services staff and the personnel staff within the department, MVR has been able to attract candidates from across the country for Rehabilitation Teachers and Orientation and Mobility Specialists.

Montana has no state university training for either Rehabilitation Teaching or Orientation and Mobility, and therefore, attracting highly qualified professionals in these areas will continue to be a problem for MVR. In an effort to address this dilemma, training positions have been developed.

MVR maintains contact with Montana State University-Billings to update them on the MVR Program. The agency gathers information on degree requirements, and work with rehabilitation counseling instructors to ensure that university requirements are compatible with those needed to qualify counselors to effectively and efficiently serve people with significant disabilities who are eligible for vocational rehabilitation services. MVR works with Montana colleges to recruit individuals from minority backgrounds and persons with significant disabilities. MVR takes affirmative action to employ and advance in employment, qualified individuals with significant disabilities.

In Montana, Native Americans make up the largest minority population. Montana has six Native American Section 121 Projects housed on reservations and employing Native Americans as rehabilitation counselors. However, with the new CSPD standard requiring education at the graduate level, the general MVR program has difficulty recruiting qualified Native Americans for employment within the agency. The one tribal college program, providing a Bachelor's Degree in Rehabilitation, has been discontinued and MVR lost that program as a resource for potential employees.

By developing a plan to assure adequate numbers of CRC counselors and by providing leadership training at all levels, MVR is working to develop future leaders who will be ready to take over key positions as they are vacated. Towards this effort, MVR has formed a leadership council that will work directly with current MVR management staff in the design and implementation of the process and format for case services to consumers. Staff participating on this leadership council, referred to as the MVR Futures Group, will provide the skills necessary to take MVR into the future.

MVR Futures is composed of current staff who have been successfully employed by the agency for a minimum of two years, have completed specific prerequisite training in supervision and/or management and who are or have been, enrolled in approved leadership training.

Participation in the MVR Futures Group involves a competitive application process and involves a three-year term for staff members and two-year term for the regional administrator. Successful completion of a three-year term in the MVR Futures Group has a proposed equivalency of two years of management experience within MVR. Allowing staff to participate in real-life problem solving and real-life improvements to our current service delivery system serves the agency well and provides a mechanism for honing the skills of future leaders within the agency.

MVR also works closely with two Regional Rehabilitation Continuing Education programs to provide in-service training to our staff. Presently, staff members are taking advantage of regularly offered videoconference training on a variety of pertinent topics.

Personnel Standards

MVR has a system for ensuring the yearly evaluation (annual review of each counselor's CSPD status to arrive at the percentage of "qualified" staff) and performance of each staff member. The performance evaluation of rehabilitation counselors and other professionals is paramount to our efforts to ensure quality services to Montanans with disabilities. Our evaluations are tied to specific performance activities leading to those quality services.

The standard for counseling staff in Montana is to qualify to sit for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor examination or to have qualified to sit in the past, with the completion of additional coursework---and then to complete such coursework. Initially, MVR had targeted 2007 as the year in which we would meet our CSPD goal of having all counselors meet the standard of qualifying to sit for the CRCC examination. Unfortunately, as more experienced employees retire there is not a ready pool of qualified professionals to hire into those vacated positions. In "difficult to recruit for positions" MVR will hire individuals with a Bachelor's Degree in a related field (at the minimum) and develop a CSPD plan to ensure that the employee moves toward qualifying to sit for the CRC examination. It typically takes an individual hired with a Bachelor's Degree three years to meet the standard. Blind and Low Vision Services instructional staff must be eligible to hold the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals Certification.

Montana has identified eight rehabilitation counselors who need graduate level training to qualify to sit for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor examination. Currently, five are enrolled in the programs mentioned above and three are preparing to enter the above-mentioned graduate programs within twelve months. MVR anticipates that the distance education graduate programs will take the average rehabilitation counselor approximately two to three years to complete. Without the distance-learning component, MVR would be unable to set this plan in motion, as this allows for the counselor to complete their graduate education while remaining on the job. Through continued use of the distance education programs, MVR anticipates maintaining/increasing the numbers of Certified Rehabilitation Counselors over the next several years. MVR counselors have completed a graduate program in Rehabilitation Counseling at an average rate of 3 per year. This has been the trend for at least the last seven years.

CSPD requirements dictate master's level coursework. CSPD funds are also written into the current in-service training grant; however, Rehabilitation Services Administration scholarships are utilized whenever available to the graduate student. MVR's comprehensive efforts to meet the training needs of staff provide significant benefit in terms of recruitment of new staff and retention of existing staff.

One counselor will be eligible for retirement and two have experienced a decrease in duties within the current year.

(3) Communication with Diverse Populations

MVR requires that rehabilitation counselors who are hired to work with deaf and hard of hearing consumers have fluent sign language skills. Sign language interpreters for the deaf or hard of hearing are also provided when necessary. Other accommodations, such as documentation in alternative formats, are routinely made by MVR. MVR policy is to consult with the consumer to determine the most appropriate mode of communication.

Montana has a relay system for telephone communication with consumers who are deaf or hard of hearing and offices are equipped with TTYs. Three offices (with the highest numbers of deaf/hard of hearing clients) have video phones for enhanced communication. The Montana Telecommunications Access Program is housed in the Department and lends tremendous technical support to MVR working with sensory impaired consumers. The agency has

also developed a full time Assistive Technology Specialist position. The Deaf Center is operational and provides interpreter referrals and other services to persons who are deaf or hard of hearing. MVR purchases interpreter services from the Deaf Center.

(4) Staff Development

MVR does complete training needs assessment on all employees each year. MVR identifies, through this process, major themes for training large groups as well as individualized training topics identified by staff and their supervisors. This assessment provides for a comprehensive set of training topics that remain fluid as emerging priorities are developed either at the national level or within the state. It is also used to provide information for conference planning purposes to associations such as the Montana Association for Rehabilitation and the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired. The MVR Human Resource Development Specialist has responsibility for in-service training, the preparation of Montana's in-service grant, and for overall coordination of the agency's Comprehensive System for Personnel Development. MVR also completes CSPD assessments on all counselors in a plan to meet the standard. Each year, staff who do not meet the standard are counseled and their annual course of action is determined and documented. Of course, the purpose of this annual review is to continue to move counselors toward meeting the standard. Once counselors meet the standard by qualifying to sit for the CRC examination they receive a 3% pay raise, with an additional 3% upon successful completion of the CRC exam.

MVR places a heavy emphasis on leadership at all levels and continuous improvement of staff skills at all levels. Leadership and succession planning training are available to all staff in one form or another. MVR currently utilizes the Emerging Leaders Series through the Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation at Western Washington University and the department leadership program for staff development. Building on the formalized leadership/management training available to staff through the aforementioned programs, MVR helps future leaders hone their skills through participation in the MVR Futures Group. Additionally, there is emphasis on training in the areas of rehabilitation technology, informed choice, cultural diversity, current rehabilitation trends and disability information, and the Rehabilitation Act with its amendments. Training on topics such as rehabilitation technology, assessment, vocational counseling,

and job placement is held at annual meetings such as All Staff, Bi-District, and Montana Association for Rehabilitation conference in addition to on-line seminars (for example through RRCEP). Often a representative of the agency is sent to out-of- state training to bring back and disseminate significant knowledge from research and other sources.

(5) Coordination of the CSPD and IDEA

The MVR Comprehensive System of Personnel Development coordinates with the requirements of the CSPD under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in that both necessitate the following.

1. A description of the procedures and activities that the State of Montana will take to ensure an adequate supply of qualified personnel.
2. A system for determining, on an annual basis:
 - the number and type of personnel needed,
 - which institutions of higher education in the state are preparing vocational rehabilitation personnel, the number of students enrolled in the programs, the number who graduate with credentials to qualify for employment with the agency, and
 - when to recruit, prepare, and retain qualified personnel, including personnel from minority backgrounds, and personnel with significant disabilities.
3. In-service training of all personnel:
 - detailed in-service training procedures to ensure that all personnel have access to training resources to enhance their professional skills, ultimately improving service delivery to consumers.

The new transition counselor will explore ways of coordinating training between MVR, OPI, and the schools. Across the state, there are a number of transition fairs that are held annually at the high schools. MVR presents at the transition fairs, and provides information regarding MVR services and how to access those services.

Attachment 4.11

Assessments; Estimates; Goals and Priorities; Strategies; and Progress Reports

- (a) Results of Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities and Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs
- (b) Annual Estimates of Individual's to be Served and Costs of Services
- (c)(1) State's Goals and Priorities
- (c)(4) Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds
- (d) State's Strategies and Use of Title 1 Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities:
 - 1) To Address Needs Identified in the Comprehensive Assessment and to Achieve Identified Goals and Priorities;
 - 2) To Carryout Outreach to Identify and Serve Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities who are Minorities; and
 - 3) To Overcome Identified Barriers Relating to Equitable Access to and Participation of Individuals with Disabilities in the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program.
- (e)(2) Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals Priorities and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities.

ATTACHMENT 4.11(a)

Results of Comprehensive Needs Assessment and Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs

The Rehabilitation Act, as amended in 1998, requires each state to conduct a Needs Assessment every three years. Our current three year Needs Assessment, is a statewide assessment, jointly conducted by Montana Vocational Rehabilitation (MVR) and the State Rehabilitation Council (Council). This assessment examines the need to establish develop or improve community rehabilitation programs, and the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities, particularly the vocational rehabilitation needs of:

1. individuals with the most significant disabilities including their needs for supported employment services;
2. individuals who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have not been served or are underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program;
3. individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system;

Three types of input were analyzed:

1. Direct inputs such as the consumer satisfaction survey, MVR counselor survey, focus forums (small regional groups of consumers), and the public hearing
2. Other indicators such as the Client Assistance Program report of needs, MVR Council input, program evaluation tools (standards and indicators, federal annual report, demographic trends), and our current strategic plan summary
3. Priorities from other programs such as the federal priorities, federal draft strategic plan, Developmental Disabilities “Planning Across Montana” priorities, and legislative priorities.

Method

The assessment took place between May 16, 2006 and May 31, 2007.

As indicated above, the assessment sought information from a number of sources. MVR consumer focus forums were conducted in Billings, Butte, Great Falls, Helena, and Miles City. In total, 38 people attended the focus forums. A mail survey was sent to 1,487 MVR consumers. The survey yielded a 22 percent response rate. The Public Hearing was held statewide on March 28, 2007, with Met Net sites in Billings, Bozeman, Butte, Great Falls, Helena, Kalispell, Miles City and Missoula. 64 individuals attended the hearing and 12 written comments were received. MVR counselors were surveyed in May 2007 to gather input on their perceived needs of the consumers that they serve. 37 surveys were completed. Six 121 Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Projects were surveyed, and MVR received responses from three of the Project Directors.

MVR and the Council met on October 12, 2006 to look at long range needs, and to begin development of the State Plan. MVR management staff, Council representatives, the Statewide Independent Living Council chair, and the Client Assistance Program representative met again in May 2007 to discuss the results of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment, and to make recommendations regarding FY 2008 goals and priorities.

Needs of individuals with disabilities who have the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services.

“Individual with a most significant disability” means an individual with a disability who meets the criteria for having a significant disability and *in addition* has serious limitations in two or more functional capacities (such as, but not limited to, mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of employment outcome.

Findings of the comprehensive statewide needs assessment for individuals with the most significant disabilities include:

- Assistance with Social Security work incentives and protection of current SSI/SSDI benefits

- The need to increase earnings
- Better transportation services
- Contact with mental health centers and promotion of supported employment services
- Expansion of services in rural areas
- The need to reduce the extended support services waiting list for supported employment.
- Improve quality of jobs and increase opportunities for state and federal positions
- Assistance at the high school level with independent living and social skills
- More job training program vs. working with job coaches

Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved

According to census data (Table 3: Annual Estimates of the Population by Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Origin for Montana: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2006---SC-EST2006-03-30---release date May 1, 2007), 90.8% of Montana’s population is white and 7.5% is Native American or a combination of Native American and another race. Other minorities make up the remaining 1.7% of the population. Montana has six Section 121 Native American VR projects, covering six of its seven Reservations. Although most Native Americans on or near the Reservation prefer to be served by their Section 121, some are served by MVR or by both MVR and the Section 121. Last year, MVR served 1058 minority consumers (13.6% of the caseload), of which 585 were Native American and 374 were of two or more races.

Montana’s population grew 4.7% between April 2000 and July 2006. Large growths, percentage-wise, occurred in African Americans (45.5%), Asian (18.6%), and “two or more races” (14.7%). However, number-wise, these increases accounted for less than 3,500 people out of a total increase of 42,000 people.

Native Americans

Over 60% of Montana’s Native Americans live on Reservations. Many more live just outside the Reservation. However, Montana does have a number of Urban Indian Centers (Billings, Butte, Helena, Missoula, Great

Falls), and during FY 2008, MVR will determine if Montana's Native Americans are unserved or underserved (see Attachment 4.11(d) goal # 1 C).

All six Native American 121 Programs were asked for input on what they perceive the needs are on their respective Reservations. In addition, the Council's Native American committee provides feedback throughout the year. Issues identified are:

- Creation of service programs for transition age youth into academic training or employment opportunities, or any other service
- Better collaboration between the area MVR offices and the 121 Programs
- Have an individual trained well enough in Social Security Administration policies to help Indians on Reservations apply for SSI and/or SSDI, and to assist with Social Security Work Incentives
- Establish a consultation policy which will secure the Tribe's input

Persons with Mental Disabilities including Severe and Persistent Mental Illness

Over the past 20 years, the disability makeup of Montana's caseload has significantly changed. In 1986, 69% of the consumers had physical disabilities, 19% had mental disabilities, and 12% had sensory disabilities. In 2006, 43% of the consumers had physical disabilities, 48% had mental disabilities, and 9% had sensory disabilities. The number of cases with mental disabilities has significantly increased, especially in areas like severe and persistent mental illness, learning disabilities and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. One of MVR's goals is to determine the groups that are served or underserved (see Attachment 4.11(c) (1) goal # 1).

Findings of the comprehensive statewide needs assessment for individuals with mental disabilities including severe and persistent mental illness include:

- The need for more Mental Health Centers to provide job placement and supported employment services
- The need for information on how work will impact SSI/SSDI benefits
- More information regarding Social Security Work Incentives
- Improved transportation options
- More vigorous outreach to the state hospital and mental health centers

- Better communication between MVR and the Addictive and Mental Disorders Division
- Lack of availability of community supports
- The need for ongoing support (e.g., long term job coaching)

Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system.

IN FY 2007, MVR identified the following goal and priority: “Participate in workforce investment activities to promote integration of services in order to optimize client service in an efficient manner.” Please refer to 4.11(e) (2) page five for MVR’s response.

Management staff, VR Council representatives, the Statewide Independent Living Council chair, and the Client Assistance Program representative met in May 2007 to discuss these inputs. The group then determined the highest priority needs which are listed below in order of importance:

Transitions

MVR needs to offer more and better services to students transitioning from school.

- Lack of soft skills, work experience when students graduate
- Clear benefit strategy
- Kids with physical disabilities are being missed
- Urban and rural
- From school to work
- Reservations and rural
- Job experience and opportunities
- Need for students to receive information about VR services in a timely way

Education and awareness of VR services

MVR needs to publicize its services so that everyone who needs services is aware of what is available.

- Consumers
- Public
- Sensitivity to mental illness issues

- Within the agency
- Other agencies
- Reservations
- Employers

Transportation

People with disabilities need transportation services.

- Including on Reservations

Loss of medical benefits for consumers going to work

Many people with disabilities cannot work because they will lose insurance coverage (Medicaid).

- Does Medicaid Buy-In money exist?
- Complexity of Medicaid
- More visibility for benefit planners and how to access them

Qualified and trained staff

MVR needs qualified and trained staff to provide the best services to consumers.

- Ongoing
- Good wages
- Knowledge of career opportunities
- Skill to communicate with employers
- Skill to communicate with consumers in conflict with VR policy
- Recruitment
- Knowledge based
- Too few counselors
- Too high caseloads
- Too low compensation
- Too high turnover

The results from the state wide needs assessment have been analyzed and goals and priorities are addressed in attachment 4.11(c) (1).

Assessment of need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state.

MVR continually assesses the need to establish, develop and improve Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) utilizing all of the methods described throughout attachment 4.11 (a). Among the need areas being addressed at this time include:

- 1) Expansion of services to rural and remote areas by the continued certification of private providers who meet MVR qualification levels for job placement and job coaching services
- 2) Expansion of Mental Health providers as CRP's to serve those with severe and persistent mental illness

Attachment 4.11 (b)

Annual Estimates of Individuals to be Served and the Cost of Services

During Federal Fiscal Year 2008, Montana Vocational Rehabilitation (MVR) estimates the following number of individuals will be served and the estimated cost of services:

- Estimated number of consumers with disabilities in Montana between the ages of 16 to 64 is 85,337 (2000 census).
- Title I Vocational Rehabilitation – It is estimated that a total of 8,000 consumers will be served at a case cost of around \$9.1 million (including Social Security). 900 consumers will be employed.
- Title VI-B funds – It is estimated that a total of 179 consumers will receive supported employment services at a case cost of around \$450,000. It is estimated that there will be 74 supported employment consumers employed.

Attachment 4.11 (c)(1)

State's Goals and Priorities

Montana Vocational Rehabilitation's (MVR) mission is **“Promoting work and independence for Montanans with disabilities”**. To accomplish this mission, MVR and the Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Council (Council) have developed the goals and priorities, which are listed below. These goals are not in any order of priority.

As stated in 4.11(a), MVR and the Council met on October 12, 2006 to look at long range needs, and to begin development of the State Plan. MVR management staff, Council representatives, the Statewide Independent Living Council chair, and the Client Assistance Program representative met again in May 2007 to discuss the results of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment, and to make recommendations regarding FY 2008 goals and priorities.

- 1. Successfully assist eligible consumers with disabilities to achieve their employment goals.**
- 2. Assure consistent, high quality transition services are made available statewide.**
- 3. Build awareness and understanding of VR services.**
- 4. Develop opportunities for better jobs and on-the-job supports for people who are working.**
- 5. Enhance VR services specifically for people with mental illness, brain injuries, and learning disorders.**
- 6. Collaborate with other appropriate agencies and 121s to enhance outcomes for consumers.**
- 7. Continue attention to in-service training and meeting CSPD qualifications.**
- 8. Expand our staff recruitment effort.**

Attachment 4.11 (c)(4)

Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI Part B Funds

Supported employment services are provided on a statewide basis through the Title VI, Part B funds. Supported employment is competitive employment or employment in integrated work settings in which individuals are working toward competitive work, with ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred or for whom competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability. Supported employment includes transitional employment for individuals with the most severe disabilities due to mental illness. Fund allocation on a statewide basis ensures an equitable statewide service delivery.

The goal of the state's supported employment program is to maintain a system whereby individuals with the most significant disabilities are afforded the opportunity to participate in integrated competitive employment.

Title VI, Part B funds will be distributed through four MVR regional budgets. Rehabilitation counselors at the local level will authorize Supported Employment services as needed from the Community Rehabilitation Programs statewide. MVR estimates that approximately \$450,000.00 will be expended on Supported Employment services in FFY 2008. Funding sources include: \$300,000 in Title VI, Part B funds, supplemented with approximately \$150,000 in Title 1 (Section 110) funds. It is estimated that a total of 179 consumers will receive supported employment services at a case cost of around \$450,000. It is estimated that there will be 74 supported employment consumers employed.

Supported employment services are available statewide, with 38 CRPs who provide services.

There has been a steady growth in the numbers of individuals with serious and persistent mental illnesses being served in supported employment.

Strategies:

- Inventory methods of supporting consumers on the job following supported employment outcomes
- Expand resources for extended support services by asking the Legislature for more funding
- Expand the number of mental health providers as CRPs to serve those with severe and persistent mental illness. There are currently six mental health providers that provide supported employment services.

Attachment 4.11 (d)

State's Strategies and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion:

The Deaf Center and Transportation activities are functioning on their own income capabilities, or using other grant dollars. Innovation and Expansion dollars were provided to these programs on time-limited bases, which was enough to help them get started and move to their own independence. Title I funds are still used for the Statewide Independent Living Council and Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Council members to attend their respective four Council meetings during the year. Once funded by innovation and expansion funds, the Business Enterprise Program now receives some Title 1 funds to assist with meeting operational costs.

Strategies for responding to the need to expand CRP services and providers include:

- 1) Formation of the CRP Liaison group – this group meets quarterly via conference call to discuss CRP issues. The group is composed of MVR regional administrators, the MVR CRP state liaison, and MVR CRP regional liaisons. In the past year, the group has worked on streamlining services state-wide. The MVR CRP liaisons meet with the CRP's in their region at least quarterly to review the CRP Data Report, provide training if needed, and to keep abreast of possible issues that may be “percolating” in their region.
- 2) Formation of the CRP Rates Committee – this group is composed of MVR regional administrators, MVR CRP regional liaisons, MVR CRP state liaison, MVR Futures representative and two CRP's. MVR is in the process of revising the entire rate structure for employment services.

(1) Address Needs Identified in the Comprehensive Assessment and to Achieve Identified Goals and Priorities

In May 2007 MVR management staff met with representatives of the MVR Council to discuss comprehensive needs and priorities for the upcoming year. The group looks at formal input from public hearings, focus forums, MVR staff, consumer satisfaction survey, Client Assistance Program, VR Council, state and national sources (CSAVR, RSA policy changes, Legislative activities, umbrella agency activities), and other surveys. Information from this meeting is used to plan for the next year and for the legislature.

MVR and the Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Council (Council) have developed the goals and priorities, which are listed below. These goals are not in any order of priority

1. Successfully assist eligible consumers with disabilities to achieve their employment goals.

Strategies:

- A. Continue to meet the standards and indicators, our federal report card.
- B. Continue achieving high consumer satisfaction feedback by meeting or exceeding 85% on consumer survey question #10 “In an overall general sense, how satisfied are you with the services you received?”
- C. Refine our methods to identify unserved and underserved populations and how to serve them. Evaluate methods over the next three years on developing ways to measure unserved and underserved.
- D. Make available a list of qualified Social Security benefits planners.
- E. Offer referral to benefit planners (CWICs) at intake to new SSI and SSDI clients.
- F. Increase the percentage of rehabilitated consumers who have health insurance at closure. The 2006 percentage of rehabs with health insurance through their employment was 26.1%.

The 2006 percentage of rehabs with any kind of health insurance (including Medicaid and Medicare) was 69.5%.

- G. Have CRP liaisons find out from placement specialists what the need, availability and use of soft skills training is in their region. Also have the workforce liaisons investigate this.
- H. Train consumers in transportation options by asking the independent living centers to present travel training at each regional office every two years.
- I. Provide more access regarding new and emerging technologies by providing training at statewide events such as the annual All Staff meeting. Sources of training could be PLUK and the Rural Institute.

2. Assure consistent, high quality transition services are made available statewide

Strategies:

- A. Continue identifying and communicating with students with disabilities in schools.
- B. Continue updating and maintaining VR liaisons with schools and the school contact list for transitions.
- C. Continue relationships with OPI, PLUK, and MYLF.
- D. Continue to explore video conferencing for transition services.
- E. Determine how many high school students we are serving, not serving, and who and where they are.
- F. Develop a public relation (PR) plan to reach students with disabilities, parents, school staff, and community agencies on transition services.
- G. Invite a school representative to discuss transitions in each region.
- H. Explore transition programs in other states.
- I. Hire a transition counselor/program officer to directly serve consumers and to develop transition practices. Determine if transition referrals increase.
- J. Create a strategy for improved access in schools.
- K. Develop urban and rural models of transition services.
- L. Serve 20 high school students through MYLF.

M. Coordinate annually with disability services offices at university level (regional level).

3. Build awareness and understanding of VR services

Strategies:

- A. Educate legislators, consumers, and the general public on VR services by sending out quarterly updates through the Friends of Rehab email list.
- B. Explore the potential of TV/radio ads, maybe collaborating with MTAP.
- C. Invite at least one business in each region to do a presentation at a staff meeting.
- D. Expand career fair activity in more communities (as an employer and consumer resource).

4. Develop opportunities for better jobs and on-the-job supports for people who are working.

Strategies:

- A. Inventory methods of supporting consumers on the job following supported employment closures
- B. Expand resources for extended support services by asking the Legislature for more funding.
- C. Study and explore post-BA eligibility and educational opportunities.
- D. Invite the National Business Network to present at the 2008 All Staff meeting.

5. Enhance VR services specifically for people with mental illness, brain injuries, and learning disorders

Strategies:

- A. Require each region have a focus group on mental health issues.
- B. Get baseline information on how we serve consumers with mental illness, brain injuries and learning disorders: #26s;

wage at closure; service rate, geographic areas. Develop a strategy to address areas of weakness.

- C. Encourage one counselor from each region to attend the NAMI conference each year to help develop “pockets of expertise” within the VR staff.
- D. Focus one state training event (All Staff or MAR) in 2008 on mental health issues. Find models and bring in representatives from successful programs.

6. Collaborate with other appropriate agencies and 121s to enhance outcomes for consumers.

- A. Write a letter to the DPHHS director stating how our needs assessment again identified transportation as one of the highest needs our consumers mentioned.
- B. Stay informed with what is going on in independent living and Montana Transportation Partnerships regarding transportation.
- C. Work with 121 projects to determine needs and alignment with VR. Contact the 121s and ask for input regarding the needs on their respective Reservations.
- D. Maintain joint training with 121 projects. Continue to notify the 121 projects about training opportunities such as All Staff, MAR conference, CTAT training opportunities, etc. Send the 121 projects any updated information on the MVR counselor manual.
- E. Continue good relationships with all the 121s. Visit each Reservation with a 121 project when invited.
- F. Provide technical assistance to the 121s when requested.
- G. Continue participation on federal benefits workshops on Reservations. Attend at least two federal benefits workshops per year on Reservations.
- H. Inform disability groups about progress being made on Medicaid Infrastructure Grant.
- I. Support inclusion of Medicaid Buy-In in the EPP process.
- J. Develop or improve the Community Rehab Program (CRP). Convene the CRP liaison group via telephone conference call four times per year to discuss CRP issues and possible

solutions. Contact the CRPs regarding what their needs for improvement are in FY 2008.

- K. Identify and encourage additional CRP participation. The MVR/CRP rates committee will have at least two CRP representatives that serve on the committee. MVR will contact at least two mental health facilities in FY 2008 regarding their interest in becoming a provider for MVR.
- L. Participate in employer associations such as Workforce Centers, Community Management Teams, and One-Stops.
- M. Establish a liaison with Department of Corrections and become familiar with their programs related to disability.
- N. Continue inter-agency cooperation with OPI and other agencies.
- O. Meet with Job Service to understand their new role.
- P. Continue participation in local Mental Health advisory councils.
- Q. Invite other agencies (such as Job Service, Mental Health, DD, OPI) to present at VR Council meeting.
- R. Strengthen networking between VR and other agencies. In 2008, work with Mental Health and Job Service. In 2009, work with Veterans Administration and Brain Injury.
- S. Arrange for workforce presentations describing living wage and benefits (what's hot and what's not) once a year in each region.

7. Continue attention to in-service training and meeting CSPD qualifications.

- A. Continue to provide in-service training to staff so they continue to be qualified.
- B. Continue to require professional development plans for counselors.
- C. Continue in-service on new counselor training and training to remain current on disability trends.
- D. Develop specific training on VR public law and policy for counselors.
- E. Provide conflict and mediation training for MVR staff including mediation techniques when a counselor has to say no. Provide training on how to deal with consumers who are in crisis.

- F. Provide staff with information on employment trends (demographics, labor market, interagency linkages and changes).
- G. Continue good succession planning program and prepare for upcoming retirements of senior management.
- H. Continue cultural awareness activities including having a VR Council meeting on a Reservation, sending a counselor to CANAR. Look at the needs of urban Native Americans who do not live on a reservation.
- I. Explore video conferencing for training.
- J. Develop a forum for sharing best practices among the counselors such as setting up a column in the newsletter.

8 Expand our staff recruitment effort

- A. Analyze and determine optimal staffing needs considering job placement, transitions, travel, and number of cases.
- B. Enhance recruitment through internship project through Futures, participating in career fairs, making contacts with universities regarding employment opportunities, and identifying potential MVR consumers who are working towards a career in vocational rehabilitation. Provide information on VR/BLVS as a career to high school students.
- C. Recruit and hire a Deaf Coordinator in Great Falls.

(2) Outreach Activities to Identify and Serve Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities who are Minorities

Native Americans represent the only significant minority group in Montana (7.5%). Montana has seven Reservations and thirteen tribes within autonomous governing bodies. The Little Shell Chippewa Tribe was recently granted Montana recognition and is expected to get federal recognition within the near future. MVR has counselors who serve consumers on each Reservation. These counselors coordinate with tribal agency staff to identify potential referrals and resources.

Native Americans with disabilities living on reservations face unique challenges. First, they are eligible for a combination of tribal, federal, and state programs to meet their vocational and health needs. This requires extensive coordination and cooperation between agencies. Secondly, they are faced with significant cultural and economic barriers. Unemployment on these reservations varies from 27% to 76% (Bureau of Indian Affairs, US Department of the Interior). Today there are very few private or self-employment opportunities on Reservations: most employment comes through tribal and federal programs.

Montana is fortunate to have six Section 121 Vocational Rehabilitation Projects (Confederated Salish & Kootenai, Blackfeet, Chippewa Cree, Fort Peck, Fort Belknap, and Northern Cheyenne). This gives improved access to vocational rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities being served by the Section 121 Projects. MVR counselors assigned to these six reservations coordinate with each project staff as needed. In addition, the MVR program manager visits each 121 Project annually and provides technical assistance when requested.

Native American consumers living on reservations have a choice of either being served by the Section 121 Projects, state MVR, or in some cases, jointly by both parties.

Section 121 Projects have a better grasp of the cultural and service delivery barriers that exist on reservations and can help support MVR counselors as needed. In some cases, MVR has access to specialized programs, or services, which are not always found on reservations. MVR's efforts are to network, coordinate, offer technical assistance, and provide training opportunities for Project staff, to ensure consumers with disabilities have access to the full range of vocational rehabilitation services. Six cooperative agreements have been written and are monitored on an annual basis.

The Confederated Salish/Kootenai Tribes 121 Program has been approved as an Employment Network under the Ticket to Work Program.

In order to ensure that MVR is meeting the needs of Native Americans that do not live on or near the reservation, in the past year MVR staff has met with:

- Great Falls Indian Family Health Center
- Helena Indian Health Services

- Butte North American Indian Alliance
- Butte North American Indian Alliance Youth Program

MVR provided program and referral information, literature regarding MVR and MVR transitions, and discussed transition services for youth. In Great Falls, a counselor has been assigned as a liaison to the Indian Family Health Center to ensure that those eligible for MVR services receive the appropriate information, and are referred in a timely manner.

MVR will contact the Urban Indian Centers in Billings and Missoula in the coming year to provide information regarding MVR services, and to initiate a relationship with the programs.

The Native American sub-committee within the Vocational Rehabilitation Council has been very active, and has always had a great interest in the Section 121 Projects. This committee has been encouraging the last Reservation (Crow) to apply for a Section 121 grant. The sub-committee has encouraged the attendance of all Section 121 Project staff at Council meetings. At least once a year the Council asks one of the Section Project directors or coordinators to give a presentation to the Council on their Project's activity and accomplishments.

(3) Overcoming Barriers to Equitable Access to and Participation in Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Programs

MVR is very proactive in identifying and overcoming barriers to consumers to access and participate in the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment experience. All the MVR district and field offices are in accessible locations. All district and field offices have toll-free voice and TTY capabilities and advertise this information to consumers, stakeholders, and other agencies through written public relations sources. All public hearings, focus forums, and other meetings are held in locations that are accessible, and any other accommodations are made available as needed. All consumers are informed that alternate formats (Braille, diskette, large print, and auxiliary aides) are available upon request.

MVR makes special effort to provide interpreters for deaf and hard of hearing, or who speak foreign or native languages. Referrals may also be made to the Montana Telecommunications Access Program for telecommunication equipment needs and services. MVR's web page (www.dphhs.mt.gov) is a valuable tool for consumers to access all types of disability information. MVR staff works with all partners in the One-Stop Centers and other agencies to assure consumers get the services they need to become employed.

The University of Montana Rural Institute (Rural Institute) has served as the implementing agency for MonTECH, Montana's federally funded assistive technology project since 1991. MonTECH's primary purpose has been to assist individuals with disabilities to maintain or increase their level of functioning and independence in all environments through the access to and use of assistive technology devices and services to consumers throughout the state.

Strategies:

- Invite the MonTECH Project Director to showcase assistive technology devices at the 2008 MVR all-staff meeting.
- Develop a training curriculum for new rehabilitation counselors regarding the services that MonTECH provides.
- Look at the viability of providing webcams in each regional office so that counselors and their consumers can link with MonTECH to view assistive technology devices.
- Provide loaner assistive technology devices for the visually impaired in three regional offices so that consumers can test the equipment to determine what best will meet their needs.

Attachment 4.11 (e)(2)

Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Goals and Priorities and use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

Title 1 funds being used at this time are to support the Statewide Independent Living Council and the Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Council, which meet four times during the year to conduct business. Expenditures included travel, stipends, supplies, meeting room rental interpreters, facilitation services and costs related to consumer satisfaction.

Assessment of Montana Vocational Rehabilitation in meeting the Performance Standards and Indicators

Montana Vocational Rehabilitation (MVR) has always been very mindful of the federal standards and indicators and has monitored the development of its performance. Utilizing fiscal year 2006 data, MVR and the Council have assessed the agency's performance in meeting the minimum requirements for standards 1 and 2. The following chart displays the outcome of this assessment.

Standard/Indicator	Minimum Requirement	MVR Outcome	Indicators Met
Standard 1: Employment Outcomes	4 of 6 Indicators and 2 of the 3 Primary Ind.	All Indicators were met	Yes
Indicator 1.1	900	909	Yes
Indicator 1.2	55.8%	57.5%	Yes
Indicator 1.3	72.6%	97.5%	Yes
Indicator 1.4	62.4%	81.7%	Yes
Indicator 1.5	.52	.75	Yes
Indicator 1.6	53%	55.2%	Yes
Standard 2 Minority	The Indicator must be met	The Indicator was met	Yes
Indicator 2.1	.80	.87	Yes

MVR has incorporated the standards and indicators into performance appraisals for staff. MVR and the Council will continue to monitor the performance outcomes throughout the year and work to consult with MVR

Regional Administrators to assure compliance in meeting the required indicators. MVR tracks the indicators on a quarterly basis so adjustments can be made in areas that may need some attention.

Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Goals and Priorities

Actions taken in support of MVR's Goals and Priorities identified in the previous State Plan:

Goals:

1. Rehabilitate 900 Montanans with disabilities.

In fiscal year 2006, MVR served 7,771 consumers, and rehabilitated 909 into employment.

2. Serve 450 consumers in the Older Blind Program, 1,500 in Independent Living, and 95 in Visual Services Medical Program.

In FY 2006 a total of 495 consumers in the Older Blind Program, 1403 in Independent Living, and 110 in Visual Services Medical Program were served.

3. Meet or exceed the standards and indicators established by RSA.

MVR has met all of the Federal Indicators in FY06.

4. Complete a comprehensive statewide needs assessment.

Montana Vocational Rehabilitation, working along side the Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Council (Council), reviews policies and procedures as appropriate to maintain and improve services to consumers. Information received from public hearing, focus forums, satisfaction surveys, staff surveys, and agency partners are used by MVR and the Council to evaluate program effectiveness, identify policies and procedures that need to be improved upon to effectively deliver appropriate services to consumers, and to identify the needs of consumers.

MVR and the Council conducted a planning meeting in October 2006 for the upcoming year. We also review our accomplishments from the past year. A facilitator from outside the agency conducts the meeting. The Council has three subcommittees: Native American; Transitions; and Public Awareness. During the 2006 planning meeting, the Council set goals for each of these committees.

5. Conduct a quality assurance session with representatives from each Montana regional office to review a sample of open and closed VR cases.

On August 8 and 9, 2007 the annual quality assurance session was completed. The following activities comprise the annual quality assurance cycle for MVR case services. Quality Assurance is accomplished through Peer Consultation, Management Review and Standard Case Review:

- Peer Consultation: Every case manager is required to prepare and consult with peers for at least one case every quarter at a regular staff meeting. More consultations are allowed and encouraged.
- Management Review: Supervisors receive a list of 4 case files every six months for each of the staff directly in their line of supervision to be reviewed and staffed with the case manager. The composite average score of these reviews must fall within 3 pts of the statewide average for cases in that status. When the review scores below the standard, the supervisor is asked to conduct additional reviews until the average score is within the required level or until a corrective action is called and determined.
- Standard Case Review: A sample of 220 files are reviewed annually by a team composed of a cross-section of agency staff. This review is a sample of randomly selected open and closed cases.

Agency production is measured directly from the standards and indicators weighted in the performance grid.

6. Continue to expand employment opportunities for people who are blind through the Randolph Shepard Business Enterprise Program.

During FY 2006 the Randolph Shepard Business Enterprise Program did not expand. Due to reorganization within the program, one vending route was closed and the vending machines from that route were moved to other routes and more productive sites. Three vendors left the program (one to take a paid position within the building where the snack bar was located) and one new vendor entered the program. An effort was made to place a vendor in a snack bar at the Federal Building in Bozeman, but the site proved to be unproductive due to the length of time the snack bar had been closed and the proximity of other eating establishments.

7. Continue succession planning activities through MVR Futures Program.

- MVR Futures continues to bring three to four new participants into this leadership group per year, who will then each serve a three year term. The entrance criteria have been minimally reduced to encourage participation---candidates must have no less than two years successful experience with the agency at the time of application to the group.
- Participants continue to gain valuable experience related to budgets, the EPP process, due process, progressive discipline, motivational leadership, etc. through their participation in this group.
- Examples of projects either completed this year or in process are: new counselor training curriculum, university internship program, bulk purchase of blind/low vision aides, adaptive driving equipment decision tree, and the CRP fee schedule.

8. Provide extended support services to 50 people who are currently on the waiting list. As of 8/16/06 there are 129 individuals on the list.

In 2001, MVR secured a qualified contractor to conduct the administration and maintenance of MVR's extended support services program. (see 4.8(b) page 10 for a description of the program). Because supported employment requires a long-term sign-off from a provider to guarantee long term support, and because of the limited capacity that providers have to serve consumers long term, there has historically always been a waiting list for extended support services in Montana.

28 consumers from the 2006 waiting list are currently receiving extended support services. An additional 41 consumers from the 2006 waiting list are

receiving MVR services and will be moved into extended support services/employment funding when they are stabilized in their employment setting.

The waiting list grew substantially since August of 2006. There are currently 176 individuals on the waiting list. MVR will continue to request an expansion of resources for the extended support services program by requesting additional funding from the Legislature. This is addressed as a goal in Section 4.11(c)(1).

9. Streamline the case management system.

Montana Vocational Rehabilitation has designed an automated case management system which was implemented on January 16, 2007. Prior to the implementation of the case management system, training was provided to staff at the bi-district meetings held in November 2006. After implementation of the case management system, individual office training was provided in each region.

This software program is an enhancement of an existing and tested database called AWACS which has handled MVR financial transactions and federal/state reporting for a number of years. The new case management documentation system is called CASE-E and is a component of the larger AWACS system. CASE-E is designed to both create an electronic record of the individual consumer's delivery process and also generate a paper file record. The overall impact of this innovation will be to increase consistency of the service delivery documentation process across the state, speed communications, and provide a route of structured streamlining of case file documentation for counselors.

10. Improve collaboration/ communication with CRPs

As stated in Attachment 4.11(d), in 2006 MVR initiated the CRP Liaison committee, which meets via conference call four times per year. In 2006/2007 the group worked on the following activities:

- Creation and implementation of a reference guide for CRPs regarding billable activities
- Implementation of the CRP Data Report – this report contains information on individual CRP's statistics (i.e., total number of clients served, total number of successful placements, total

dollars spent on clients successfully closed) and will be shared with consumers and providers. The pilot year for the CRP Data Report will conclude October 1, 2007, at which time the CRP Data Report will be implemented.

- Revising the CRP Certification of Assurances: This goal is ongoing.
- Regional reports of “what’s new” with CRPs in each region: This goal is ongoing.
- Review of MVR’s current qualification level for CRP’s (e.g., CARF accreditation). This goal is ongoing. MVR is in the process of reviewing other possible sources for accreditation (e.g. Rehabilitation Services Accreditation System/ RSAS), and the CRPs have been given information on RSAS and encouraged to provide feedback to the CRP Liaisons.
- Inform CRPs of available training opportunities that occur throughout the year: This goal is ongoing.

Priorities

1. Participate in workforce investment activities to promote integration of services in order to optimize client service in an efficient manner.

Montana Vocational Rehabilitation is a one-stop partner and has signed the Statewide Consortium Agreement of One-Stop Partners. The one-stop system provides integrated services for education, employment and training resource services to Montanans.

Montana Vocational Rehabilitation has specifically committed itself through its Field Services statewide plan to commit to participation on the Work Force Area Community Management teams throughout the state.

In the northwestern quadrant of Montana, the service area of Missoula is under a formal agreement and the Regional Administrator participates in both the Workforce Council and the Community Management Teams. The Kalispell office is part of the Community Management Team. DPHHS is signed in as a "partner" for Mission Valley Community Management Team under JOBLINC, and MVR is a participating member with the Flathead Workforce System Community Management Team.

In the southeastern part of the state, MVR has formal agreements signed and in force as partners in three Community Management Team (CMT) areas including: the Billings area, the Miles City area, and the Glendive/Sidney area. MVR has one formal agreement and is a managing partner in a certified one stop center (in Billings). It is likely that the VR representative will be the Chair of the Community Management Team in Billings for this upcoming year July 07 until June 08.

In the northeastern part of Montana, as part of the Workforce Center certification process, MVR has signed a local agreement, as one of the mandatory partners in this system. The agreements which have been signed include:

- Lewistown Job Service/Workforce Center
- Great Falls Job Service/Workforce Center
- Havre Job Service/Workforce Center
- Northeastern Montana Job Service/Workforce Center

The one stop certification process has been completed for Great Falls, Lewistown and Havre. These centers have been certified by the Statewide Workforce Investment Board (SWIB). At this time it also appears that the Northeastern Montana Workforce System servicing Glasgow and Wolf Point, has also been approved.

The Great Falls region participates in Community Management Team meetings across the region. These meetings occur on a monthly basis in some locales and on a quarterly basis in others. In the southwestern quadrant of the state, all the offices are connected to work force system and formal agreements are in place for "the Yellowstone Work Force System" in Bozeman, the Capitol Area Work Force System in Helena and the South West Montana Work Force System in Butte/Anaconda/Phillipsburg /Dillon.

Specific workforce activities in the past year include:

- Community Management Team tours of the Missoula Pre-Release, Missoula Housing Authority, Dickinson Adult Learning Center, Human Resource Council, Council Grove Housing, Missoula Job Service, Office of Public Assistance, Child Care Resources, and Women's Opportunity Resource Development (WORD)

- Development of a website where agencies can post notices about upcoming training
- Attendance at a community job fair that was sponsored by the Missoula Job Service Employers Council
- Participation with the Flathead County Job Fair
- Regular participation in community resource awareness via quarterly panel presentations with agencies such as mental health, Summit Independent Living Center, Flathead Valley Community College, and Infant-Child-Adult Services.
- Participation in a community resource event at the Hamilton High School

2. Collaborate with the Native American VR projects and provide appropriate support within our resources.

In the past year, the MVR liaison has visited the Fort Peck, Northern Cheyenne, Flathead, and Fort Belknap Reservations. In addition, she has been involved with the federal benefits workshops that have provided “Train the Trainer” workshops to the Crow and Northern Cheyenne reservations. The liaison was invited by the Fort Peck and Northern Cheyenne reservations to complete an outside case review of their program in 2006.

All of the 121 Programs receive notification of conferences/ trainings that are pertinent to their programs. In addition, each year they are invited to attend the MVR All-Staff meeting and the Montana Association of Rehabilitation Conference.

3. Support the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act initiative.

As of June 15, 2007 there were twelve Ticket to Work Employment Networks in Montana. At the present time MVR has 663 assigned tickets. MVR has made a concerted effort in the last year to increase the number of tickets assigned.

The MVR program manager has completed training through the Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach (BPAO) program, which included Ticket to Work training. She has attended “Ticket Training Tuesdays” conference calls that are sponsored by MAXIMUS, and regularly visits the MAXIMUS web-site to keep abreast of changes in the Ticket to Work program.

MVR has worked in conjunction with MSU-Billings in providing Social Security work incentive trainings to MVR counselors in the Missoula region, as well as to staff at the Montana State Prison.

4. Encourage, develop and promote the staff's professional development.

- MVR continues to review on a yearly basis (and of course at the time of hire) the professional qualifications of our counseling and instructional staff. For those counselors who do not meet our standard of being eligible to sit for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor exam through the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification, we develop a plan by which they can reach that standard. Presently, 97.3% of our counseling staff either already meet the standard or are under a CSPD plan and working toward meeting the standard.
- MVR continues to send at least three staff per year to nationally respected leadership training in our effort to prepare for upcoming retirements among our management staff.
- We also take seriously the role our in-service training program plays in maintaining the skill and competence of our entire staff. Training is planned to address the needs identified through a number of means, taking into consideration consumer voice, staff opinions, performance appraisals, and RSA reviews.

Attachment 6.3

Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services

Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services

Supported Employment Definition

The Act as amended defines supported employment as:

Competitive work in integrated work settings, or employment in integrated work settings in which individuals are working toward competitive work, consistent with the strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice of the individuals with the most significant disabilities for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred; or has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability; and who, because of their nature and severity of their disability, need intensive supported employment services for the period, or extended services to perform such work. This also includes transitional employment for persons with the most significant disabilities due to mental illness.

Quality of Supported Employment

Montana Vocational Rehabilitation, through its cycle of services planning process, certifies providers who will be making supported employment time limited services available. This certification process ensures that the providers of services maintain the necessary education, skills, and degree of professional expertise to provide a level of service commensurate with MVR's work service standard. MVR values its priority partners who have the necessary accreditation. CARF (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) providers are the majority of supported employment providers. Other providers are certified through their accrediting affiliation with the Developmental Disabilities Program or the Addictive and Mental Disorders Division.

Scope of Services

The scope of services available may include one or more of the following services depending on the individual's needs:

Vocational Evaluation/In-House

Vocational Evaluation/Community Based

Supported Employment/Extended Support Services
Supported Employment/Developmental Disabilities (DD)
Supported Employment/Mental Health (MH)
Supported Employment/Other
Follow-Along Extended Support Services
Job Placement Services/Job Finding

Extent of Supported Employment

An individual shall be eligible to receive supported employment services using Title VI Part B funds if:

- 1) The individual is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services.
- 2) The individual is determined to be an individual with the most significant disabilities; and
- 3) There is comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs of the individual including an assessment of rehabilitation career and job needs, and identifies supported employment as the appropriate rehabilitation objective for the individual.

Cooperative Agreements: When a goal requiring supported employment is identified in the IPE, a document (cooperative agreement) signed and dated by the extended service provider reflecting the commitment of extended service provisions will be placed in the file prior to closure. If the cooperative agreement is dated after the IPE, there must have been reasonable expectation that extended services were to be available prior to closure.

Funding extended support services prior to closure: For the 90 days preceding closure, the extended support services provider must have met the individual's support needs without VR time limited funding.

MVR provides time-limited services needed to support an individual in employment. MVR can fund a maximum of 18 months of job coaching and follow-along services unless the Individualized Plan of Employment (IPE) indicates that more than 18 months of services are necessary for the individual to achieve job stability prior to transitioning to extended support services.

Prior to the purchase of supported employment services, the need for services, the appropriate extended support services and funding, and the appropriate agency to provide the services are established and identified on the IPE. The VR counselor secures a signed cooperative agreement from the provider to guarantee ongoing support.

Supported employment services are available statewide.