

# MVR STRATEGIC PLAN 2011-14

## Progress review through September 30, 2011

**Goal #1: Improve the infrastructure that supports MVR in order to increase the agency's potential to promote work and independence for Montanans with disabilities.**

*Objective 1.1: Increase transportation options for Montanans with disabilities that impact employment opportunities for MVR consumers.*

**Strategies: MVR will:**

1. Partner with Montana's Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) and Montana's centers for independent living on transportation initiatives.
  - The transportation coordinator participates on independent living (IL) Transportation Task Force conference calls.
  - The transportation coordinator provides updates to IL network pertaining to the Transportation Summits that co-hosted by DOT and DPHHS.
  - The IL Transportation Task Force and DPHHS Transportation Coordinator are working towards a passenger/client transportation summit.
  - The transportation coordinator attended an IL Symposium and informed the participants of his job duties and transportation and coordination goals.
  - The transportation coordinator assisted IL Transportation Task Force on developing HB213, which would allow operation of electric transportation vehicles by persons with disabilities. The bill was passed by the 2011 Montana Legislature.
  
2. Attend local Transportation Advisory Council (TAC) meetings and advocate for changes in local transportation plans that will benefit persons with disabilities. Consumers will also be encouraged to attend TAC meetings.
  - The transportation coordinator emailed the Transportation Advisory Committee chairs, and general public providers requesting that they include the following people when sending out invitations for the TAC meetings: VR regional administrators (RAs), centers for independent living (CILs), and the DPHHS transportation coordinator.
  - An email was sent to the VR field services bureau chief, VR RAs, and CIL directors informing them about the TAC's, and the importance of attending the meetings.
  - An email will be sent out in the month of August asking that the TAC chairs invite the local Health and Human Service Providers and State agencies to attend the TAC meetings. Also in that email, all VR Staff will be asked to attend the TAC in their counties/communities that they serve, based on approval by their RA.
  - Emails are sent to the groups twice a year. The transportation coordinator has also requested the transit providers, and TAC chairs email if VR representatives are not attending the meetings.

- An email was sent to all public transit providers requesting that another option for attending the TAC meeting be considered. Having a conference call available for participants was suggested. This would allow more people to discuss transportation and better coordination will be successful.

3. Actively participate in the joint Department Public Health and Human Services and Department of Transportation conference/summit in order to develop solutions that address transportation barriers for Montanans with disabilities.

- MDT and DPHHS have hosted three transportation summits since March 2010. They were held to open lines of communication among state agencies, public transportation providers, and interested citizens and to identify opportunities in all state agencies to provide resources for public transit, and help local agencies identify their own local resources to improve transit services.

During the second summit, the three main priorities developed were:

- a. Coordinate funding requests across departments.
- b. Address reporting requirements of federal departments of Health and Human Services and Transportation. Coordinate and consolidate versus each having doing reports.
- c. Address the liability of mixing riders and groups on existing transportation systems.

During the third summit, action groups were established to address the priorities developed in the second summit and to identify strategies for removing the barriers to coordination. The action groups that were established were tasked with looking at the following:

- Funding group is to identify all sources of potential funding, and determine how to access and utilize them more effectively.
- Regional Coordination group is to improve the availability of transportation routes between our major cities and towns.
- Public Awareness group is to increase the public's awareness and appreciation of the public transportation services currently available.

- A fourth summit is in the process of being scheduled to be the same time that MDT Transit Section has their annual transit manager meetings. The purpose of this scheduling is to increase the participation of transportation stakeholders in the meetings. With a new director in MDT, the fourth summit was postponed. There will be meetings for each action group work on the tasks that were developed in the third summit. A fourth summit will be scheduled for 2012.

4. Ensure that information and the resources gathered by Disability Employment, Independence, and Transitions' transportation coordinator gets distributed to all staff on a regular basis.

- Information on TACs has been distributed as described previously.
- Information related to issues described in the second performance measure below has been distributed.

5. On the regional level, explore best practices such as taxi discounts. Success will be shared with other regions for potential replication.

- The transportation coordinator is currently working with United We Ride ambassador for Montana on ways to work/coordinate with taxis.
- Each VR office uses the local taxi services if needed. Some VR offices work with a non-profit that negotiates fares with the local taxi company. Vouchers are then offered to different groups in the community.
- The DPHHS transportation coordinator is working with transit providers to include taxi companies into the local coordination plan, and develop contracts for after hours service. This is difficult at times because the taxi companies see public transportation as competitors.
- The transportation coordinator requested a list of all taxi companies including phone number and their service area from the Public Service Commission. This information will be passed onto VR counselors in the future for consumer use.

### **Performance Measures:**

*Each fiscal year, beginning with fiscal year 2011, MVR will decrease the number of cases closed because of transportation barriers from the previous year.*

**Milestone 2010 total:** 5 closed cases with transportation barriers noted as reason.

**Through September 30, 2011:** 5 closed cases with transportation barriers noted as reason.

*Each fiscal year, beginning with fiscal year 2011, each region will report successful transportation initiatives in their area to the state office. The regional reports will be consolidated into a state report and distributed to the regional administrators and State Rehabilitation Council.*

Regional transportation initiatives that have been implemented with the assistance of the transportation coordinator:

- Improving procedures for developing and obtaining bids on accessible vehicles.
- Improving procedures for developing and obtaining prices for non-accessible vehicles.
  - This includes checking the availability of state surplus vehicles, which often represent better value than through dealerships.
- Working on obtaining gas vendors so VR clients are able to charge for fuel. Two additional gas vendors (Butte and Hamilton) were obtained during the 4<sup>th</sup> qtr 2011. One of these vendors is a pilot by a major Montana distributor that could create significant opportunities in the future.
- Providing guidance to consumers on warranty locations for accessible vehicles. Worked with two consumers on these issues during 4<sup>th</sup> qtr of 2011.

*Objective 1.2: MVR will implement procedures and practices that improve counselor infrastructure/supports to increase quality time spent with clients and improve client outcomes.*

**Strategies: MVR will:**

1. On a quarterly basis, review the computerized case reporting system (CASE-E) and other office procedures to identify best practices and system changes in order to make the system more efficient for counselor use.

Issues that have been identified and in some cases resolved are:

- To allow a draft of the individualized plan for employment (IPE) to be saved with only a vocational goal. Fields in the IPE cannot be left blank on the "final" IPE. The final date of the IPE must be within 60 days of the date the data was entered.
- A check box was added to indicate if a consumer starts receiving SSI or SSDI after application. This will be used to assist in Ticket to Work assignment and tracking potential cases for Social Security reimbursement.
- The Rationale for Goal Selection has been revised: it no longer repeats information that is already in the file.
- Six work requests have been sent in and will be worked on as the programmers have time. The work requests are for changes in vendor/provider updates for Fiscal and provider pop-ups in the authorization screen, adding fax number and counselor number to the purchase order, adding an alert for HIPAA reviews, saving correspondence from CASE-E as a journal entry, and adding the release of information to the correspondence center.
- The ACTION team met during the 4<sup>th</sup> qtr and prioritized the next five work requests. The next five on the list are: Add client's email address to the VR1050, Have the service date default to the effective date when doing a new purchase order, add more room to type text to the journal, when a form is saved make it so a sound can be heard, and allow for more than one loan agreement alert.

2. Provide training on policies and practices to ensure consistency.

- There has been intensive training state-wide in the past year on cognitive motivational therapy. This will help provide consistency in counseling techniques leading up to plan development. With the completion of the state wide trainings, the regions are working on continuing the process locally.
- During the June BLVS staff meeting discussion/training was conducted on physical restoration services.
- An All-Staff meeting was held in May 2011 with the primary focus being Deaf Services (communication strategies, assistive technology, deaf culture, resources). In addition, training on ethics, diversity, and TBI Resource Facilitation Services were provided.
- Five MVR counselor supervisors who are new to their position are participating in supervisory training provided by the Region VIII TACE.
- In August 2011, Montana Telecommunications Access Program (MTAP) in conjunction with MonTECH (resource center for assistive technology) traveled to six VR offices across the state and provided training on assistive technology to VR/BLVS staff.

- Bi-monthly webinars have been implemented. Training topics have included: Transitions – from the School Perspective (presented by OPI), Transitions – Adopt a School, two trainings on TBI, and training on the VR budget for the new regional administrators/counselor supervisors.
- Motivational Enhancement Therapy (MET) is being piloted in the Missoula region.

3. Explore technology options to reduce travel time for staff in areas such as staff training and consumer contacts.

- Staff have been participating in MVR Web-ex training and a variety of webinars and online training activities.
- Where there are multiple offices in a region, staff from satellite offices participate in staff meetings, other meetings, and training through conference calling.

On a regional basis the following were reported:

**BUTTE:**

- Counselors have used three-way conferencing to conduct meetings between consumers, the VR counselor and community rehabilitation providers (CRPs).

**MISSOULA:**

- In bad weather, counselors covering Lincoln, Sanders, Mineral and Lake Counties attempt to complete their contacts by phone/email/texting and/or fax.

**GREAT FALLS:**

- The Great Falls region is exploring ways to use video conferencing with clients from outside of Great Falls.
- The MCIS tools provide counselors with the ability to work on assessment and career planning activities on a “long distance basis.”
- The use of shared portfolios, video and telephone conferencing, computer desktop sharing, and other technologies has allowed our counselors to continue their work with customers in outlying areas between their regularly scheduled travel trips.
- Counselors discussed video conferencing with schools and service providers across the the Great Falls region. Plans are to test the system at various locations in the near future.
- A Focus Forum with a group of Native American clients on the Blackfeet Reservation. The group addressed the question: "How can MVR use technology to develop rehabilitation plans more quickly?" There were many issues raised including the lack of internet access, limited computers that are available to the general public and inadequate knowledge of various computer programs and technology in general.

4. Use MVR quarterly newsletter to share best case service practices between regions.  
The MVR trainer position is responsible for the quarterly newsletter. This position was vacant for most of FY 2011. Therefore, this activity did not occur.

5. Do a yearly staff needs assessment for training that focuses on issues that create stress for counselors and areas that may increase efficiency of routine procedures.  
The yearly survey will be completed in February 2012.

6. Use the recently developed statewide application packet and provide adequate training on use of the packet.  
All counselors received a guidance memo regarding the use of the application packet from Anna Gibbs, author of the application packet.

7. Continue “myth busters” as a method for dispelling inappropriate interpretations of policy and other inconsistent practices.  
The MVR trainer position is responsible for the “myth busters.” This position was vacant for most of FY 2011. Therefore, this activity did not occur.

8. Develop guidelines on procedures for reinforcing training issues on the local level, including procedures for monitoring implementation by counselors. While this is a need in all training areas, the initial focus will be on the “use of technology” training.  
A number of trainings have been conducted, but a procedure for follow up has not been developed or implemented at this time.

**Performance Measures:**

*Each fiscal year, beginning with fiscal year 2011, MVR will meet the standards and indicators.*

There are two evaluation standards:

To achieve successful performance on standard 1, a VR agency must meet or exceed 4 of 6 indicators. MVR met 5 of the 6 indicators (MVR did not meet the rehabilitation rate indicator.)

To achieve successful performance on Standard 2, a VR agency must meet or exceed the performance indicator. MVR met the indicator.

*Each fiscal year, beginning with fiscal year 2011, there will be a decrease in the number of waivers from the previous year for extended time between the time a consumer is found eligible for services and the IPE is completed.*

**Milestone, 2010 total:** 2,540 extensions.

**Through September 30, 2011:** 2,282 extensions. This is a 10.2% decrease from the baseline number of waivers.

*Each fiscal year, beginning with fiscal year 2011, the positive ratings in the consumer satisfaction survey on the questions: “My relationship with my counselor has been helpful and productive.” and “How would you rate the quality of service you received?” will be at least 85%.*

It should be noted that because the consumer satisfaction survey is done on a calendar year basis, the findings reflect the surveys conducted during a calendar year and not fiscal year.

It should be noted that on the Blind and Low Vision Services (BLVS) survey, this question reads: “My relationship with Blind and Low Vision Services has been helpful and productive?” The reason for the difference between the two questions is that consumers of BLVS services often interact with other professional staff, in addition to the counselor.

**Benchmark:** 85%

**Through June 30, 2011:** The positive satisfaction rating for the question: “My relationship with my counselor has been helpful and productive.” was:

General Program	BLVS	Combined Program
84.0%	97.8%	86.5%

It should be noted that beginning with the 2010, the question “How would you rate the quality of service you received?” was changed to “I am satisfied with the quality of service received.”

**Benchmark:** 85%

**Through June 30, 2011:** The positive satisfaction rating for the question “I am satisfied with the quality of service received.” was:

General Program	BLVS	Combined Program
84.7%	97.7%	85.8%

*Each fiscal year, beginning with fiscal year 2011, the number of counselor sick days used will decrease from the previous year.*

Sick leave days used decreased in the first quarter of FY2011 (790) compared to the first quarter of FY” 2012 (692)

*Each fiscal year, beginning with fiscal year 2011, there will be a decrease in calls to Client Assistance Program from the previous year.*

Montana CAP reports that in FFY 2010 there were 154 service requests by 144 consumers. These requests include referrals related to IL, tribal VR programs, and employment discrimination of VR consumers. CAP does not keep records differentiating the type of referral. However, MVR cases make up the vast majority of the cases and changes in the volume of referrals over a given time period likely reflect changes in the volume of MVR related referrals.

In FFY11 there were 170 service requests by 154 clients

***Objective 1.3: Establish and/or enhance effective working relationships with a broad range of organizations that assist individuals with disabilities in achieving employment.***

***Strategies: MVR will:***

1. Develop and enhance working relationships with public and private organizations, state agencies and organizations such as the State Rehabilitation Council, the Veteran's Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation Program, the Department of Corrections, and consumer advocacy groups.

- Across the state many MVR personnel are active in community management teams and similar WIA partner activities.
- Across the state MVR personnel are participating in drug court teams. The participation increases collaboration with other community organizations, utilization of comparable services for VR consumers, and increases successful closures for MVR consumers.
- Across the state MVR personnel are participating in a variety of Veteran activities, such as Stand Offs.

**BILLINGS:**

- A Memorandum of Understanding exists between Second Chance Homes and Vocational Rehabilitation which has increased referrals to VR from this program for homeless women.

**MISSOULA**

- A Missoula counselor attends the Western Area Service Authority (mental health) for west central Montana and the Missoula Local Advisory Committee.

**GREAT FALLS:**

- MVR and other community agencies participated in Transition Fairs at both Great Falls high schools in an outreach effort to students and parents.

***2. Assign MVR liaisons to appropriate organizations, committees and councils to promote mutual goals and achievements.***

Counselors of expertise have been assigned across the state. In Regions where there has been significant turnover, reassignment is an ongoing process and orientation to the responsibilities involved will take some time to fully develop the networks described.

A specific initiative in this area is that all major high schools in Montana will have a specific counselor assigned to have designated hours each month in the school during the 2011-12 school year.

**Performance Measures:**

***Each year of the plan, MVR will review for evidence of record (e.g. minutes, agendas, and agreements) for documentation of the participation of MVR in partnerships and collaborative***  
**March 2010:**

- Memorandum of understanding (MOU) between MVR and Second Chance Homes (MVR will designate a liaison, and provide training on its laws, services, policies and procedures to Second Chance). This will increase referrals.
- Great Falls VR – letter of support for the WoRC Program in Cascade County
- BLVS – letter of support for Community Action Partnership of Northwest Montana – grant proposal to enable seniors with blindness and visual impairments to receive the services required to remain independent in their homes.
- A letter of support was completed for a proposal by Accessible Space Inc. to build a HUD subsidized apartment building in the Great Falls community.
- A letter of support was submitted for Western Montana Mental Health’s proposal to expand their vocational program and their proposal was awarded.
- A letter of support was written for Share House which provides housing during addiction recovery. By having stable housing, mutual clients are better able to participate in job search activities and employment. It is estimated we serve twenty Share House residents each year.

*Each year of the plan, MVR will review for evidence a large variety of documents and activities for documentation that MVR regards partnerships as an essential part of doing business. Prominent examples include the State Rehabilitation Council, an MOU with the Veteran’s Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation Program, programs supported by the Department of Corrections and more.*

All current MOUs and other agreements are on file in the central office.

The Field Service Chief and the VR Veteran’s Administration are working on an MOU between the two agencies

***Objective 1.4:***

***Improve Disability Employment, Independence and Transitions compliance with relevant federal and state civil rights laws that prohibit disability discrimination.***

**Strategies: MVR will:**

1. Complete and update the Americans with Disabilities Act Self-evaluation and Transition Plan.

Each Center for Independent Living submitted ADA Self-evaluations for the Vocational Rehabilitation/Blind-Low Vision offices in the Center's service area. Next step is for the office leaders to review the evaluations and to assign a priority for barriers identified in the evaluations. Then the offices will commence with the removal of the barriers. The reports provided by the Centers were all of a high quality. Disability Transitions will provide copies of the evaluations on request. ARRA funded the Center's work.

2. Identify and eliminate barriers to AWACS, Case-E, and ISERV software by employees who are blind, visually impaired, or otherwise print disabled and who use assistive technologies to access that software.

After meeting with representatives from the Technology Services Division of the DPHHS and researching the use of accessible information technology systems with other state VR and IL agencies, DTP decided to continue using its current systems (AWACS, CASE-E and ISERV) and to improve accessibility within those systems where possible until replacement of those systems. We contracted with an outside service and involved our BLVS technology coordinator to optimize the current system. While modest improvements were made, our efforts fall well short of full and equitable accessibility by all.

Our long-term efforts for AWACS and CASE-E will commence with planning for HB10 (funding for long term information technology needs) in the 2013 Legislature. At this time, Disability Transitions does not know whether the project will be included. We expect to hear confirmation during the Executive Planning Process, which commences in the spring of 2012. This will be a multi-step effort, including DPHHS and gubernatorial approvals. In addition, DTP must research options for replacement of our systems. Research so far, shows our costs will exceed \$3 million. Satisfying this objective will take multiple years to accomplish.

No developments occurred insofar as making ISERV accessible.

3. Expand the options for qualified sign language interpreters and caption services through the development of remote service contracts and Internet or video phone based communications for the deaf/hh.

- In order to improve services to the deaf/hh, each region has appointed VR counselor/s to work with deaf/hh. Eleven Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCD) have been appointed. These RCD get training through Pep-Net & Webinars' and these will be on going trainings throughout the year. One RCD from Butte attended a 4 week orientation program at Rehabilitation Counseling with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Adults (RCDHHA) Western Oregon University.
- Having enough qualified interpreters remains a problem. Establishing video remote interpreting (VRI) remains a work in progress. Efforts are being made to work out issues with the state information technology staff. There are times when VR offices will not be able to schedule an interpreter. VRI will be the backup plan.
- Several VRI providers (Communication Services for Deaf, Networking Interpreting, Hands-On VRS, Purple, and Sign On VRI) have been contacted. The fee for service and the going rate is comparable across services, \$75.00-\$100.00/hr.
- VRI has been demonstrated to MVR several VR staff. The Program Manager for Deaf and the IT Dept Video Administrator have been working together on various VRI options to find the most appropriate alternative for providing effective communication between Deaf and hearing using Video Remote Interpreting. The project should be completed and operational by the January 2012.

- UBI-Duo's have been provided to all VR offices. An Ubi-Duo is a portable, easy to use, wireless device that facilitates face-to-face communication between deaf/hh people and hearing people. The devices can also be used with people who have other disabilities impacting communication. After utilizing the Ubi-Duos in the offices for a period of time, it became apparent that there was a need for further training. Additional training was provided and the technology is making communication more accessible for all involved.
- A pilot project for a Rehabilitation Communication Specialist (RCS) has been done in Bozeman and proven to be successful. An RCS is a person who is a team player with the VR Counselor. This person should know the process of MVR, skilled in sign language, and have the skills to job search/job coach. An RCS eliminates a third party and reduces communication confusion. The Great Falls Region has recently been training a person to be a RCS. This RCS has been working in and out of the community with Deaf VR Consumers and employers to bridge the gap for successful employment.
- Disability Transition Services purchased a workstation, software, a scanner, and a Braille embosser for accessible document conversion and production for use in the central office.
- VR Offices around the state that conduct Informational Meetings received a Comfort Contego FM System. The Comfort Contego is a hearing product to assist a hard of hearing person in many situations and is used to participate in all conversations. This device is not to be used as a substitute for a hearing aid, but assist the hard of hearing person in a meeting setting or one on one with a counselor

4. Establish a policy and procedures as well as ongoing training for the publication of accessible documents created for internal and external use by Disability Employment, Independence, and Transitions.

- The BLVS technology coordinator was designated to lead these efforts.
- DTP developed print materials and provided training to the central office staff members on accessible document design.
- Additional plans include the publication of a policy and online resource guidance for accessible document design as well as the provision of training for regional offices of DTP and other units within DPHHS.

**Performance Measures:**

***By the end of the first year of this plan, the Americans with Disabilities Act Self-evaluation and Transition Plan for programs and facilities of Disability Transitions Programs will have been completed.***

The Centers for Independent Living were contracted to do Self-evaluations for the Vocational Rehabilitation/Blind-Low Vision offices in the Center's service area. Those evaluations were completed. The next step is for the office leaders to review the evaluations and to assign a

priority for barriers identified in the evaluations. Then the offices will commence with the removal of the barriers.

***By the end of the third year of this plan, there will be evidence of progress made on removing barriers identified in the Americans with Disabilities Act Self-evaluation and Transition Plan.*** As mentioned, in the report on the previous performance measure the Self-evaluations have been completed and priorities for addressing issues are being assigned. It is anticipated that evidence of progress will occur based on the priority assignments over the course of the next two years.

## **Goal #2: Assure high quality employment for Montanans with disabilities through the vocational rehabilitation program.**

***Objective 2.1 Provide functionally equivalent services to unserved and underserved populations.***

### **Strategies: MVR will:**

1. Develop a specific set of procedures for identification of underserved.

A set of indicators developed by the Rocky Mountain Technical Assistance and Consulting Center has been identified as providing a good basis for procedures to identify unserved and underserved populations. Indicators include:

- Longer periods between eligibility and closure.
- Longer periods between plan development and closure.
- Lower amounts of case service dollars spent.
- Lower weekly hours worked following closure.
- Lower earning following closure.
- Greater dependence on public support following closure.
- Lower health insurance coverage following closure.
- Higher rates of closure with an employment outcome.

2. Meet with representatives of the d/hh community, Native American, and mental health communities to discuss changes to MVR practices that could improve services to these groups.

- Butte's RA met with Western Montana Mental Health's (WMMH's) vocational staff to discuss changes in WMMH's vocational program that will enhance services to our mutual consumers. The RA provided training to WMMH's vocation staff regarding MVR services, supported employment and general work issues for persons with mental illness. Butte staff is meeting monthly with WMMH's vocational staff in order to facilitate better cooperation and coordination.
- Butte staff met with North American Indian Alliance staff to facilitate referrals to both programs and to coordinate services to mutual participants.

- A Missoula counselor continues to conduct monthly informational meetings at the local mental health center, averaging 5-9 individuals.
- The Kalispell supervisor met with Lake County mental health after a decrease in referrals was noted. He was told the decrease is because of recent changes in mental health funding as now they primarily serve those diagnosed with schizophrenia or recently deinstitutionalized. They feel most are not ready for work.
- The two Missoula Region counselors serving deaf and hard of hearing clients have taken sign language classes and worked with a tutor to improve their signing skills so they can better communicate with the deaf/hh population.
- The counselor serving Lake County meets monthly with the CSKT VR counselor to coordinate services for mutual clients.
- The Great Falls regional transitions group recently received notification that a youth transition planning grant was awarded through the Mental Health Settlement Trust Fund. The purpose of the project is to improve the transition planning system for youth diagnosed with serious emotional disturbances transitioning from the children's mental health system to adult services by providing training and education to youth and transition stakeholders. The local MVR staff will be working with representatives from the Children's Mental Health Bureau and Addictive and Mental Disorders Division to identify activities to accomplish the goals of the grant.
- A VR counselor and BLVS orientation and mobility specialist recently participated in a disability conference at the Blackfeet Community College in Browning. They had an opportunity to share information about VR/BLVS services with conference participants, which will help VR/BLVS improve services on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation.
- The center for mental health in Havre was recently awarded a mini grant through the Mental Health Settlement Trust Fund. The project will begin a landscaping and snow removal business to provide needed services and employment opportunities. MVR was involved with startup and implementation issues. North Central Independent Living Services will provide Social Security benefits analysis and planning for anyone who requires this assistance. The Center for Mental Health and MVR have been working together to implement the mini grant to begin a landscaping and snow removal business staffed by individuals with significant disabilities. Several MVR/ Center for Mental Health clients are now working on the "Green Team".
- Michelle Pickell/ JOBS, has completed trainings regarding Deaf/ HH issues at Billings, Bozeman, Helena, Missoula, Kalispell, and Great Falls. The training is funded by MVR, and has been open to the community. Reports indicated good attendance and positive feedback regarding the information provided.
- Tribal VR programs are notified of trainings offered by MVR and affiliated programs. One tribal VR program attended the Deaf/HH issues training. Participation in these trainings assisted the tribal programs to gain information on a variety of developments in VR and also provides an opportunity to share cultural perspectives related to the training topics.
- The Program Manager of Deaf/HH gave a workshop at the Montana Association of the Deaf June 11, 2011. The workshop was a power point presentation covering "Changes in MVR and Future Goals for the Deaf/HH. This workshop gave him the opportunity to get feedback from the Deaf/HH community concerning MVR.

- A Billings counselor meets regularly with the Northern Cheyenne 121 director and staff to coordinate services for consumers. This has led to an increase in joint cases with the 121 project and improved outreach to Native Americans on the reservation.
- The Havre Counselor has met with Directors of the 121 Native American Projects in the Havre region to renew working relationships and collaborate on ways to improve services to our mutual clients.
- The Regional Administrator and Counselor Supervisor travelled to the Blackfeet Indian Reservation to facilitate a Focus Forum with several Native American clients. The group discussed how MVR can work more effectively with clients from minority groups to complete rehabilitation plans. The use of technology was also discussed.
- Butte Region's regional administrator was appointed to DPHHS Mental and Addiction Disorder's Mental Health Oversight Advisory Council (MHOAC), and attends semi-annual meetings. The RA then relays the information from these council meetings back to MVR's Central Office staff and RA's.
- Butte MVR staff are meeting monthly with local mental health staff. Results have included improved referral and billing procedures and overall communication between the two programs.
- Butte Region's regional administrator and the Helena office supervisor participated in training sponsored by Addictive and Mental Disorders on evidence-based supported employment for individuals with psychiatric disabilities. The regional administrator then participated in a "Fidelity review" at Butte Western Montana Mental Health as a first step to assist in improving the vocational program at WMMH.
- Butte Region conducted a focus forum with Native American individuals with disabilities. The regional administrator met with Native American consumers who shared the barriers they face, their successes and their experience of being a Native American with a disability.
- Attending the Montana Association of the Deaf (MAD) quarterly board meetings is becoming routine for the Program Manager for Deaf/HOH to promote goals and improve services.
- The Havre Office has been contacted by a Native American Tribal Office in regards to interpreting services for one of their Deaf Native American. There is a real problem in obtaining Interpreter Services for Deaf Native Americans and Mental Health services in rural areas of Montana. Video Remote Interpreting could address this need once it is set up and demonstrated. Training will be needed to complete this project.

### 3. Explore ways to increase the service capacity for rehabilitation providers for rural communities.

- The Kalispell staff have met with staff of Mission Mountain Enterprise in Ronan to update them on MVR procedures related to job development and billing.

- Efforts to reestablish connections with Achievements have been successful, referrals to Achievements have increased and the only successful job placement closures in the Eureka area have been through Achievements.
- MVR has established a working relationship with Milk River Inc., so that clients in the Glasgow area can receive job placement assistance.
- MVR is now working with Eastern Montana Industries to begin job coaching and other services to MVR consumers north of the Missouri River. Clients in Eastern Montana can receive job coaching and services to help them succeed in employment.
- MVR recently met with Quality Life Concepts to discuss starting a satellite program in Havre. This would potentially provide much needed services to clients with developmental disabilities in the Havre area.
- A private individual with background in working as a CRP will begin providing job search activities in the Kalispell area.
- A teacher's aide in Eureka who provides some job development for students and former students is in the process of completing a CRP proposal for the Missoula region: he has many community connections in Eureka and it is hoped that he will be more successful than the CRP's who are not familiar with that area have been in the past.

4. Complete a comprehensive review of agency materials to make sure all our materials are in accessible formats.

Disability Transitions is working with Human Resources in the Department of Administration to improve accessibility to state government documents for employees and others. In addition, the same is occurring between Disability Transitions and the Montana State Library. More partnerships are expected. In addition, Disability Transitions is building its skill set on accessible document design in order to build our resourcefulness to address the issue. These plans include meeting with the University of Montana's Disability Services for Students and Information Technology Services to learn how that institution assures document accessibility for its students, employees, and public

5. Explore telework/work at home opportunities in rural areas.

Great Falls/Havre staff participated in an intensive training session with the Director of the Small Business Development Center (SBDC). This training provided counselors with more expertise in how to assist clients with self employment in rural areas and how to evaluate feasibility of "work at home" ideas.

**Performance Measures:**

*Have a procedure in place for identifying unserved and underserved populations at least one year prior to the next strategic planning session to get input from those groups for the strategic planning meeting.*

A basic structure for identifying unserved and underserved populations that would utilize information available from the MVR database has been identified. During the next year,

Information related to these factors will be acquired and analyzed.

*Each fiscal year, beginning with fiscal year 2011, there will be an increase from the previous year in successful closures with health insurance benefits through employers of minority groups and other groups identified as unserved or underserved.*

**Milestone, 2010 total:** 16 closures of 96 total 26's (16.7%) with health insurance benefits through employers.

**Through September 30, 2011:** 16 closures of 86 total 26's (18.6% This is an 11.4% increase of the percentage with health insurance from the base line.) with health insurance benefits through employers.

*Each year, the positive ratings in the consumer satisfaction survey for the question "I am satisfied with the plan my counselor and I developed to meet my needs to achieve my employment goal" will be at least 90% for 26 closures of consumers from minority groups and other groups identified as unserved and underserved.*

**Benchmark:** 90%

**Through June 30, 2011:** The positive satisfaction rating for the target question was:

General Program	BLVS	Combined Program
77.8%	100%	80%

*Each fiscal year, beginning with fiscal year 2011, there will be an increase in the number of consumers from minority groups and other unserved and underserved groups who have plans developed from the previous year.*

**Benchmark 2010:** 275 plans were developed for minority consumers

**Through June 30, 2011:** 248 plans have been developed for minority consumers. This is a 9.8% decrease from the baseline

*Each fiscal year, beginning with fiscal year 2011, standards and indicators related to minority ratio will be met.*

**Benchmark:** Minority ratio must be greater than or equal to .80.

**Quarter 1:** .91      **Quarter 2:** .88      **Quarter 3:** .88      **Quarter 4:** .84

**Objective 2.2 Develop a plan to address the high status 30-to-closure ratio.**

**Strategies: MVR will:**

1. Conduct an analysis of status 30 closures to identify common characteristics that might be amenable to targeted strategies.

MVR hired a part-time position to complete this process. Many case files have been reviewed and list of characteristics related to closures is being developed.

2. Review research being conducted through MVR's Future's Group to determine if there are recommendations that can be implemented.

Facilitating the Future's Group is the responsibility of the MVR trainer position. The trainer position was vacant during most of the last year and the facilitation of the Future's group was not completed during that time. The trainer position has been filled and there will be a meeting of the futures group in February of 2012.

3. Conduct a telephone survey of all status 30 closures and provide recommendations on changing procedures based on survey results if appropriate.

The part-time position mentioned above has completed the telephone survey. After reviewing the number of cases involved and a review of an initial sample of calls to target it cases, it was determined that calling all status 30 closures would not be possible or necessary. A sample of all cases was called. An attempt will be made to contact all cases that were closed "for all other reasons." The reason for this is that cases closed in this category have the most potential for unique reasons for the closure.

**Performance Measurements:**

*Each fiscal year, beginning with fiscal year 2011, there will be a 3% decrease in status 30s from the previous year.*

**Benchmark: 2010:** 1612 status 30 closures

**Through September 30, 2011:** 1423 status 30 closures.

This is an 11.7% decrease in the number of status 30 closures.

*Each fiscal year, beginning with fiscal year 2011, there will be a decrease in the ratio of 30s to 26s and 28s from the previous year.*

**Benchmark: 2010:** The ratio of 30's to 26's and 28s was: .94

**Through September 30, 2011:** The ratio of 30's to 26's and 28s was: .88.

This is a 6.4% decrease in the baseline.

***Objective 2.3 Provide rehabilitation services that lead to successful outcomes in employment for transition age youth 14-24 years of age.***

**Strategies: MVR will:**

1. Conduct analysis of the Missoula pilot program in transitions to determine impact and potential best practices and explore options for expanding elements of the program to other parts of the state.

## IMPACT

The impact of the project is witnessed through an increase in numbers served (see table below) and the observed findings listed below.

- Meeting with students in a familiar environment results in an increase in the quantity and quality of information shared by students; students are observed to be more relaxed and open meeting with VR counselors in a familiar environment.
- A former student observed that traveling to the VR office from school felt very clinical "like going to a doctor's appointment."
- Teaching staff expressed appreciation for the convenience of planning and scheduling student meetings at school versus transporting students to another location.

<b>Transition Age Students (14-24) Served</b>					
District	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
BILLINGS - IV	429	479	520	503	455
BLIND & LOW VISION - V	55	60	57	68	70
BUTTE - II	471	455	469	490	444
GREAT FALLS - III	298	295	330	391	355
MISSOULA - I	489	540	583	613	546
Total	<b>1742</b>	<b>1829</b>	<b>1959</b>	<b>2065</b>	<b>1870</b>

## BEST PRACTICES

In the past three years there have been improvements initiated in the following areas:

- Improved methodology for scheduling 1) campus-based VR application appointments and 2) VR counselor attendance at IEPs.
- Improved use of existing data—garnered from school administered Vocational Preparation Work Experiences—to assess student ability and support needs.
- Improved protocol for scheduling and staffing CRP based work assessments and vocational evaluations, all tailored to transitions students; scheduling is coordinated with school staff and/or parents and staffing are conducted at school for the convenience of student and his/her support team.
- The development and implementation of Transition Tools geared to 1) achieve clarity of roles and 2) streamline the transitions process for students, teachers, and parents.

## EXPANSION

Based on the above observations, plans were to expand the model to Billings, Helena, Great Falls, Bozeman, Butte, Miles City and Kalispell via the "Adopt a School" program. The expansion plans will be initiated in the 2011-12 school year.

The transitions program manager has developed a Transitions Kit to help counselors initiate and carry out the project in their assigned schools. To date the Kit contains:

- Transitions How-To Guide

- Letter to Administrators (designed to introduce project and accompanying benefits to school administrators in selected areas)
- Cooperative Agreement
- Goal Positioning System
- Assessment Table (designed to help counselors determine which assessment tool is best for students who are transitioning)
- Vocational Rehabilitation as a Partner in Transition: Bridging the Gap Between School and Work (Per the recommendation of PLUK member, Mary Hall, this article was included in the Kit.)
- PowerPoint Presentation, a companion piece to the article noted above, that illustrates the rehabilitation process for transitioning students through case studies.

2. Provide on-going transitions training to MVR counselors.

- The transitions program manager introduced the Adopt a School idea to counselors in a statewide webinar in the fall of 2010.
- Training for counselors assigned to schools in the selected areas of the expansion was conducted via webinar on July 21, 2011.
- The transitions program manager continues to be available on an ongoing basis to counselors, VR managers, teachers, parents, and other professionals across the state to provide guidance regarding transitions related questions.

3 Outreach to school administrators and school board groups to discuss and explain transitions issues.

In the fall of 2010, the transitions program manager presented to/at:

- Alex Apostle, Superintendent of Missoula Public Schools
- School administrators and teachers at in-service trainings and open houses at Sentinel High School, Big Sky High School, and Hellgate High School
- Montana Conference of Educational Leadership

Since the beginning of the year, the transitions program manager has presented at the following conference and gatherings:

- |  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| • Vocational Rehabilitation Council, Helena          | January 7, 2011  |
| • Office of Public Instruction Webinar, Helena       | February 1, 2011 |
| • Council of Exception Children Conference, Billings | April 14, 2011   |
| • PLUK Conference, Helena                            | May 5, 2011      |

Feedback (recommendations for improvement and/or requests) received about the information and/or materials presented in the above noted events was shared with VR management and used to revise/improve presented information and materials for future use.

4. Collaborate with entities who serve dropouts, youth in foster care and older youth (juvenile justice, etc.) to work on transitions strategies for these populations.

The transition program manager continues to serve students who are at risk by attending their Youth Centered Meetings and collaborating with multiple team members (Child and Family Services, MT Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, MT Foster Program) to develop transitions plans that meet individualized transition needs.

5. Work with Montana Youth Transitions Coalition on initiatives related to transitions issues.

The transitions program manager continues to participate on the conference planning committee and the website committee

#### MYT Website Contributions

The transitions program manager rewrote the introduction regarding Montana Vocational Rehabilitation for the MYT website to be more "youth friendly." Additionally, links to the Goal Positioning System, the Cooperative Agreement, and the "Bridging the Gap" article were listed on the site.

#### MYT Conference Committee Contributions

The transitions program manager recommended and will coordinate a "Transitions Team" panel presentation at the upcoming conference in November 2011. The panel, featuring a transitioning youth and the members of his/her support team, including parents, teacher, VR counselor, job coach, etc, will provide a big picture illustration of the transitions journey and how each member plays a part.

The transitions program manager plans to invite and coordinate two teams, one that highlights the journey of a student who has transitioned from high school to college and the other focusing on a student who has transitioned from high school directly to the world of work.

6. Explore alternate models of Individual Plans for Employment (IPE) that meet the needs and circumstances of transitions age youth, including possibly incorporating the IPE as part of Individual Education Plans.

With a recognized and structured system in place the likelihood of IPEs being written *before* graduation is increasing. However, this is done with caution to insure that IPE goals and services are well thought out and not premature.

7. Identify and encourage the use of best practices for informing parents and family members about Vocational Rehabilitation services.

Parents and families will continue to hear about MVR via:

1. Introductions to MVR in IEP meetings
2. Full explanations of MVR in one to one consultations and/or application meetings
3. Information booths and presentations at Open Houses and Resource Fairs
4. Presentations at Annual Conferences (e.g., MYT, MEA, MCEC, MAR, MCEL, etc.)

In addition to the events noted above, MVR will develop a youth friendly approach for the promotion of MVR Transitions.

#### MVR Transitions PR Project: Video and Print Campaign

The transitions program manager has initiated a PR project including 1) the production of a video and 2) a print campaign.

The video will:

- Capture the attention of transition age youth
- Dispel myths about disability
- Inspire the desire and courage to explore work
- Explain MVR services
- Explain eligibility criteria
- Invite students to apply for services

Toward the production of the video, the transitions program manager has

- Written a preliminary storyline (script).
- Contracted with the Media Arts Project to produce and edit the video.
- Contracted with Luca Patuelli, international break-dance star and youth leader to narrate the video.
- Initiated the solicitation of other key actors (Montana youth leaders) to star in the production.

In addition to the video, we will produce a video compatible print campaign including:

- 11 x17 posters that will hang in high schools across the state
- New transitions brochures
- Banners to use at job fairs and resource fairs
- Branded jackets and messenger bags for MVR Transitions counselors who travel to the schools on a regular basis and/or represent the MVR Transitions Team at job fairs and resource fairs. (This addition was a safety related recommendation to ensure that school staff and students can recognize MVR staff when they are on campus.)

Toward the development of the Print Campaign, the transitions program manager has solicited print bids from various vendors.

The Great Falls BLVS counselor presented at the MSDB Family Weekend for Students with Visual Impairments about BLVS and then spent Saturday meeting with family and students individually.

8. Develop a transitions data tracking system including, but not limited to:

a. Outcomes

b. Outreach strategies

c. Types of services

d. Service costs

- Outcome data (rate of employment and wages) at 5 and 10 years following application to Voc Rehab is being developed.
- Other areas that data sets are being developed on are referral sources and number of applications to VR by the same consumer.

**Performance Measurements:**

*Each fiscal year, beginning with fiscal year 2011, increase the number of 26 closures for transitions age youth (14-24) by 3% over the previous year.*

**2010 benchmark:** 161 “26 closures” of transition age (2010), a 3% increase (5 “26 closures”) would be 166 “26 closures” of transition age

**Through September 30, 2011:** 148 “26 closures” of transition age youth

This is an 8.0% decrease in the number of “26 closures” of transition age.”

*Each fiscal year, beginning with fiscal year 2011, increase the number of consumers of transitions age (14-24) on the MVR caseload by 5% over the previous year.*

**Benchmark:** 2,065 transition age consumers on the MVR caseload (2010), a 5% increase (103 consumers) would be 2,168 transition age consumers.

**Through September 30, 2011:** 1,870 transition age consumers are on the MVR caseload.

This is a 9.4% decrease in transition age consumers from the baseline year.