

DSHS/DVR 2016 – 2020 State Plan

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

Draft Federal Guidance

Describe the designated State agency's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated State unit, including the following:

1. Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development
 - a. Qualified Personnel Needs. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs with respect to:
 - i. the number of personnel who are employed by the State agency in the provision of VR services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;
 - ii. the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and
 - iii. projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the State agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.
 - b. Personnel Development. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:
 - i. a list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program;
 - ii. the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and
 - iii. the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

2. Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel. Describe the development and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated State unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.
3. Personnel Standards. Describe the State agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) and to ensure that designated State unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:
 - a. standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and
 - b. the establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.
4. Staff Development. Describe the State agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that, consistent with section 101(a)(7)(C) of the Rehabilitation Act, all personnel employed by the designated State unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:
 - a. a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated State unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and
 - b. procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.
5. Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs. Describe how the designated State unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.
6. Coordination of Personnel Development Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Introduction

This section describes DSHS/DVR’s Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD). The CSPD determines staffing levels, personnel recruitment, staff classifications, personnel standards, preparatory and in-service training activities, staff advancement and succession planning, and coordinated professional development with educators.

Personnel Data & 2016 – 2020 Projections

DSHS/DVR employs a total of 253 field service personnel to serve approximately 20,000 individuals per year. Personnel providing direct services to customers are employed in eight distinct classifications. DSHS/DVR’s direct service personnel are chiefly comprised of Vocational Rehabilitation Councilors (VRCs) and Rehabilitation Technicians (RTs), representing DSHS/DVR’s professional and paraprofessional personnel, respectively.

DSHS/DVR Personnel Levels and Vacancies by Classification, December 1, 2015

Classification	Personnel	Vacancies
VRC 1	14	7
VRC 2	48	7
VRC 3	56	2
VRC 4	5	0
RT 1	75	3
RT 2 (18 Business Specialists)	21	3
Supervisor	23	1
Assistive Technology & Assessment Practitioner	2	1

Based on current personnel attrition, DSHS/DVR projects staff recruitment needs for the 2016 – 2020 planning cycle.

DSHS/DVR Projected New Staff Needs by Personnel Classification, 2016 - 2020

Personnel Classification	Projected New Staff, 2016 - 2020
VRC 1	6
VRC 2	23
VRC 3	28
VRC 4	3
RT 1	33
RT 2	10
Supervisor	11

Personnel Development

Higher Education Vocational Rehabilitation Programs

Western Washington University (WWU) offers the only graduate program in Washington that directly prepares vocational rehabilitation professionals. Currently 37 students are enrolled in the Master of Arts in Rehabilitation Counseling program. In FFY 2015, 19 graduates completed this program and attained the credentials for certification as a rehabilitation counselor.

WWU Master of Arts in Rehabilitation Counseling Participants and Sponsorships, FFY 2015

Students Enrolled	37
DSHS/DVR Sponsored	0
RSA Sponsored	3
Graduates	19
DSHS/DVR Sponsored	0
RSA Sponsored	9

Recruitment, Preparation, & Retention of Qualified Personnel

DSHS/DVR's FTE allotment remains capped at 318.5 FTEs until June 30, 2017. The division is able to recruit all field service vacancies as they occur but may not exceed this FTE cap. Approval by the DSHS Secretary is required to fill any newly established exempt or program management positions, as part of ongoing budget savings policies.

Qualified Personnel Recruitment & Preparation Strategies

- Maintain recruitment linkages and concentrated efforts with regional higher education institutions offering rehabilitation counseling programs. These include:
 - Western Washington University
 - University of Idaho
 - Portland State University
 - Western Oregon University
 - San Diego State University
 - Fresno State University
 - Utah State University
- Continue to send recruitment announcements to higher education institutions offering rehabilitation counseling programs nationwide.

Recruiting qualified candidates in sufficient numbers to fill VRC positions is a continuing challenge. The national shortage of qualified VRC applicants has significantly affected DSHS/DVR's ability to fill vacancies in a timely manner, especially in rural locations. In response, DSHS/DVR has broadened its list of qualifying master's degrees to include psychology, counseling, or a field related to vocational rehabilitation (i.e. fields which promote the physical, psychosocial, or vocational well-being of individuals with disabilities). While the list of qualifying master's degrees has broadened, the required competencies that a VRC candidate must demonstrate have remained unchanged.

Per Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) revisions to Rehabilitation Act CSPD requirements, DSHS/DVR will revise educational qualifications for its VRC 1 classification. This revision, changing minimum education requirements from a master's degree to a bachelor's degree, will include redefining the classification as an in-training classification. VRC 1 incumbents will be required to obtain a qualifying master's degree to advance to VRC 2. DSHS/DVR anticipates this revision will result in a broader recruitment pool and more timely appointments to vacant positions.

A particular focus of recruitment continues to be attracting candidates who identify as African-American, Latino, and American Indian, as these individuals are presently under-represented among DSHS/DVR personnel. Targeted recruitment will continue in collaboration with Latino community based organizations, American Indian VR Programs and other Tribal organizations, as well as African-American community based organizations.

Retention, & Advancement

To ensure new employees start successfully, DSHS/DVR continues to use a comprehensive employee onboarding program. Used by supervisors when new employees are hired, this program ensures that individuals receive adequate orientation and training to perform their roles and responsibilities.

DSHS/DVR continues to offer staff advancement opportunities and will adopt a formal succession plan by October 1, 2017. This plan will include a number of elements that encourage staff to prepare and compete for future leadership training, introductory courses on supervision, mentoring and networking activities, and other advancement opportunities.

Personnel Standards

DSHS/DVR will continue satisfying CSPD personnel standards by applying state-based registration requirements maintained by the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries as registration standards for VRCs.

All current DSHS/DVR counseling personnel (Field Services Administrator, Area Managers, VR Supervisors, and VRCs) hold credentials that are consistent with either the state-based VRC registration requirements or the national certification standards of the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC).

DSHS/DVR will continue to apply educational qualifications for new hires into VRC 2, VRC 3, VRC 4, and VR Supervisor classifications that require the following credentials:

- A master's degree in rehabilitation counseling, psychology, counseling, or a field related to vocational rehabilitation (i.e. fields which promote the physical, psychosocial, or vocational well-being of individuals with disabilities; or
- CRCC Certification; or
- A master's degree in a closely related field, plus 18-quarter (12-semester) credit hours in specified rehabilitation counseling courses at the graduate level.

As mentioned, VRC 1 educational qualifications will be revised from a master's degree to a bachelor's degree, as follows:

- A bachelor's degree, demonstrating competency and basic skills, in related fields such as social work, psychology, disability studies, business administration, human resources, special education, supported employment, customized employment, economics, or other fields which prepare VRC 1 candidates to work with customers and businesses; and
- Minimum of one year paid or unpaid experience, consisting of:
 - direct work with individuals with disabilities in a setting such as independent living centers;
 - direct service or advocacy experiences working with individuals with disabilities; or
 - direct experience as an employer, small business owner or operator, in self-employment, human resources, recruitment, supervision, training, or other activities in competitive integrated employment environments.

The VRC 1 classification will be designated as an in-training classification. Incumbents will be required to obtain a qualifying master's degree within 3 years of appointment. Upon obtaining a qualifying degree and successful completion of the VRC 1 Training Plan, the VRC 1 will promote to a VRC 2.

21st Century Education & Experience Requirements

DSHS/DVR will revise specifications for VRC 1, VRC 2, VRC 3, and VRC 4 classifications. In addition to aforementioned VRC 1 revisions, the VRC 1 and VRC 2 classifications will be designated as in-training to assure that incumbents acquire the education and experience to meet the evolving needs of businesses and customers. Specific VRC 2 revisions will ensure that incumbents receive in depth coaching and on-the-job learning to become skilled at serving individuals with disabilities and businesses as dual customers. The VRC 3 classification will be designated as the journey-level counselor. The VRC 4 classification will be designated as the lead counselor that assists supervisors in assigning work and coaching staff.

Staff Development

DSHS/DVR completes an annual Performance and Development Plan (PDP) with each employee that covers the period October 1 to September 30. The PDP is a standard State of Washington tool used to evaluate job performance and emphasize individualized staff development needs. Specific development needs identified for each employee are to be addressed in the following year. In addition to determining individual training needs, DSHS/DVR compiles results to plan overall training and developmental priorities conducted staff-wide. While specific priorities evolve year-to-year, DSHS/DVR consistently addresses assessment, counseling and guidance, vocational planning, job placement, as well as assistive and rehabilitation technology.

DSHS/DVR requires all VRCs to participate in comprehensive in-service trainings on an ongoing basis. The Rehabilitation Academy, DSHS/DVR's in-service training platform, features standard training modules. The Basic Curriculum must be completed by all VRCs within 12 months of appointment.

Rehabilitation Academy: Basic Curriculum

1. Vocational Rehabilitation Process
2. Special Programs
3. Employment Outcomes
4. Benefits Planning
5. Rehabilitation Law Review
6. Motivational Interviewing

The ongoing redesign of all in-service training curricula to be competency-based, focused on contemporary case management practices, and available using web-based and other distance-learning methods has demonstrated initial success. Statewide WIOA implementation training, designed and conducted by DSHS/DVR's Rehabilitation Act Steering Committee, successfully leveraged in-person and web-based platforms to educate staff on competencies and best practices which support initial WIOA implementation. This success prompted numerous stakeholders to request in-person and web-based WIOA trainings, which DSHS/DVR provided. Stakeholder training participants included Tribal VR directors, workforce development professionals, DSHS staff, and Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) staff.

DSHS/DVR continues to provide training via video conferencing equipment at 21 office locations statewide. This technology permits larger numbers of staff to receive more timely training while reducing travel costs.

Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

DSHS/DVR continues to assure full communication access for all individuals with limited English proficiency. In addition to bi-lingual DSHS/DVR staff, contracted interpreter and translation services are available. DSHS/DVR forms and publications are available in Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, Laotian, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese and translations to other languages are provided as needed.

Individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing may communicate with DSHS/DVR staff at all locations via video phone, video relay, voice relay, American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, real-time captioning, augmentative listening devices, and Ubi-Duo devices. DSHS/DVR's Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCDs) provide effective and culturally competent services for customers who are Deaf.

Coordination of Personnel Development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

DSHS/DVR has worked closely with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to coordinate personnel development activities and has an interagency agreement with OSPI to address mutual issues. The DSHS/DVR-OSPI agreement will be amended and expanded to all regional and local education authorities. This expansion will facilitate the required coordination with education and provision of Pre-employment Transition Services, as required under WIOA. In addition, these

agreements will identify necessary training for DSHS/DVR and education staff regarding new services, new coordination, and best practices in serving students with disabilities.

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