



## Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

### *Addressing Employee Concerns*



**Thank you for your input. We are interested. We are committed.**

As in previous surveys, the 2011 Employee Survey confirms that DVR employees know how DVR measures success and how their work contributes to its goals. Staff know what is expected of them and believe they are held accountable for performance. And most staff say that they are treated with dignity and respect by their supervisors. These are organizational strengths that help us serve our customers – people with disabilities who want to work.

DVR employees' passion and commitment is what makes DVR a great organization and this shows in the high percentage of staff who participated in the survey (95%). Many added comments in response to the open ended questions. Well over half of those who commented voiced their satisfaction in working directly with clients. Approximately 75% of the comments were positive expressions of job satisfaction and approximately 25% expressed concerns and need for improvement.

DVR will focus on one major area of improvement over the coming year. This will be to improve communication processes and provide better, more timely information to staff about changes that are going to happen and how decisions are made. This is extremely important as many staff do not feel they receive adequate, timely information or are valued in the decision making process.

– Andres Aguirre, Interim Director

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

For more information, please contact **Don Kay** at **360.725-3623**.



## Focus Issue: Communication processes and decision making

### Summary of the Issue

Only 46% of DVR staff indicated they receive clear information about changes made within the agency (this is a significant drop from 71% in the 2009 Employee Survey). DSHS-wide results showed that only 38% of all department employees feel they receive clear information about changes made within the department. The period since the 2009 Employee Survey has had unprecedented changes impacting all state employees, such as: temporary lay-offs, hiring freezes, mandatory program reductions, etc. In addition, for some DVR staff, organizational changes within the department that resulted in a consolidation of resources have been perceived as a threat to the DVR program's integrity, autonomy, and functionality. At the same time the underlying uncertainty created by the state's economy has created anxiety and hardship for many DVR customers and staff.

Additionally, only 57% of DVR staff express confidence in the decisions made by the DVR Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the Area Managers (this is a drop from 65% in the 2009 Employee Survey). DVR staff have slightly higher confidence in DVR management compared overall to department employees.

### What we're already doing

- The DVR Interim Director sends out a semi-monthly program update to all staff that highlights current issues and key changes.
- The division has a statewide management team that includes Senior Leadership, Area Managers, Supervisors, and Program Managers and meets regularly to discuss program priorities and organizational changes. Supervisors share this information with staff at the unit level.
- The Field services Leadership Team meets regularly to discuss performance, quality assurance, policy, field activities, and issues at the division level that will be impacting field. The team members disseminate information throughout their respective areas.
- Area level leadership teams meet monthly to address issues and concerns impacting their local areas and disseminate information to staff.



- **What we're already doing – continued**

- The Field Services Unit has a Senior Rehabilitation Team that represents all levels of the field staff and meets regularly to review policy and programmatic changes before they occur. Members of this team also bring concerns/issues from their respective offices for discussion and resolution.
- The DVR intranet site/Sharepoint resources has been designed exclusively to keep employees informed of key changes and provides opportunities for team discussion covering a wide range of topics.
- Over the past 3 years, DVR staff at all levels have been learning to use Motivational Interviewing to improve communication with DVR customers, partners, and their colleagues. MI is a communication technique that is culturally competent as it is person centered and focuses on the individual understanding their level of acceptance and motivation.
- DVR's Training Unit publishes a monthly newsletter that includes information about upcoming training, wellness, policy updates, and quality assurance issues. In addition to DVR staff receiving this monthly newsletter, it is disseminated to a broad range of partners and stakeholders.
- DVR's Field Services Chief regularly conducts unit visits across the state to keep staff informed of changes and updates. In addition to regular unit visits, the Field Services Chief and Area Leadership met with the staff in offices where there was indications of higher levels of dissatisfaction to listen to staff and address concerns.

- **Our plan for the coming year**

- DVR will continue to train staff on the use of Motivational Interviewing to assist with increasing effective communication. DVR Area Managers will coordinate training for their units, which includes Supervisors and Program Specialists. Unit Supervisors will coordinate Motivational Interviewing training for their staff. State Office units including the Senior Leadership Team will receive Motivational Interviewing training.
- A Communications workgroup that involves staff at all levels has been formed to evaluate communication processes within DVR and will make recommendations to improve the flow of information at all levels.
- Each member of the Senior Leadership Team will more clearly and respectfully communicate key decisions within their areas of responsibility. As a whole, this team will more consistently develop planned communication for its major initiatives and activities that will impact staff.



## Our Plan for the coming year - continued

- DVR leadership will continue to identify ways to more effectively communicate departmental changes that impact DVR employees.
- DVR will convene other workgroups to address staff concerns in other areas such as: compensation, work efficiencies, and staff training.