

J. Professional Development and System Improvement

1. Personnel Development

[Federal Planning Guidance: How will your State develop personnel to achieve the performance indicators for the programs included in your plan?]

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board is developing a program for development of personnel to achieve the performance indicators listed in this plan. On January 11, 2000, the Board met and discussed the methods for professional development and system. Recommendations for the program were received at this time, as well as suggestions from the public. Suggestions have also been received from the Arkansas Employment Security Department. Currently, staff of the State Board provide technical assistance to local workforce investment boards, One-Stop operators, and One-Stop partners as needed. Staff will monitor One-Stops as they develop and will determine where there is additional need for technical assistance, personnel development, and system improvement. In addition, workshops and training sessions will be held as needed. Part of the state set-aside funds will be used for providing this assistance.

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board will coordinate and establish policy for conducting all employment and training activities within the workforce investment system created by the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999, including all activities conducted in and through Arkansas' One-Stop career centers.

A general overview of professional development and system improvement for the programs in this plan is given below:

PERKINS III (SECONDARY AND POSTSECONDARY) AND TECH PREP

Arkansas Department of Workforce Education (ADWE) staff provides many professional development and inservice training opportunities for vocational and technical teachers, counselors and administrators. Each summer, numerous occupational specialty training sessions are provided for teachers so that they may keep abreast of the changing technology in the career fields in which they teach. Any expenditure of Perkins funds on instructional equipment for the classroom requires that the teacher receive inservice training on the new curriculum for inclusion of the new technology into the program as well as training on the use of the new equipment. In addition of occupational specialty inservice training, the ADWE works collaboratively with the regional educational cooperatives to provide training for teachers, counselors and administrators on such topics as career guidance and planning, integration of academic and vocational education, use of content standards (what students should know and be able to do), and the

operation of vocational student organizations. All of these activities will assist in meeting the performance standards.

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT TITLE I (YOUTH, ADULT, AND DISLOCATED WORKER)

Personnel development is discussed in the general discussion above and in 1(b) below. In addition, some training may be given by the Arkansas Employment Security Department (AESD). It is anticipated that interagency cross training and shared staff meetings will increase as partnerships continue to develop.

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY

The Arkansas Department of Workforce Education (ADWE) has delegated responsibility for adult education teacher training and professional development to the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center (AALRC). It will be the responsibility of the AALRC to develop and implement training of personnel to achieve the performance indicators. The ADWE is committed to continuing a wide spectrum of training activities.

FOOD STAMP EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAM

Training of staff is provided at several levels. Central office personnel trains field staff who then train local office staff.

TRADE ACT PROGRAMS

Periodic training sessions are held by AESD for those staff members who work with the TAA and NAFTA/TAA programs. A workgroup of staff members who are most knowledgeable about the programs and who have been designated as TAA/NAFTA/TAA leads in the field reviews policies and procedures, makes recommendations for changes, and conducts the field training.

WAGNER-PEYSER ACT

AESD uses in-house program experts to train staff, both formally and on-the job. The agency also uses the Certified Employment Manager Program (CEMP) operated by the Arkansas Public Administration Consortium to provide staff with a broader perspective of workforce development. It is anticipated that interagency cross training and shared staff meetings will increase as partnerships continue to develop. AESD has a full-time training officer, who is identifying training needs and purchasing training packages to assist staff in identified areas of deficiency. Another full-time staff person is researching available technology to discover how AESD can use recent technological advancements to improve service to all its customers.

All local office staff continues to have the opportunity to expand their professional abilities and capacities by attending training that is provided by the TEAM-Up! Program designed specifically for employment and training and labor exchange managers and staff. The TEAM-Up! Program is part of the Arkansas Public Administration Consortium (APAC), a consortium of three universities – the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, and Arkansas State University in Jonesboro – that offer a variety of professional training programs to middle and upper-level managers of public and private nonprofit agencies and organizations.

AESD continues to utilize training provided by the Certified Employment Manager Program (CEMP) which includes the following topics: computer skills, client and customer service, supervision and management, case management, grievance and mediation, ethics, and high performance training skills.

The performance indicators will be part of individual employees formal annual evaluations.

WIA CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Under WIA, there will be no state-level set-aside for training and technical assistance (TAT). However, the State will expect the responsible state agencies for core program services (AESD, DHS, etc.) and local boards to provide basic programmatic training and remedial technical assistance out of allocated administrative funds. Local Boards will procure generic and capacity-building training for board members and staff as determined necessary out of pass-through formula funds.

From the State Reserve funds, the Arkansas WIB will designate funds for providing Incentive Grants and Technical Assistance to local areas. If a local area fails to meet the levels of performance agreed to for the core indicators of performance or customer satisfaction indicators for a program in any year, the State will provide technical assistance. The Arkansas Employment Security Department (AESD) will provide the technical assistance with funds reserved for Title I statewide workforce investment activities.

The technical assistance may include help in the development of a performance improvement plan, a modified local plan, or other actions designed to assist the local area in improving performance. The AESD will be an active member in the monitoring process to assure that the improvement process benchmarks have been achieved and the improvement process is reasonable and feasible within a required timeframe.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

- **ARKANSAS REHABILITATION SERVICES**

The Rehabilitation Act calls for ARS to have a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD). The federal requirements emphasize national certification for qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors. A challenge facing ARS concerns requirements for vocational rehabilitation counselors to have a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling. An Arkansas regulation prohibits financial assistance with state general revenue with a course that leads to a degree for a state employee (DFA Accounting and Procedures Manual, Sec. III, Sec. 9, pg. 12.22). Special language during the legislative session will be required to allow ARS to meet the CSPD requirements under federal law.

- **DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND**

The Rehabilitation Services Administration has mandated that vocational rehabilitation agencies develop a method to upgrade vocational rehabilitation counselors to the highest qualification in the state, which is a Master Degree. DSB has developed a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) that identifies the current education degrees of its staff and the education needed to obtain a Master Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. The CSPD outlines a process for hiring staff with a Master Degree and identifies a process to include those new hires who do not have a Master's Degree at the time of hire. Vocational Rehabilitation Teachers are also identified in the CSPD and may also be compensated when achieving appropriate certification.

VETERANS PROGRAMS

A training conference for Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) and Representatives of the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOPs) is conducted each year by staff of AESD. There also is a national training academy in Denver, CO. Each year, some LVERs and DVOPs and some AESD local office managers and program supervisors have an opportunity to participate in some of the courses. Additionally, veterans service staff members have an opportunity to attend agency training and participate in the Certified Employment Manager Program through the Arkansas Public Administration Consortium.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

AESD uses in-house program experts to train staff, both formally and on-the job. The Unemployment Insurance program is complex, so more formal training is provided than for other AESD programs. The agency also uses the Certified Employment Manager Program (CEMP) operated by the Arkansas Public Administration Consortium to provide staff with a broader

perspective of workforce development. It is anticipated that interagency cross training and shared staff meetings will increase as partnerships continue to develop.

TANF

The Division of County Operations has in place a detailed staff training plan to ensure that field staff are provided with appropriate initial and on-going training. This plan is updated periodically. Training is provided through either the Department's centralized staff development section or on a local basis by Area Trainers.

WELFARE-TO-WORK

Arkansas has conducted two large statewide training conferences for Welfare-to-Work programs and a number of smaller, more focused sessions. The U.S. Department of Labor, DHS, and AESD have conducted the training. Written program instructions are coordinated between AESD and DHS. Also available is the Certified Employment Manager Program (CEMP) operated by the Arkansas Public Administration Consortium to provide staff with a broader perspective of workforce development.

SCSEP

The state Title V coordinator conducts periodic training sessions for the AAA Title V specialists. Training on related topics is always included in the curriculum of the statewide annual Arkansas Aging conference.

CSBG

Training and technical assistance will be provided to the eligible entities during the course of the year to further enhance the quality of Workforce Investment Act services. Each eligible entity can request the type of training necessary to meet its program objective. The State Agency or the Arkansas Community Action Agencies Association will provide funds for training expenses.

(a) Perkins III

(i) Professional Development

[Federal Planning Guidance: Describe how comprehensive professional development (including initial teacher preparation) for vocational and technical, academic, guidance, and administrative personnel will be provided. (Sec. 122(c)(2))]

The Department of Workforce Education cooperatively sponsors an annual conference with the Arkansas Vocational Association each summer and is co-sponsor with other organizations for conferences and professional development meetings throughout the year that are of benefit to educators.

All inservice training sponsored by the Department of Workforce Education is posted on the Department's web page. As more and more administrators and teachers are connected to the Internet, this posting site will become a valuable tool for their planning.

Professional development for counselors is an important component for quality vocational and technical education programs. Several initiatives were designed to provide assistance to the counselors as they attempt to provide career guidance and counseling to all students. A computer system for counselors to use with the student records and accountability portion of the state's school data system was one option for use of the Perkins funds. Counselors were included in the inservice training provided regarding integration of academic and vocational education, the dissemination and discussions regarding the program frameworks and content standards, the inservice regarding the Career Action Planning model, and the distribution of the vocational career focus/major booklet.

Professional development for administrators is provided through presentations at various conferences and workshops and through invitations to participate in the various training opportunities such as the inservice sessions on the integration of academic and vocational education and the Career Action Planning model.

Professional development for teachers has included both specific occupational specialty training opportunities as well as inservice training regarding supporting activities such as the integration of academic and vocational education, the use of the content standards on what students should know and be able to do, and the operation of the vocational student organizations. Inservice training is a required component for any new curriculum and instructional equipment that is purchased with Perkins funds. This approach to program improvement has increased the numbers of teachers involved in inservice training each year within their occupational specialty. Some of the inservice sessions conducted during the previous school year include the following: Teaching Food Science in Family and Consumer Sciences; Computer Monitoring Servicing; Multimedia Application in Business; Computerized Cabinet Making; Digital Video and Digital Photography; Desktop Publishing; Corel WordPerfect Suite 8; Banking and Finance; Computerized Sewing Machine Techniques; VSO Leadership; and many others. In addition to these specialized inservice sessions designed to help the teachers stay current within their occupational specialty, inservice sessions on teaching techniques for new teachers and strategies for using the content standards were also provided in most of the program areas. In an effort to reduce the number of classroom days that teachers miss, the Department staff is currently

working with the State's distance learning committee and will be exploring this opportunity during the coming years.

Professional development necessary to the successful implementation of the activities proposed under the local grants made to postsecondary community and technical colleges will be integral into the activities themselves. Professional development relevant to their role in the conduct of these activities will be made available to teachers, counselors, and administrators. In addition, state leadership funds will be used to provide professional development for persons responsible for administration of local Perkins grants as needed.

The priorities for professional development activities funded under state leadership will be activities associated with integration of academic and vocational education, using advanced technology in vocational and technical education programs, the CAP model for career guidance and counseling, models and materials regarding nontraditional education and training, incorporating all aspects of the industry into vocational and technical education programs, and activities associated with new teacher licensure.

(ii) Technical Assistance

[Federal Planning Guidance: Describe how you will provide local educational agencies, area vocational and technical education schools, and eligible institutions in the State with technical assistance. (Sec. 122(c)(14))]

SECONDARY

Technical assistance to the LEAs and secondary vocational centers is provided by the State Board staff in a variety of ways. Regular scheduled technical assistance visits are performed by a Technical Assistance team composed of program specialists with expertise in the occupational areas in which the LEA and vocational centers have programs. These scheduled visits are generally on a three or four year cycle so that all districts receive assistance on a regular basis. The program specialists provide recommendations to the administrators regarding the vocational and technical education programs as well as do monitoring for compliance with state and federal regulations.

LEAs may receive technical assistance for specific requests by calling the appropriate program specialist. Assistance is given regarding design of new programs or redesign of existing ones to meet the needs of business/industry, instructional equipment, curriculum, gender equity issues and strategies, nontraditional education and training, and a variety of other topics.

Technical assistance is also provided during regional and statewide training sessions on the expenditure and accountability of the federal vocational funds, the integration of academic and vocational education, and current technology in the occupational area.

A staff member at the state level will work with secondary and postsecondary educational agencies to identify and implement effective strategies and services designed to promote, recruit and retain participation in nontraditional training and employment.

In addition to the State Board staff, a network of 15 workforce education coordinators are located in the state's educational cooperatives. These coordinators are funded by state and/or federal vocational funds. They serve as a delivery mechanism for state-sponsored inservice as well as design other inservice needed by the vocational teachers in their regional area. These 15 coordinators, although employed by the educational cooperatives, are closely aligned with the Instructional Programs Section of the Department of Workforce Education. They meet on a regular basis with the Associate Director and other staff to receive information on the Department's direction and initiatives. In each of the cooperatives, this coordinator also serves as the contact/staff person for the cooperative's Perkins consortia of secondary schools.

POSTSECONDARY

Regular and routine visits by Arkansas Department of Higher Education personnel will be made to all postsecondary sites at which activities funded by a local Perkins grant are conducted. All aspects of the activity will be evaluated and issues and/or problems revealed by this evaluation or suggested by local persons will be addressed. Reports relative to each visit will be kept on file at the Department. In addition, persons involved in the implementation of the local grants will meet periodically for the purpose of addressing current related issues and networking.

(b) WIA Title I and Wagner-Peyser Act and/or Veterans Programs

[Federal Planning Guidance: Explain how the local and State Boards will use data collected and the review process to reinforce the strategic direction and continuous improvement of the workforce investment system.]

The state and local workforce investment boards will use core measure indicators calculated on a quarterly and program-year (PY) basis to judge the performance of each measured WIA Title I group. Wagner-Peyser and Veterans Program service measures will be compiled monthly on a PY-to-date basis via the SAMS (SESA Automated Management System) reporting package provided by AWTS (America's Workforce Technology Solutions). In monitoring Wagner-Peyser services, special attention will be given to the national Employment Service performance measures, which will be finalized soon. The Veterans Program indicators of compliance included

in the SAMS Veterans Performance Standards report will be areas of focus in monitoring service to veterans. Problem areas will be identified, and corrective measures will be prescribed.

In addition, each One-Stop center will be monitored closely as it develops in order to reinforce the strategic direction and to ensure that the system is in place for continuous improvement. The state board has identified state performance measures, some of which will influence the Wagner-Peyser program. These measures include the use of the public employment service by the business community and the number of jobs filled through the employment service. As these measures are developed and adopted, The Arkansas Employment Security Department will use them as indicators of performance and will report outcomes to the state board.

(c) Vocational Rehabilitation

[Federal Planning Guidance: Describe the designated State agency's policies, 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 pursuant to Sec. 101(a)(7) of the Act. (Sec. 101(a)(7))]

ARKANSAS REHABILITATION SERVICES (ARS)

Policies, Procedures And Activities To Establish And Maintain A Comprehensive System Of Personnel Development

Data on Qualified Personnel Needs and Personnel Development

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) maintains a comprehensive data system on personnel and personnel development. Data collected includes the following:

- *Number and type of personnel employed in each professional and paraprofessional category:*

See Attachment J-1 for this information.

- *Existing vacancies, turnover rates, and projected separations:*
 - Existing vacancies are presently at 105. Many vacant positions are not used or ARS is working with OPM to change the classifications or delete the positions because they are no longer relevant to the agency.
 - The average yearly ARS turnover rate is 3%.
 - Projected yearly separations (including turnover) within ARS is 8%
- *Projected client numbers to be served and optimum client/counselor ratio:*

115 counselors will serve a target of 18,384 clients. The optimum client/counselor ratio is 160 clients per counselor on average.

- Projected staff requirements for the coming five years:

<i>23 Years or More of Service</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Management	40	46%
<i>Direct Service Delivery</i>	36	26%
Medical/Allied Health	9	10%
Central Support	11	13%
Direct Service Delivery Support	13	17%
Other Support*	8	10%
TOTALS	117	21%

**Includes: Housekeeping, Food Service, Elevator Operators, Laundry, Custodial, Maintenance, Drivers, Security.*

Years of Service	Number of Staff
OVER 28	52
28	14
27	11
26	10
25	11
24	19
TOTAL	117

Projected ARS staff requirements for the next five years is approximately 6% a year (turnover, retirements and separations). Management and direct service delivery (professional and support) will be the main needs. ARS is asking for support staff upgrades through the Office of Personnel Management and has begun a Career Ladder Incentive Program to help with these future needs.

As part of the maintenance of offering a program of development, ARS maintains a list of higher education institutions in the state, which prepare rehabilitation professionals. This listing is maintained by type of program and by category of professional development. ARS also monitors students who enroll in rehabilitation and related programs at each of the institutions and programs by category and the number of students who graduated during the prior year with and without certification or licensure. The Staff Development sections at ARS and DSB have collaborated to develop and disseminate a formal survey of the higher education institutions each June to assure timely and accurate data for planning purposes. Attachment J-2 is a sample of the yearly survey.

The minimum qualifications for the Counselor III, II, and I are bachelor's degrees in psychology, sociology, or related field with three, two, and no years of experience, respectively.

The Rehabilitation Counselor III is functionally the entry-level counselor position. Because of the state's salary structure, ARS has been unable to recruit at the lower levels. Occasionally, hires have been made at the Counselor II level, depending on location, applicant pool, etc. The Counselor I position is not used because of the salary level.

ARS PLAN OUTLINE

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services will implement the following plan to address the requirements of the CSPD. The initial phase of the plan will focus on rehabilitation counselors. Later phases will address the other VR professionals identified in Section 101(a)(7).

- STANDARD

Because there is no standard established by the State of Arkansas, ARS bases its personnel standards for counselors on the degree needed to meet the national CRC requirements, which is a masters degree in rehabilitation counseling or a closely related field, as defined by the CRC.

Action(s) needed:

Formally adopt and communicate the master's degree standard in ARS.

- NEW STAFF

All personnel hired by ARS in any position classified as a Rehabilitation Counselor III or Senior will meet the standard of a master's degree and/or be CRC certified. When there is not an applicant with the master's degree, ARS will permit the hiring of a bachelors degreed counselor in a Counselor II position with a condition of employment that the person will seek and obtain a masters degree within three years of employment.

Action(s) taken:

Requested that Office of Personnel Management (OPM) align the state class specifications with the state qualification and implementation criteria to read that the minimum education qualification is a master's degree rehabilitation counseling for Senior and III Rehabilitation Counselor positions.

Requested that Office of Personnel Management (OPM) change the minimum education qualification for Rehabilitation Counselor III positions to a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling without any appropriate years of experience and Senior Rehabilitation Counselor positions to a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling, five years of experience, and a CRC Certification.

Action(s) needed:

Devise and implement recruiting strategies to identify potential applicants for vacancies.

- EXISTING STAFF:

ARS currently has 44 out of 94 counselors that meet the national CRC standard. (We presently have 18 unfilled counselor positions.) Of those, 34 (77%), are CRC certified or are Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC). The 50 counselors who do not have masters degrees in rehabilitation counseling or a related field have been identified and prioritized for training or retraining needed to meet the standard in the following manner:

Priority 1: Counselors who have completed graduate hours in a rehabilitation counseling program and/or are currently enrolled or accepted into a program. (4 counselors)

Priority 2: Counselors with related master's degrees (as per CRC criteria for eligibility-categories D.1 to D.4) who will need from one to six graduate courses for CRC exam eligibility. (14 counselors)

Priority 3: Counselors who express interest in obtaining masters degree in rehabilitation counseling. The counselors in this priority would have between 1 and 15 years of career service with the state. (15 counselors)

Priority 4. Counselors who have between 16 and 25 years of career service with the state. (7 counselors)

Priority 5: Counselors who have 25 or more years of career service with the state. (10 counselors)

Priority 6: Counselors with bachelor's degrees that are CRC certified. (4 counselors)

Priorities and available funding will be determined on a fiscal year basis.

In all priority categories, counselors who receive educational assistance would be expected to comply with the provisions of the ARS Educational Leave Policy and agree, among other things, to continue working with the agency for two years for every 9 credit hours completed.

Action(s) taken:

Determined availability of ARS resources to fund training. The Federal In-Service Training Grant FY 1998-2000 has increased tuition and textbook expenditures for staff from \$12,460.00 in 1999 to \$39,560.00 in 2000. This 2000 figure is based on academic tuition for 16 classes based on a maximum of \$380.00 for three semester hours at an in-state university (as charged currently by the University of Arkansas) using classroom based instruction and 48 classes based on a maximum of \$600.00 using web based/distance learning instruction, plus an additional estimated \$65.00 for textbooks per course.

Request a waiver of regulation preventing payment for college courses leading to a degree from the Department of Finance and Administration.

This was waived for the agency's Rehabilitation Long-term Training: Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CFD 84.129W) federal grant proposal in July 1999.

Identified alternative methods of funding for education. ARS is involved in the Region VI Distance Learning Consortium and will be involved in a federal grant bid for CSPD monies in July of 1999. Also, five VR counselors will start distance learning coursework in the fall of 1999 (at no cost to the agency) with the University of North Texas through a federal grant awarded to the University of North Texas, University of Georgia and San Diego University.

Identified methods and opportunities for training (e.g., traditional classroom, distance learning, etc.). ARS is involved in the Region VI Distance Learning Consortium and is involved in a federal grant bid for CSPD monies in July of 1999. CORE accredited distance learning coursework slots for the fall of 1999 with the University of North Texas, University of Georgia and San Diego University will be available for \$600 per course. Oklahoma Rehabilitation Services and eCollege.com are collaborating to provide CORE Accredited distance learning coursework through the University of Arkansas, Langston University, North Central University and Southern University. University of Arkansas at Little Rock is providing coursework through eCollege.com. The slots for Arkansas VR counselors will cost \$600 per course and start in January 2000. The University of Arkansas (in Fayetteville and in Little Rock) and Arkansas State University have stated that they are willing to provide CORE accredited coursework through traditional lecture/classroom methods on-campus and/or on-site at various locations throughout the state which started in the fall of 1999.

- RECRUITING:

When recruiting for Rehabilitation Counselor vacancies, ARS vacancy announcements state that MRC and CRC is preferred. Applicants who have the preferred qualifications are referred for interview. If a selection cannot be made from those candidates, a candidate with the State minimums may be hired, subject to the condition that the master's degree will be obtained within a specified time.

The Rehabilitation Counselor III is functionally the entry-level counselor position. Because of the state's salary structure, ARS has been unable to recruit at the lower classification levels for many years. Occasionally, hires can be made at the Counselor II level, depending on location, applicant pool, etc. The Counselor I position will be phased out via OPM on July 1, 1999.

Action(s) needed:

Action(s) taken:

Requested change from OPM to require masters degree in Rehabilitation Counseling for the Rehabilitation Counselor III positions with no appropriate experience needed.

Request that Extra Help positions be used for Rehabilitation Counselor Interns, allowing ARS to initiate a paid internship program. The minimum qualifications for the Intern should be the same as Counselor I - bachelors level.

Action(s) needed:

Review and request appropriate salary levels for counseling classifications from OPM

Agency personnel policies and procedures establish and maintain standards for professional and paraprofessional personnel used by ARS. These standards are consistent with any national or state recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the professional category. Standards are based on "the highest requirements in the State applicable to that profession or discipline" and are kept on file for public access.

A Human Resource Development component of the CSPD team reviews and oversees the current training levels of all personnel in each category. Required standards and evaluation of training needs and timelines are established. The HRD component develops and monitors agency policy and procedure in terms of hiring, training, or retraining personnel to meet standards. This function includes notifying public agencies and all personnel of those steps and timelines.

Personnel Training, Including Staff Development

ARS ensures that all personnel receive appropriate and adequate continuing education. The agency provides for employees to attend classes, seminars, and conferences, and disseminates information through newsletters, in-service training, workshops, etc.

Several innovative efforts are currently in progress in the area of training and staff development.

- Arkansas Leadership Academy - This cooperative effort with the Oklahoma University Rehabilitation Management Program is has provided intensive leadership training to 50 ARS staff and is presently providing training to an additional 25 staff. The persons involved in the training represent all levels of personnel in the agency. The four-week program is a major staff development effort, which will continue into the coming plan period.
- Distance Learning - Technology equipment is in place and will be utilized to present an ongoing series of conferences and courses to virtually all employees through the use of local down-links and the Internet.
- Performance Evaluation and Training Needs - Each Employee Performance Evaluation addresses training needs. These needs receive priority for funding. In those cases where sufficient common training needs are identified, the agency develops and provides this training to groups.
- Team Training - With the agency's move to delivering services through Self-Directed Work Teams, extensive training will continue to be offered in this area. The Human Resources Development team has developed a core curriculum of training that is offered to all personnel involved in team activities. Examples include basics in team principles, communication skills, conflict resolution, and goal setting in teams.
- Cooperative Relationships - The agency will continue close associations with the Arkansas Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program and the Arkansas Vocational Rehabilitation Research and Training Center through the University of Arkansas. ARS staff serve on advisory boards and steering committees for both organizations, and are able to influence the type of research, training, development, and consultation provided by these organizations to meet ARS needs.
- Technology Training - The agency offers ongoing training programs for professional and paraprofessional personnel in the area of technology. ARS manages the Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN) program. This program will offer technology training as related to disability to persons both in vocational rehabilitation and in related fields.

- Acquiring and Disseminating Knowledge and Research - As mentioned previously, ARS maintains close linkages with the Arkansas Regional Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program and the Arkansas Research and Training Center in Vocational Rehabilitation and HRD staff are presently involved in the Region VI Distance Learning Consortium and federal grant opportunities. Additionally, information from Rehabilitation Services Administration, the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, other Research and Training Centers, and other colleges and universities is incorporated into Human Resource Development training activities.
- Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 - The Agency has conducted extensive training on Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, and key components of the Acts are incorporated into new employee orientation and training. Training in this area in the coming year will focus on the Implementation, collaboration, cooperation and coordination with state agency and community partners. ARS has taken the lead in training and development regarding the Acts.

Special Communication Needs Personnel Training

ARS will continue to include among its personnel or will make available personnel who are able to communicate in the native languages of applicants for service and clients who have limited English speaking ability. ARS also provides special modes of communication such as interpreters, captioned videos, and specialized telecommunications services for individuals who are deaf, special materials for individuals who are deaf-blind, and other specialized media systems for individuals with disabilities. Whenever possible, people with needed language skills are hired, Special equipment is provided as needed. Interpreters are provided in service settings when needed. Sign language skills are included as a minimum qualification for positions providing services to deaf persons. When needed, special entry rates are offered to persons who possess needed special language or communication skills.

Performance Evaluation System

ARS continues the process of continuously examining and modifying its personnel evaluation system, particularly with rehabilitation counselors, to emphasize serving persons with the most severe disabilities. Performance evaluation focuses on accomplishing the purposes of the Act and Federal Regulations. The Evaluation in no way impeded the accomplishment of the purpose and policy of the Act.

Coordination with Personnel Development under IDEA

ARS coordinates its comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under IDEA. The three components specifically identified are personnel development, data system on personnel and personnel development, and continuing education. Persons responsible for personnel development under IDEA in the Department of Education are involved with the persons responsible for personnel development through regular meetings, communication, and follow up.

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND (DSB)

Comprehensive System Of Personnel Development

The Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) supports a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) as required by Section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992. DSB's CSPD Plan is aimed at securing and maintaining an adequate supply of qualified rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals to provide rehabilitation services to blind and visually impaired Arkansans.

Data System

DSB presently has 76 authorized positions and a total of 72 current employees providing services to a total of 2523 consumers, 1934 of whom are vocational rehabilitation clients. There are 23 Counselors (13 who carry a Vocational Rehabilitation caseload and 10 managing Rehabilitation Teaching and Orientation and Mobility). This provides a VR counselor ratio of 63:1. The remaining VR staff includes three field supervisors, one case reviewer, ten business & technology staff (including Vending Facility Program), two job developers and 30 support staff. There are nine administrative staff. It is anticipated that 2-4 VR Counselors will be needed over the next 5-year period.

An Education and Training Profile on personnel employed by DSB is established at hire by the DSB Staff Development Coordinator (SDC) and updated annually. The data identifies each employee, his/her job function, educational background, and certification obtained or pending. The SDC annually completes a Training Needs Assessment, which includes education needs and training needs. This database contains all training activities individual staff members have attended, and is made available to individuals for certification and licensing verification upon request.

Budget discussions are held by the DSB Director with the administrative team to discuss overall agency personnel needs for compliance with the program requirements of the state plan. Personnel planning considers retirement projections for existing staff and other turnovers for the current program year and the next five years. Client needs assessment data is also analyzed to note patterns in the demand for services in order to focus appropriate staff skills toward consumer demand.

Training calendars are designed to meet current staff development needs based upon the approved state plan and any changes within the Rehabilitation Act or regulations and related policy directives. Planning also includes consumer group participation.

The University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (UAF), Arkansas State University (ASU) and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) offer CORE accredited Master's Degree Programs in Rehabilitation Counseling. The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) offers courses/programs designed to train rehabilitation personnel.

There are twelve (12) or more colleges and universities located throughout the state that offer related courses pertinent to the field of rehabilitation. These campuses are accessible for staff to pursue college courses within reasonable distance of home. Distance Learning Programs will also be explored as an option. However, the above universities will be utilized, as needed, for training new staff and retraining existing staff to meet standards.

In collaboration with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, DSB has surveyed universities every three years to solicit the number of graduates in the field of rehabilitation. DSB will continue this collaborative effort and survey universities in June annually to develop a pool of professionals for recruitment of qualified personnel. Following are statistics from the latest survey:

1997 Survey Results:	Total	Graduates	Continuing Students
Undergraduate VR Rehab	121	51	70
Graduate VR Programs	23	08	15
Graduate Rehab Teaching	70	29	41
Graduate O & M	22	17	05
Graduate Audiology/ Speech Pathology	43	23	20
Doctor Rehab	07	01	06
Deafness Rehabilitation	11	08	03

Recruitment And Retention

The Director has committed full support in providing resources to implement the CSPD Plan and has appointed a “Comprehensive Personnel Development Team” (CPDT) to plan recruitment focus, personnel preparation and retention efforts to assemble and maintain a qualified staff to include minorities and individuals with disabilities. DSB currently has 13 counselors carrying a VR (Vocational Rehabilitation) caseload, two of whom have a Master’s Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and meet the equivalent of CRC Certification. Neither of the two counselors is certified. Other DSB staff, rehabilitation teachers and support staff, will need skills upgraded as well to meet requirements and enhance skills and competencies in their respective areas.

Anticipated turnover is monitored to better plan long term staffing and recruitment efforts. Performance Evaluation plans are developed based on counselor/client caseload ratios considered together with professional standards of certifying entities. Staff demographics are examined to determine whether this reflects the general population by age, sex, disability, ethnicity, etc. It is expected that DSB will experience significant turnover in staff in all areas in the next five years due to retirement. Plans are in place to provide ‘shadow’ positions with veteran staff for transition and succession planning. Training evaluations are required to assess the effectiveness of training provided and afford an avenue for staff input on current and future training.

DSB coordinated with the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) in a joint effort to obtain funding for the CSPD, submitting a Proposal, “Opportunities for Long-Term Professional Training for Arkansas’ Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors” (Operation OPT). This joint effort included collaboration with the University of Arkansas of Fayetteville (UAF) and Arkansas State University (ASU) Master’s Degree Programs in Rehabilitation Counseling, and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR). Five DSB staff will complete Course I-Medical Aspects of Disability in December 1999 towards CRC Certification. Three slots have been allocated to DSB from the University of North Texas State and San Diego State University CSPD Distance Learning Grant to work toward a Masters Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. The Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) has reviewed transcripts and made recommendations regarding CRC Eligibility requirements for certification renewal and continuing education.

The University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) offers a Master’s of Art Degree Program in Counseling with an emphasis in Rehabilitation Counseling. Numerous courses are offered that are designed to move students closer to a Master’s Degree and individuals can pursue a graduate degree in Rehabilitation Teaching with a specialization in blindness and visual impairment.

UALR provides full support by providing assistance to DSB in meeting CSPD needs and has been invited to serve as advisor on the CPDT Committee.

DSB staff participates with the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB), a Historical Black College/University (HBCU), by continuing to commit staff to serve as consultants for an undergraduate degree program in Rehabilitation. DSB is actively involved with the Region VI Consortium on Distance Learning, University of Arkansas Regional Continuing Education Center CSPD Initiatives and the University of North Texas State/San Diego State University Consortium Model for Distance Education CSPD Program.

DSB will continue to increase linkages with Disabled Student Affairs offices within the higher education system; continue to provide in-service presentations at various career days, job fairs and disability awareness activities, etc.; provide practicums and internships at ASU, UAF, UALR, Arkansas Technical University (ATU), etc. DSB staff will continue to participate on various University Advisory Boards, focus groups, task forces and community outreach activities to encourage minorities and individuals with disabilities to enter the field of rehabilitation.

Personnel Standards

This Division will recruit, and, to the degree possible, hire counselors with a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or other closely related degree, and utilize the CPDT to implement an education plan for existing personnel to be retrained to meet certification standards for CRC*, LPC*, AER* and LOC* requirements:

*CRC - Council on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (Certified Rehabilitation Counselor)

*LPC - Arkansas State Board of Counseling (Licensed Professional Counselor)

*AER - Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (Rehabilitation Teaching and Orientation and Mobility Certification)

*LOC - Library of Congress (Certified Braille Transcriber)

The Arkansas Office of Personnel Management (OPM) recommends the minimum qualifications, job descriptions and salary rates for specific classifications, based upon labor market surveys, which are then reviewed and approved by the legislature. Following input from both state rehabilitation agencies, OPM has amended State Minimum Qualifications for entry-level staff to show preference for the above rehabilitation field certifications. Similarly, senior positions now require such certification or its equivalency based upon the current standards of each certifying entity.

There is presently a shortage of rehabilitation professionals across the nation, and particularly in Arkansas. Although there are existing graduate rehabilitation programs within the state, Arkansas salaries lag behind recruitment demand and graduates traditionally relocate. Training of existing long-term staff is planned to diminish the likelihood of high turnover.

DSB provides internships for CORE (Council of Rehabilitation Education) schools and participates as a supporter in their grant development activities. Agency staff also serve as speakers for rehabilitation and related field classes in the institutions of higher education, professional organizations and various community programs. These schools are surveyed annually as a potential market of qualified rehabilitation professionals.

As a Division of the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS), DSB personnel vacancies are published in the DHS Career Opportunities Bulletin and copies are disseminated to local Employment Security Department Offices, other state agencies, college and university recruitment bulletins, etc. Further recruitment is accomplished through publication in statewide newspapers, on the Arkansas Radio Reading Services, the DSB Website and the national Rehabilitation Recruitment Center at Oklahoma State University.

Performance evaluation standards for vocational rehabilitation counselors are designed to consider the counselor's effectiveness in providing consumers assistance in the achievement of employment outcomes. An integral component of the performance evaluation is the counselor agreement that emphasizes employment outcomes for the most severely disabled individuals. Counselors complete an agreement that identifies performance indicators expected for case management, case development, outreach efforts and successful outcomes.

DSB participates in various college career days throughout the state to encourage careers in rehabilitation and has targeted university programs having a high number of minorities and individuals with disabilities. Contact is maintained with Disability Support Offices throughout the state to provide information regarding DSB services. Community outreach is also included as a standard on the staff performance evaluation.

The Comprehensive Personnel Development Team (CPDT) is in place and will develop strategies to move counselors effectively toward compliance with the CSPD requirements in a timely fashion. The CPDT consists of eleven staff members in all organizational levels (Field Services Administrator, Field Supervisor, VR (Vocational Rehabilitation) Counselors, Rehabilitation Teachers, Job Developer, and Clerical Support). The CPDT will review transcripts, determine certification equivalency needs, identify and prioritize staff to receive training, develop an Education Plan for each staff member, recommend training-related changes to the state plan and strategic plan, draft the annual training schedule, recommend changes to

training procedures, research feasibility and effectiveness of new approaches to training (such as long distance learning programs, video tapes, teleconferences, etc.), and research funding sources. The Staff Development Coordinator will serve as Team Leader.

The agency's CSPD plan is non-discriminatory and will provide training to all staff, with VR Counselors given priority. Following is a current profile of DSB employees:

Total Staff - 72

9 of 72 or 12% are persons who have a visual disability (4-WF, 5-WM)

20 of 72 or 28% are persons of a racial minority (18-BF, 2-BM)

49 of 72 or 68% are female (18-BF, 31-WF)

Staff Development

DSB assures that existing staff receives adequate and ongoing training by utilizing the Long-Term VR Training Grant as a vehicle to address issues of retention of qualified staff, succession planning, leadership development and capacity building.

Technology training is required and made available to all DSB staff, and DSB ensures that such training is accessible to individuals with disabilities. The DSB Technology Laboratory has been expanded to assess the skills and determine needs of individuals eligible for DSB services and programs as well as provide VR staff with training. Staff in the technology unit keep abreast of the latest assistive technology information and products. Technology personnel and vocational rehabilitation counselors have accessed various technology training, including the intensive workshops sponsored by the National Federation of the Blind.

Personnel will continue to receive training on the 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act, the Workforce Investment Act, and the American's with Disabilities Act. A copy of the Federal Regulations for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program is available in each area office with changes disseminated via policy directives and manual updates.

The Region VI Rehabilitation Continuing Education Center (RCEC) is used to provide core and supplemental training to DSB staff. RCEC has provided training to DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors on the Vocational Rehabilitation Process and the 1998 Rehab Act as amended, Ethical Case Management, Informed Choice, and the application of World Class Services as it relates to the consumers of VR services. The RCEC has provided training and technical assistance on such topics as Teamwork Concept, Conflict Resolution, Consensus Decision Making and Communication Skills. Training is provided for personnel via college

courses, seminars, conferences, in-service training, workshops, and RSA/CSAVR training initiatives on employment.

New Employee Orientation has been revised to provide timely, accessible and job-appropriate orientation to employees when hired or promoted to new positions within the Division. Orientation will occur in three phases: Phase I - Orientation to the position, common eye diseases, rehabilitation resources, introduction to division/ department policies and procedures, and case management procedures; Phase II -Professional Skills Training Institute (new professionals will receive training at a comprehensive rehabilitation training center); and Phase III - Shadowing & Mentoring with a senior staff member.

DSB maintains close linkages with Vocational Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers within the Region, as well as Virginia Commonwealth University, Oklahoma State University State Clearinghouse; UALR Center for Research on Teaching and Learning; Mississippi State University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision; The Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind, and numerous other training centers, colleges, universities and professional associations in the field of rehabilitation.

Communication With Diverse Populations

DSB contracts with “Communication Plus,” a statewide provider for state agencies for communication with persons in their native language and/or those persons with limited English-speaking ability as well as persons with hearing impairments. In this manner, DSB provides interpreter services including interpreter sign language services as necessary to ensure effective communication. A staff member is designated to coordinate services provided by Communications Plus. DSB staff and volunteers are utilized also on a supplemental basis. Family members of the applicant or eligible individual may be used only at the request of the applicant. A DSB Policy Directive has been issued to all staff and is on file in each DSB Office regarding Communication Plus. Participation by staff in communication skills development is widely encouraged, including sign language, Braille, foreign language, etc.

A Staff Preference Survey is conducted annually regarding access to materials in the medium of choice (Braille, disk, tape, large print, etc.) for qualified staff members with a disability. Information is also available in the medium of choice for persons making employment application to DSB. The CPDT will develop strategies with HBCU’s to coordinate internships and other recruiting incentives to encourage minority individuals to apply for vacant positions. Recruitment efforts are nondiscriminatory. Individuals with disabilities and minority individuals are encouraged to apply for vacant positions. Reader services, guide services and various special

adaptive services or equipment are made available for DSB applicants and personnel upon request.

Coordination Of The CSPD Under The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

DSB supports a comprehensive system of personnel development aimed at securing/maintaining qualified rehabilitation professionals. This system is supported by cooperative relationships between DSB and education, higher education, certification bodies and state personnel officials. Cooperative agreements are in place with institutions of higher learning statewide and collaboration with various universities is ongoing.

State Special Education is a partner to DSB in enacting and monitoring the transition requirements under the IDEA, which mirror similar requisites under the Rehabilitation Act. DSB is committed to a collaborative effort with the Department of Education, Arkansas School for the Blind, and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock for a Summer Transition Project. 'JUMPSTART' is a four-week summer program to provide summer work experience and community living experiences for students age 14-21 as they transition from school to work or higher education.

'Preparing for the Future' was a special Transition training session held to involve DSB VR Counselors, and personnel from the Arkansas School for the Blind Outreach Program, Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Transition Project, Arkansas Education Department Vision Instructors in public schools, and parents of blind and visually impaired youth age 14 and older. The session covered IDEA/Transition, Self-advocacy, Parents and Student Rights, and presentations from various state agencies and university programs in Arkansas and Louisiana. Plans are to continue this cooperative venture annually.

Rehabilitation counselors will attend training and conferences sponsored by the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit. These collaborative efforts strengthened coordination of services with education and VR agencies and enhanced successful outcomes for students with disabilities.