

## **ATTACHMENT 4.2(c): Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Response of the Designated State Unit; and Explanations for Rejection of Input or Recommendations**

The agency's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is established under Kentucky Revised Statutes 163.470 and meets the requirements of 34 CFR 361.29. The SRC is a valued partner with the Office for the Blind (OFB) participating in the administration of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The council meets quarterly to review policies, program information, and other pertinent issues. As a part of the agency's commitment the Office for the Blind provides funding support for the SRC with a FY 2008 budget of \$ 48,100 and a projected FY 2009 budget of \$48,100 to be used to compensate and reimburse the expenses of Council members.

The Office for the Blind works with the SRC and makes every effort to seek input for needed improvements and recommendations. This occurs through formal and informal communication, as well as the committee work of the SRC members. The OFB works in partnership with the SRC in ensuring that individuals served received the needed services and supports to gain independence through employment and increased skills acquisition. The State Rehabilitation Council and its sub-committees guide OFB operations: Bylaws, Business Opportunities, Legislative, Nominating, Public Relations and Special Projects.

OFB staff gave performance and program operation updates at each SRC quarterly meeting in 2008. At the November 14, 2008 quarterly meeting, the Kentucky Office for the Blind (OFB) reported its performance measures on the standards and indicators, satisfaction surveys and numbers served and outcomes for the various programs offered to consumers for 2008. The University of Kentucky Research Program and the Human Development Institute conducted the 2008 Satisfaction Survey and were scheduled to make an in depth presentation at the May 26, 2009 meeting on the results. Due to scheduling conflicts with UK staff the presentation had to be rescheduled for the August 2009 meeting.

A copy of this attachment Draft was distributed to the SRC for review and approval. This attachment is Kentucky's State Rehabilitation Council's input to the State Plan and is inclusive of the comprehensive statewide needs assessment. Input was received and recorded in the written minutes of the Committee Reports and of the Council that met on August 15, 2008, November 14, 2008, February 13, 2009 and May 26, 2009. The Kentucky Office for the Blind did not reject any recommendations from the SRC during the past year. Summaries of the Council's activities and recommendations as well as the OFB response are listed below.

### **SRC Recommendations for Gaining Input for the State Plan**

At the August 15, 2008 SRC quarterly meeting the council discussed in depth the methods for obtaining input from the public for the 2010 State Plan. They discussed the possibility of holding focus groups in the fall for obtaining information on the needs of

individuals for the comprehensive needs assessment. There was a lot of discussion by the Council for this area as documented in the August minutes. The Council made the decision to utilize the focus groups being held for the statewide needs assessment as a method to obtain information for the State Plan. Given that the focus groups would gather in depth information from consumers the Council decided this venue would be utilized for input for the 2010 State Plan. Information gained would be summarized in the Statewide Needs Assessment and utilized in formulating the Agency goals, strategies and priorities for the 2010 State Plan. The Council clarified that there were no major changes to OFB policies and procedures that would merit holding additional open forums. The Council members emphasized to each other what an important role each member has in getting the word out to the different advocacy chapter groups across the state regarding the focus groups. The membership of the Council committed to playing an active role in sharing with their National Federation of the Blind (NFB) and American Council of the Blind (ACB) chapter groups and other key organizations that the Office for the Blind will be holding focus groups to gain input as well as obtaining information through surveys via the website. Individuals were also given the option to call the toll-free number and give their input verbally.

A sub-committee of the formal Council was formed to identify the format and design of the focus groups. The sub-committee members were Kenny Jones, Morry LaTour, Charlie Allen and Dr. Ron Milliman. The sub-committee worked with agency staff in identifying the format, timeframes and facilitation of the groups. The following focus group locations were set:

Kentucky NFB State Convention	Louisville /September 2008
Kentucky ACB State Convention	Louisville/November 2008
Kentucky School for the Blind	Louisville/February 2009
Blue Grass Council for the Blind	Lexington/March 2009

The sub-committee came up with a design for the sessions and designated two SRC members as facilitators. The objective of each session was: “To gather information regarding the needs of individuals who are blind and visually impaired” for the five target areas decided upon by the Council. They were: 1) Housing, 2) Adaptive Equipment and Devices, 3) Independent Living, 4) Mainstream Education and 5) Employment. The facilitators would introduce the topic areas and invite discussion using questions from the survey design. The facilitators would then carefully reflect back a summary of what was discussed assuring accuracy in capturing the information. One of the SRC members would record the session or capture it on paper while the other was the main facilitator of the session. The information was then put in an electronic format and shared with agency staff.

**OFB Response:** The OFB followed all of the above recommendations for gaining input for the 2010 State Plan and the conducting of the statewide needs assessment. Information regarding needed input was sent through different disability list serves, and press releases through the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet at the

recommendation of the SRC. Input was gathered through the following methods: Satisfaction Surveys, link was posted on the website for an on-line survey approved by the SRC; telephone, email and in writing to the Office for the Blind. As a result of the Council members commitment to playing a more active role in making sure there is more participation through the different advocacy groups there was excellent participation in the four focus groups held across the state. OFB staff shared with the Council Members the results of the comprehensive needs assessment report. The summary provided information for needed planning by the Council and the goals, strategies and priorities were agreed upon for the 2010 State Plan at the May 2009 quarterly meeting.

### **SRC Recommendations for the State Plan Goals and Priorities**

In 2008 there were five concise and measurable goal areas. The Council reviewed the five goals, strategies and innovation and expansion activities existing in the plan at the May 26, 2009 meeting based upon the information given in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. The information was gathered and analyzed from the Statewide Needs Assessment. The revision of the goals, priorities, strategies and innovation and expansion activities for the 2010 state plan were based on the results of the Statewide Needs Assessment. The SRC, in collaboration with the agency, will work on each goal and establish a baseline of performance assuring measurable for reporting the agencies progress. A motion was made by Morry LaTour to approve the set goals, strategies and priorities and seconded by Charlie Allen. The motion was passed by the full Council.

The established goals are as follows.

**Goal # 1: Increase the number of quality employment outcomes by providing services to ensure that individuals who are blind and visually impaired secure employment and achieve economic self-sufficiency.**

**Goal #2: Expand and increase services for transition age youth.**

**Goal # 3: Maximize consumer access to affordable assistive technology in order to increase their independence in their homes, schools, and communities and remove barriers to employment.**

**Goal # 4: Maximize the operational management of programs in order to insure efficiency and effectiveness of agency processes.**

**Goal #5: Maximize Independent Living Services (IL) and Services for Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) increasing the number of individuals who are blind and visually impaired that live independently, work competitively, and are active in their community.**

**OFB Response:** The agency accepted the recommendations for goals for the 2010 State Plan.

### **SRC Recommendations for the Satisfaction Survey Process**

At the May 9, 2008 meeting Tony Lobianco, HDI staff attended the meeting and made a presentation to the Council for the 2007 survey results. After the presentation there was general discussion on the survey. The Council was very pleased with the performance of UK and asked OFB to start the process to renew the contract for 2008. A copy of the 2008 Satisfaction Survey Executive Summary was distributed to SRC members at the February 13, 2009 meeting. There were 320 respondents with a 93% response rate. Overall 90% of the respondents considered OFB services to be "Excellent to Very Good". The council again requested a presentation from UK on the results of the 2008 survey. The contract with HDI and the UK Research Department at the recommendation of the Council is currently going through the approval process with the Cabinet and UK.

**OFB Response:** At the Council's recommendation OFB contacted HDI to come and make a formal presentation of the data and any service trends identified through the survey and answer any of the Council's questions regarding the satisfaction survey results for 2008. The presentation was scheduled for May of 2009; however due to scheduling conflicts for UK staff the presentation will not occur until the August 2009 meeting of the SRC.

### **SRC Recommendations for Marketing and Public Relations**

The SRC Public Relations Committee works specifically with OFB staff in the area of marketing and outreach. Council Member, Dr. Ron Milliman, Professor of Marketing at Western Kentucky University, serving on this committee has been a true asset to the Council. In 2008 OFB worked closely with the SRC and made excellent progress in this area in response to the recommendations given by the Council for the 2009 State Plan. The agency held a marketing retreat in October of 2008 and developed a Marketing Plan for the agency. The Marketing Plan was presented to the Council at the November 14, 2008 meeting. Paul Wiese moved to accept the report and Charlie Allen seconded. Agency brochures were revised, printed and distributed to the field offices for use in marketing the agency. The agency PSA was produced and distributed widely in 2008 through radio and TV throughout the State. The Committee made the following three recommendations to include in the State Plan for 2010: 1) Consider an exhibit at the Lions Club Bluegrass Fair, and continue to attend and exhibit at events (Optometrist, Ophthalmologists, Transition and Job Fairs, and 2) Utilize local advocacy organizations such as ACB and NFB as a marketing and communication venue and 3) Tracking and Reporting for the outreach and effect of the PSA for referrals (following them through application to closure).

**OFB Response:** The Marketing Committee will work on the implementation of the formal Marketing Plan in 2009. OFB staff participated in the State Chapter Conferences for ACB and NFB and the National Conference for ACB in 2009. Staff made presentations of OFB services and projects increasing our visibility as an agency with both organizations. OFB had exhibit booths at both the Ophthalmologists and

Optometrist Annual Conference Meetings working closely with the Kentucky Medical Association. In 2008 OFB staff made presentations and distributed materials about agency services at eighty-four (84) different events such as job fairs, health fairs, transition fairs, and senior citizen and diversity fairs. Year to date for 2009 staff have participated in 61 different events. A follow up report for the PSA tracking will be compiled quarterly and reported to the SRC.

### **SRC Recommendations for the Statewide Needs Assessment**

In 2008 the Special Projects Committee along with the full council concentrated on the design and conducting of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. The Special Projects Committee of the SRC began the process of working on the design of the assessment in 2007 making sure it would target the RSA priority areas. Dr. Ron L. Milliman, Professor of Marketing at Western Kentucky University played a key role in the design of the project. This will be outlined in detail in Attachment 4.11 (c) of this plan.

The design included recommendations from the Council for the 1) Identification of Potential Clients, 2) Determination of the Best Methods to Reach Potential Clients, and 3) Create an Instrument or Design Other Medium Formats. The Special Projects Committee along with the full council came up with a list of sources of information, organizations and partners to target to assure that the RSA target priority areas were addressed. A variety of media outreach methods were identified by the Special Projects Committee.

The Committee designed the survey content for the consumer survey. Agency staff took that recommendation and assisted in the development of questions for the survey. The Council approved the survey as well as the review and approval of the other surveys utilized by the agency for other targeted populations.

At the August 15, 2008 meeting the decision was made to develop a sub-committee that would develop a format for the focus groups. There was much discussion at this meeting on how the focus groups would be facilitated. The Council made the decision that they as members would be the facilitators for each of the four focus groups to be held across the State. The sub committee came up with format to use at the four focus groups held during 2008 and 2009. The format is as follows:

Objective of the session: To gather information regarding the needs of individuals who are blind and visually impaired for the areas of: 1) Housing, 2) Adaptive Equipment and Devices, 3) Independent Living, 4) Mainstream Education, and 5) Employment.

The SRC members conducting the focus group will facilitate discussion around these areas. During the focus groups SRC members leading the group carefully reflected back a summary of what was heard as the facilitator to assure accuracy in capturing information. The facilitators will record the information shared either electronically or

through manually written notes and share this with agency staff for compilation in the needs assessment.

**OFB Response:** The agency followed all the recommendations of the Special Projects Committee and the full Council for the design and conducting of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. Agency staff compiled the results of the assessment and submitted the summary report to the full council for review in May of 2009. The Council reviewed the information and formulated goals, strategies and priorities for the 2010 State Plan based on the information gained through the needs assessment.

### **SRC Recommendations for Increasing Employment Outcomes**

This Business Opportunities Committee had a change in the chair of this committee with the loss of Dr. Shipman. Mr. Charles Allen became the new chair. At the August 15, 2008 meeting the committee shared job vacancies for the following employers: 1) Kentucky School for the Blind, 2) The American Printing House for the Blind and 3) Vending Openings at Ft. Campbell and Dosker Manor in Louisville. There were no other recommendations for the agency at this meeting. At the November 14, 2008 SRC meeting the committee recognized the economic instability in the country and its effects on the labor market. The committee recommended to the agency that it would focus its efforts on maintaining current levels of performance and exploring ways to make things better for consumers. The committee made the recommendation that OFB explore interim type programs to provide work opportunities and job experience focusing mainly on students who are coming out of college. A similar program existed in the past and they asked that the agency explore the idea of reestablishing this program. At the February 13, 2009 quarterly meeting the committee shared information regarding companies hiring in the state such as AT & T, Six Flags Kentucky Kingdom, and the Census Bureau. At the May 29 meeting the committee recommended that KBE “look into possibilities other than just food”. They stated that one possibility was that stimulus money can be used to put people to work as entrepreneurs through the KBE program and it could be a small business program, not just food and vending. They asked for a report on this at the next meeting. The committee voiced concern over the fact that the agency was not addressing their recommendations. They would like a quarterly report to be given as feedback as to what has been done by the agency into implementing things they’ve recommended. To further clarify what the Council wanted in the report on job leads shared they ask for information to be given on how the agency follows through with their recommendations and whether or not an employment outcome occurs as a result of those leads. The committee members recommended that staff follow up with the following companies that are hiring: 1) Global Marriott (reservation positions), 2) Kentucky Kingdom, and 3) the Red Cross Program (call-back program for donors).

OFB Response: The Director of Consumer Services will explore the possibility of reestablishing the work opportunities and job experience program for individuals graduating from college. The Director of Kentucky Business Enterprises will research

options regarding the recommendation from the committee regarding other possibilities and the small business program and give a report at the quarterly meeting in August of 2009. All recommendations are reported in the state plan with the agency response and that is distributed to all Council members for their review. Agency staff acknowledged that a quarterly report to the Council regarding job leads had not been generated. Since the retirement of the individual in that position, there have been two different appointments of the Director of Consumer Services and now one of them is splitting their time as Acting Director. Job leads are shared agency wide that are sent by the Council and staff. As a result consumers have opportunities for employment. This issue will be resolved by the August of 2009 meeting and a report will be given to the committee regarding all recommendations given.

### **SRC New Member Orientation**

A new member orientation was not held in 2008. The Council made the determination not to conduct one until later in 2009 when additional members new to the operations of the Council will receive their appointments. Many of the current new members had participated on the SRC in prior years and were familiar with the Council operations. All members were encouraged to participate in the training and were sent information about the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Online Training Series, developed by the Rehabilitation Services Administration in cooperation with the National Rehabilitation Continuing Education Programs.

**ATTACHMENT 4.8 (b)(1): Cooperation and Coordination with Other Agencies and Other Entities: Cooperation with Agencies That Are Not in the Statewide Workforce Investment System and with Other Entities**

The agency will assure that the Governor of the State, in consultation with other appropriate agencies, will have in place interagency agreements or other mechanisms for interagency coordination between any appropriate public entity including the state Medicaid Program, public institutions of higher education and a component of the statewide workforce investment system. This will ensure the provision of vocational rehabilitation services described in subparagraph (A) other than those specified in paragraph (5) (D), and in paragraph (1) through (4) and (14) of Section 103 (a) of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, that are included in the individualized plan for employment of an eligible individual, including the provision of such vocational rehabilitation services during the duration of any dispute. Such agreements shall include the following:

- (i) A description of a method for defining the financial responsibility of a public entity for providing such services, and a provision stating the financial responsibility of such public entity for providing such services.
- (ii) Information specifying the conditions, terms, and procedures under which the office shall be reimbursed by other public entities for providing such services.
- (iii) Information specifying procedures for resolving interagency disputes under the agreement.
- (iv) Information specifying policies and procedures for public entities to determine and identify the interagency coordination responsibilities of each public entity to promote the coordination and timely delivery of vocational rehabilitation services (except those services specified in paragraph (5)(D) and in paragraphs (1) through (4) and (14) of Section 103 (a) of the Act.

**Responsibilities of Other Public Entities**

If any public entity other than the office is obligated under Federal or State law, or assigned responsibility under State policy or under regulations set forth in the 1998 Amendments to the Act, to provide or pay for any services that are also considered to be vocational rehabilitation services (other than those specified in paragraph (5) (D) and in paragraphs (1) through (4) and (14) of Section 103 (a), such public entity shall fulfill that obligation or responsibility, either directly or by contract or other arrangement.

- 1. If a public entity other than the office fails to provide or pay for the services for an eligible individual, the office shall provide or pay for such services to the individual. The office may claim reimbursement for the services from the public entity that failed to provide or pay for such services. Such public entity shall

reimburse the office pursuant to the terms of the interagency agreement or other mechanism described in the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, according to the procedures established in such agreement or mechanism pursuant to the established conditions, terms and procedures of reimbursement.

2. Signed agreements between respective officials of the public entities that outline and identify the responsibilities of each public entity relating to the provision of services shall be in place.

The Office for the Blind has developed collaborative relationships with several agencies and entities within and without the statewide workforce investment system both private and public agencies and programs. OFB works cooperatively with the following agencies to avoid the duplication of services and enhance the service delivery process for consumers who are blind and visually impaired.

- 176 school districts statewide consisting of 1,249 schools inclusive of 458 Visually Impaired Students
- Eleven special education cooperatives networks across the state created to enhance educational opportunities for Kentucky's children providing technical assistance, training; professional development, specialized services and research.
- Department of Behavioral Health, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities through their fourteen (14) Community Mental Health and Mental Retardation Centers for supported employment
- The Correctional System in assisting consumers with visual disabilities who are offenders
- The Kentucky Business Leadership Network, which is affiliated with the U. S. Business Leadership Network, is to promote enduring partnerships between business and industry and agencies that provide vocational support services for Kentuckians with disabilities.
- Community rehabilitation providers in the provision of employment services
- Kentucky Association of Persons in Supported Employment whose mission is to “promote the improvement of Supported Employment services for persons with significant disabilities experiencing barriers to employment through education, advocacy, collaboration, policy change, elimination of barriers, empowerment and community participation”.
- Department of Medicaid Services –OFB has representation on the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant Task Force and the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant Steering committee collaborating with the Department for Medicaid Services, Department for Mental Health and Mental Retardation and the Department of Protection and Advocacy.
- Department of Community Based Services-Public Assistance Programs
- Local Ophthalmologists and Optometrists and their respective professional associations in accessing needed services for consumers. These are key collaborative relationships that OFB has established. Staff attend state conferences, distribute marketing materials and maintain working relationships

with local offices and the area ophthalmologists and optometrists (patient referral and services).

- American Printing House for the Blind, the world's largest source for adapted educational and daily living products.
- Kentucky School for the Blind, K-12 public school serving Kentucky students who are blind and visually impaired; Short Course program (1-12 weeks) of specialized instructional is also available to students throughout the school year; and summer school programs are offered in June and July
- Kentucky Federation of the Blind an advocacy organization that improves blind people's lives through advocacy, education, research, technology, and programs encouraging independence and self-confidence. OFB is involved through representation at their state and national conventions and representation of this advocacy organization sit on the State Rehabilitation Council.
- Kentucky American Council of the Blind strives to improve the well being of all blind and visually impaired people by serving as a representative national organization of blind people. OFB is involved through representation at their state and national conventions and representation of this advocacy organization sit on the State Rehabilitation Council.
- Local Chambers of Commerce –OFB staff represent the agency across the state on local chamber organizations
- International Centers specializing in advocacy and services to the foreign born and serve refugees, asylees, and immigrants (Louisville, Lexington, Bowling Green).
- The Veterans Administration-A representative of the Veterans Administration sits on the State Rehabilitation Council. Currently OFB is talking with VA in planning for needed services due to an increase in visual impairments as a result of injuries associated with the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Area Employers in the development of working relationships increasing the number of successful employment outcomes for consumers
- University of Kentucky Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute is a University Center of Excellence established by federal legislation to promote team-based approaches to provide services for individuals with disabilities and their families.
- Other community based organizations such as Health clinics, HUD, Diabetes Foundation, The Lions Club and other community resources for consumers
- The Kentucky Assistive Technology Service (KATS) operate within its lead agency the Office for the Blind. This allows for increased collaboration between OFB and KATS. KATS is a statewide network of organizations and individuals connecting to enhance the availability of assistive technology devices and services to improve the productivity and quality of life for individuals with disabilities.
- Visually Impaired Preschool Services offering service to infants, toddlers, and pre-schoolers who are visually impaired; and to maximize each child's developmental potential through direct services, advocacy, and community education

- Kentucky Outreach and Information Network (KOIN)- Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services/Department of Public Health planning committee for communication and message distribution to special populations during a public health emergency or other disastrous event.

The USDA Rural Development obligations of \$5,901,018,067 in Kentucky from 2001 through 2008 for the areas of Community Facilities , Housing, Water and Environmental, Business Cooperative Programs. Agency staff are aware of these programs and provide information and referral to consumers for these programs to meet their individual needs.

OFB staff are integral members of many statewide councils and their respective subcommittees such as the SILC, Developmental Disabilities Council, Transition and the Interagency Council.

### **Coordination with the Statewide Independent Living Council and Independent Living Centers**

The Office works in coordination with the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). A member from SILC sits on the Agency State Rehabilitation Council. The Office for the Blind Independent Living Program Manager represents the Agency on the SILC. As outlined in the SILC state plan OFB provides monies for costs associated with the statewide independent living conference. OFB staff work collaboratively with the Independent Living Centers across the state in the service delivery process for consumers with visual impairments.

### **State Use Contracting**

Under the state procurement code, administered by the Finance and Administration Cabinet, there are preferences to be given by governmental entities and political subdivisions in purchasing commodities or services from specified entities. Specifically, first preference is given to the products made by the Department of Corrections and Division of Prison Industries. Second preference shall be given either to: (1) the Kentucky Industries for the Blind or any other nonprofit corporation with which the Office for the Blind contracts to further its statutory purposes; or (2) qualified nonprofit agencies for individuals with severe disabilities i.e., Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP). This means that state and local governmental agencies are to purchase directly from Correctional Industries or an Industries contracted with by OFB and/or a CRP without having to utilize the competitive procurement processes. The Finance and Administration Cabinet is to publicize/distribute a list of those products and services. OFB confers its statutory state use preference upon LC Industries to afford them the preferential procurement opportunities for their products and services, which may expand employment opportunities for individuals who are blind and visually impaired. A LC Industries representative sits on the Office for the Blind State Rehabilitation Council.

## **Requirements related to the Statewide Workforce Investment System**

As a partner of the One-Stop service delivery system the office shall carry out the following functions consistent with the Act, Title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and the regulations in 20 CFR part 662:

- 1) Make available to participants through the One-Stop service delivery system the core services (as described in 20 CFR 662.240) that are applicable to the program administered by the office under this part;
- 2) Use a portion of funds made available to the program administered by the office under this part, consistent with the Act and this part, to:
  - i) Create and maintain the One-Stop service delivery system;  
and
  - ii) Provide core services (as described in 20 CFR 662.240)
- 3) Enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Local Workforce Investment Board under section 117 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 relating to the operation of the One-Stop service delivery system that meets the requirements of section 121c) of the Workforce Investment Act and 20 CFR 662.300, including a description of services, how the cost of the identified services and operating costs of the system will be funded, and methods for referrals.
- 4) Participate in the operation of the One-Stop service delivery system consistent with the terms of the MOU and the requirements of the Act and this part.
- 5) Provide representation on the Local Workforce Investment Board under section 117 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

## **Cooperation and Collaboration within The Workforce Investment System**

**Reciprocal referral services with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation:** The Office for the Blind and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation have established reciprocal referral services which allow for more efficient services to individuals with disabilities. The two agencies have a memorandum of agreement and jointly plan activities to improve services in the state for individuals with multiple impairments, including individuals with dual sensory loss.

The office may enter into agreements with other entities that are a component of the statewide workforce investment system and replicates those agreements at the local level between the individual offices of the office and the local entities carrying out the One-

Stop service delivery system. These agreements may provide for the provision of inter-component staff training and technical assistance that may include, but is not limited to the following areas:

- i. the availability of benefits of and information on eligibility standards for vocational rehabilitation services; and
- ii. the promotion of equal, effective, and meaningful participation by individuals with disabilities in workforce investment activities in the State through the promotion of program accessibility, the use of nondiscriminatory policies and procedures, and the provision of reasonable accommodations, auxiliary aids and services and rehabilitation technology for individuals with disabilities.

Said agreement may also provide for:

- The use of information and financial management systems that link all components of the statewide workforce investment system, that link the components to other electronic networks, including non-visual electronic networks, and that relate to such subjects as employment statistics and information on job vacancies, career planning, and workforce investment activities.
- The use of customer service features such as common intake and referral procedures, customer databases, resource information and human service hotlines.
- The establishment of cooperative efforts with employers to:
  - Facilitate job placement; and
  - Carry out any other activity that the Office and the employers determine to be appropriate.
- The identification of staff roles, responsibilities, and available resources, and specification of the financial responsibility of each component of the statewide workforce investment system with regard to paying for necessary services (consistent with State law and Federal requirements); and
- Specification of procedures for resolving disputes among such components.

Kentucky implemented an electronic data system as part of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) planning of Kentucky improving common data collection on consumers with self-service functions including registration and assessment. The system is currently under refinement. The Office for the Blind and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation are currently building a new case management system that will interface with the EKOS system to better capture the participants in the program for WIA reporting purposes. A statewide directory of resources and services is available on the Internet, with links to a geographic information system providing specific local points of services. Electronic connectivity among state agencies, educational institutions, military installations, economic development organizations and employers will increase access points, improve

the quality of information for staff and consumers, and help provide workers for jobs and jobs for workers.

Since the implementation of the Workforce Investment Act, the office continues its collaboration, cooperation and commitment to these centers and the other partners. The office has established relationships with other entities within the Workforce Investment System and works jointly in the service delivery process.

The office secures yearly a grant through the Office of Adult Education that provides testing and other educational opportunities for adults at the Charles McDowell Center.

The office participates in the ten Workforce Investment Act System local boards throughout the state as well as serving on different committees of those boards. .

The office has partnered with the Office of Employment and Training and the 10 local Workforce Investment Areas to obtain Governor's WIA discretionary funding for a demonstration project grant to expand the Kentucky Bioptic Driving Program. This program facilitates a consumer's interaction with the One-Stop System and provides driver's training to enhance independence and employment opportunities. This program is closely monitored yearly by WIA standards.

The office has access to job orders through an agreement with the Office of Employment and Training. Counselors can access job orders from their computers through EKOS. The Office for the Blind works with the local offices in obtaining vocational training for consumers eligible under the Dislocated Workers program. OFB provides informational materials to the one stops as to services the agency provides allowing for self-referral of customers.

The office participated with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Office of Employment and Training establishing electronic networks linking employment and employer information together, and establishing an Internet system whereby consumers can post resumes` and employers can access job seekers through this network system. The Kentucky Tele-linking Network provides the infrastructure for the delivery of interactive television classrooms and video-conferencing capability. This fiber-optic network links universities, community colleges, public schools, agencies, and libraries in the state. Centralized data collection and information access is possible through a mainframe computer housed by the Office of Information Systems.

The office will identify and delineate staff roles, responsibilities and available resources and specification of the financial responsibility of each component of the statewide workforce investment system with regard to paying for the necessary services that are consistent with State law and Federal requirements. The office will specify procedures for resolving disputes among such components.

The office shall provide for the development of Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) at local levels between the office and local entities carrying out activities through the statewide Workforce Investment System.

### **Information and Referral Assurance**

The office has implemented an information and referral system to ensure that individuals who have visual disabilities will be provided accurate vocational rehabilitation information and guidance using appropriate modes of communication, to assist such individuals in preparing for, securing, retaining, or regaining employment. The office assures the referral of these individuals to other appropriate Federal and State programs if it is unable to serve them.

Appropriate referrals made through the system shall:

- (i) be to the Federal, State or local programs, including programs carried out by other components of the statewide workforce investment system in Kentucky that is best suited to address the specific employment needs of an individual with a disability; and
- (ii) include, for each of these programs, provision to the individual:
  - (I) a notice of the referral by the designated State agency to the agency carrying out the program;
  - (II) information identifying a specific point of contact within the agency carrying out the program; and
  - (III) information and advice regarding the most suitable services to assist the individual to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment.

All applicants and eligible individuals or, as appropriate, the applicants' representatives or individuals' representatives, will be provided information and support services to assist the applicants and individuals in exercising informed choice throughout the rehabilitation process, consistent with Section 102 (d) of the Rehabilitation Act Amendment of 1998. The Client Assistance Program is available for additional assistance and advocacy during the entire rehabilitation process.

## **ATTACHMENT 4.8 (b) (2): Cooperation and Coordination with Other Agencies and Other Entities: Coordination with Education Officials**

### **Coordination with Education Officials and Outreach Activities**

The Kentucky Transition Collaborative is an interagency collaborative effort between 21 different state agencies. OFB participates with OVR, The Department of Education and other state agencies in this federally funded, collaborative effort to provide training and sub-grant assistance to school districts. The mission of the Kentucky Transition Collaborative is to assist students with disabilities and their families in making a successful transition from school to adult life.

The Office participates with the Department of Education and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in the Community Based Work Transition Program. The program is administered by individual school districts that hire employment specialists to provide students with community-based evaluation, work experience and job placement during the final two years of high school.

The Office participates with the Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) to provide transition services to students attending KSB. The Office monitors progress of the program and students through attending regularly established IEP and ARC meetings. OFB Charles W. McDowell Rehabilitation Center provides vocational assessments and career exploration activities for students statewide and those attending KSB during the summer between their junior and senior year in high. OFB Transition Coordinators work directly with Kentucky School for the Blind staff responsible for implementation of this program. A collaborative effort is made to assist in Community Based Work Transition Program, vocational assessments, and annual Individual Employment Plans and Individualized Graduation Plan. A KSB coordinator is designated to work with individual OFB Counselors, students and families. KSB provides an outreach teacher consultant to each of the eleven (11) Special Education Cooperatives. KSB consultants coordinate and provide training and professional collaboration for co-op faculty. KSB publishes a quarterly newsletter, "Parent to Parent Newsletter" of which OFB transition coordinator contributes articles relevant to transition.

The Office participates with the Kentucky Deaf-Blind Transition Project, which helps promote cooperative transition services for youth who are deaf-blind, and who are students at the Kentucky School for the Blind, the Kentucky School for the Deaf, or any other school the student may be attending. The Office has a DeafBlind Coordinator who is responsible for helping to facilitate these services for youth.

Workforce Investment Boards: OFB VR counselors actively participate on local WIA Board's Youth and One Stop committees to enhance and make accessible programs and services for youth in transition.

KY AHEAD is a professional organization whose purpose is to promote communication among professionals in post-secondary education in order to improve the development and implementation of services for persons with disabilities. On campus disability centers are an essential resource for students with disabilities attending post-secondary educational institutions. VR counselors are encouraged to develop relationships with disability center staff and should strongly encourage college students to utilize the services available at the centers. Every effort is made to arrange for a student to meet with staff at the disability center prior to entry into a post secondary program in assuring a smooth transition for the individuals.

Kentucky Special Education Cooperative Network: The Kentucky Special Education Cooperative Network consists of eleven (11) special education cooperatives located across the state. These cooperatives were formed to better meet the needs of the multiple school systems across Kentucky's 120 counties. All 176 local school districts, and the Kentucky Schools for the Blind and Deaf are members of a special education cooperative. Each cooperative has VI teachers and an AT specialist to assist students with visual needs and they employ other specialty service providers such as Orientation and Mobility Specialist, Physical Therapist, and Speech Therapists. OFB works collaboratively with each cooperative network across the state in the provision of information and referral for students of all ages. OFB works with others in assuring that every resource is available to students in their formative years in order for them to access needed services and acquire needed skills preparing them for the world of work.

INSIGHT – Post-secondary Preparation Week for Students Who Are Blind or Significantly Visually Impaired is a collaborative project between Big East Educational Cooperative, Kentucky School for the Blind, Kentucky Office for the Blind, Morehead State University and the University of Louisville. INSIGHT is a unique program designed to provide college bound students an opportunity to experience some of the challenges encountered when entering a university or community college. Participants gain an increased awareness of the educational, recreational, and social challenges of the post secondary environment.

The Office's Executive Director, Director of Consumer Services and Transition Coordinators work directly when needed, with the Department of Education official serving as chairman of the Kentucky Interagency Executive Transition Council. These involvements help facilitate the Office of Education's understanding of the unique transition needs of students with visual impairments and assist the Office in understanding the educational process of Public Schools in the State.

The Office provides Orientation and Mobility, Assistive Technology and Independent Living Services to school systems on a cost reimbursement basis when staff time is available.

### **Information on Formal Interagency Agreement**

The Agency in conjunction with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation has agreements with all public institutions of higher learning in the state to meet the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Title IV of the Workforce Investment Act) 29 W.S.C. Section 721 (a) (\*) (B), to develop agreements between the state vocational rehabilitation agencies and public institutions of higher education who serve mutual individuals with disabilities.

The Office participates with the Kentucky Department of Education and 21 other state agencies on the Kentucky Interagency Executive Transition Council. This Council's agreement, entitled "The Kentucky Interagency Agreement on Transition Services" provides for a statewide system of coordination among agencies in the delivery of transition services.

These agreements are designed to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in school, to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services and including provisions for:

- (i) consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including vocational rehabilitation services;
- (ii) transition planning by Office staff and staff from the educational institution for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs.
- (iii) the roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities of each agency, and including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; and
- (iv) procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need the transition services.

### **Provision for Development and Approval of Individuals Plans for Employment**

Under IDEA, schools are responsible for initiating transition planning at the age of 16 for each student identified with a disability. Since school faculty and staff are academic specialists, it is very important for the VR counselor to have early influence on the student's vocational future helping to avoid weak or unrealistic vocational training. The VR counselor acts as a vocational specialist forging the educational and future vocational needs of the child realistically together. The VR counselor is educated on the federal and state laws associated with transition and acts as an advocate for the student and parents. VR counselors may attend transition related meetings as early as the 7th grade and act as a consultant in the student's IEP. Early contact and intervention not only saves the VR counselor considerable time and effort, it allows the student and parents the opportunity to plan a realistic vocational path that will lead them to the vocational goal of their choice.

OFB maintains agreements with other agencies and schools to provide for mutual collaboration in the development of an Individual Transition Plan (ITP) for each student.

Transition planning begins in the IEP meetings in the school setting. Participants should include the student, parents or guardians of the student, appropriate school officials, an OFB VR counselor or designee, appropriate professionals from other agencies and other interested parties.

VR counselors should attend student IEP meetings during the 10th through the 12th grades and take an application at the beginning of their junior year. The VR counselor will be responsible to use their professional judgment to determine the appropriate time. The school system will continue to have the primary responsibility for accommodations and student's educational needs. Once the student graduates OFB will become the primary agent. It is mandatory that the IPE be developed with the student prior to graduation.

Prior to graduation, an IEP is developed for each student determined eligible and meets the current order of selection for vocational rehabilitation services. The IEP should address the student's transition service needs, as applicable, in the areas of instruction, related services, daily living, community, work experience, and/or assessment. Prior to the student's graduation, an Individual Graduation Plan should be developed that outlines the student's projected course of study and the responsibilities of the school and each participating agency.

The Kentucky School for the Blind provides OFB an annual number census of visually impaired students broken out by county and school system across Kentucky. When VR counselors receive the census they should be proactive in contacting school officials about transition planning for the students in their area of responsibility.

OFB recognizes that it is the primary responsibility of Kentucky schools to coordinate and provide transition planning and services for students with disabilities. The VR counselor will provide consultation and technical assistance to assist the school. If a school is unable or unwilling to provide essential transition services, OFB may become actively involved to ensure responsible educational planning for the student. Under certain conditions, with the approval of the Regional Manager, the VR counselor may directly assist schools in their responsibilities. OFB developed an agreement for the provision of specialized equipment for students. The agreement allows for that equipment to remain with the student upon graduation when an assessment determines this is in the best interest of the individual. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and AT staff determine the students postsecondary needs upon graduation taking into consideration technology changes and the need for upgraded or more advanced technology.

Post-secondary transition is driven by the student's vocational goal. The student should go to work or attend advanced education to prepare to go to work. During high school transition the VR counselor should consider the post-secondary vocational goal and proactively encourage activities for the student that will promote a smooth transition to work. Such activities should be considered an investment in the student's future:

- A. High school classes that directly or indirectly supports the student's vocational goal;
- B. Work transition or summer employment related to the student's vocational goal;
- C. Prep programs that help the student gain insight into work or the post-secondary educational environment.

OFB recognizes that transition planning is an ongoing process and that a student may choose to go in a different direction requiring a change in their vocational goal. Ongoing evaluations, vocational interest inventories and counseling will be provided to assist students in the decision making process.

**ATTACHMENT 4.8 (b)(3): Cooperation and Coordination with Other Agencies and Other Entities Cooperative Agreements with Private Non-profit Vocational Rehabilitation Service Providers**

The Office for the Blind works collaboratively with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in maintaining agreements with providers of private, non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers to support achievement of successful competitive employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The Office works with Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) through a vendor application process to ensure quality services to Office consumers. The Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) must submit a Vendor Application form. All vendor applications forms are submitted to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for review and approval of the agency as a provider.

The process for approval of a vendor as a supported employment provider is more involved and is outlined below:

- Vendor requests or obtains an application from OVR or OFB
- Upon completion of the application it is returned to the OVR branch
- OVR Branch staff review the application and obtain needed clarification if needed. Staff may meet with the provider for further technical assistance
- Application is approved and vendorship is established
- OVR Branch assists the provider with training and other information
- All vendors are required to participate in the Supported Employment training provided through the University of Kentucky Human Development Institute.
- Monitoring occurs for all vendors during the year by OVR Branch staff
- All vendorships are reviewed for continuation yearly

**ATTACHMENT 4.8(b)(4): Cooperation and Coordination with Other Agencies and Other Entities: Evidence of Collaboration Regarding Supported Employment Services and Extended Services**

The Office for the Blind has collaborative relationships with other state agencies in the provision of supported employment and extended services for individual with the most significant disabilities. The agency participates with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities, the Kentucky Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Interagency Council, the Kentucky Interagency Transition Council, Kentucky Association for Persons in Supported Employment, the University of Kentucky Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute and the Office of Special Instructional Services in the Department of Education, the Center for Independent Living and other public and private not-for-profit agencies, to provide a network of supported employment service providers.

Major objectives of this collaboration, are to promote best practices in supported employment, to expand the number of qualified supported employment service providers in various regions of the state where services are few, and to expand and enhance extended services which follow the termination of supported employment services provided by the two State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies.

The Office for the Blind works collaboratively with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in maintaining agreements with providers of private, non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers through a vendor application process for supported employment services. In 2008, the Office for the Blind worked with staff from the University of Kentucky Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute and KYAPSE in the development of training tracks for the area of vision impairments. Additional training at the KY 2009 APSE is in the planning stages for the purpose of increasing community rehabilitation providers staff skills in the provision of supported employment services to OFB consumers.

The agency participates with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the University of Kentucky Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute and the Department of Education in the Community Based Work Transition Program (CBWTP). The student considered appropriate for this program will require the unique services of a job trainer in order to obtain and maintain employment. The goal of this program is for each student to be job placed in the most integrated setting prior to graduation, with necessary supports in place to maintain that employment. In this program each school district employs a student employment coordinator who supports students in determining appropriate types of work, securing desired positions, learning the job, and maintaining employment. The employment coordinator works closely with students and their families/guardians, teachers, VR counselors, adult service providers, and other interested parties.

## **EXTENDED SERVICES**

Extended services are available throughout the Commonwealth from the 14 Regional Mental Health/Mental Retardation Boards that operate with funds provided by the Department Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. Individuals with visual disabilities who have developmental disabilities and who also have mental disabilities may meet the criteria for extended services funding from the centers.

Extended services are also available from providers of supported employment services who receive funding from organizations such as Easter Seals and United Way.

Extended services may also be arranged through systems of natural supports whereby employers, volunteers, and family members and friends of individuals with disabilities may provide supports for the duration of employment of these individuals. Documentation is required in the Individualized Plan of Employment (IPE) when this occurs.

Extended services are arranged for each individual in supported employment at the time of the development of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The type and source of extended service depends on the needs of the individual. In order to be approved to be a supported employment vendor for the agency, the supported employment agency must make extended services available using a funding source other than the agency.

Kentucky like other states faces the challenge of securing adequate funding for ongoing extended support services. The Office for the Blind along with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and several other state and public agencies are working in cooperation with the Kentucky Association for Persons in Supported Employment (KY APSE) in order to locate further funding sources for extended services and to expand supported employment services to areas of the state in which these services are lacking.

## **ASSURANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

The Office for the Blind assures that information submitted in reports will include a complete count, except as provided in subparagraph (E) of Section 103, of the applicants and eligible individual, in a manner permitting the greatest possible cross-clarification of data and that the identity of each individual for which information is supplied to other agencies of public entities will be kept confidential.

## **ATTACHMENT 4.10: Comprehensive System for Personnel Development**

### **Data System**

The Kentucky Office for the Blind maintains a system to collect and analyze on an annual basis, data on qualified personnel needs and personnel development. The OFB maintains databases for the purpose of collection and tracking of personnel training and development information. Information is analyzed on an annual basis for the number of personnel employed in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services for the blind and visually impaired. This ensures that the provision of quality services is consistent throughout the Commonwealth. In addition, the number of personnel, category, and qualifications of personnel needed by OFB, and a projection of the numbers of personnel that will be needed in five years are calculated. These calculations are based on projections of the number of individuals to be served. Personnel training files are maintained that contains records of each individual's training activities. An assessment is conducted yearly and utilized in the development and maintenance of their official career development plans as well as training, certification and educational activities.

OFB has developed and maintains a system for review of all staff assignments, based on demographic data such as population, geographic area, caseload sizes and labor market analyses. In addition, the office solicits input from field management staff in identifying areas of understaffing, or of specific need.

In 2007 and 2008 there was several veteran staff lost to retirement. For the 2008 calendar year there were twelve (12) staff retiring from the agency. Nineteen individuals or 19% left the agency during the 2008 calendar year and of these sixty-three (63%) were lost to retirements. These numbers coupled with the prior year have resulted in a very young workforce (years of service) for the agency. There were fourteen new hires or 14% of the staff new to the agency during the 2008 calendar year. The following table denotes the length of experience of existing staff for the agency.

<b>Years of Service with the Agency</b>	<b>Percentage of Staff</b>
20 Years Or Higher	10%
15 – 19 Years	10%
10 – 14 Years	13%
5 – 9 Years	27%
3 Years or Less	40%

For Counseling staff currently 88% have been in their position ten (10) years or less. Only six percent (6%) have been with the agency twenty-five years or longer and six percent (6%) have been in their position fifteen (15) to twenty-five (25) years. On a positive note, it is anticipated that the loss of veteran staff to retirements has leveled off. Most individuals needing to retire within the necessary timeframe in order to maximize their benefits have already left the agency. Even though the agency has a young

workforce, professional development, educational advancement and skills acquisition is strongly supported by the agency.

OFB must work within the constraints of a state personnel cap. Currently the personnel cap is set at 105 full-time. The following tables show the number of personnel, categories, vacancies, and projected personnel needs for the Administrative and Program Staff, Business Enterprises and the Charles W. McDowell Center. There are separate tables for the Business Enterprises and McDowell Center Staff as their job duties are different from the vocational services field staff.

**Administrative and Program Staff = 68**

<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Current Filled Positions</b>	<b>Current Vacancies</b>	<b>Projections of needs in 5 years</b>	<b>Staff / Consumer Ratio 2007</b>
Executive Director	0	1	1	1/2,993
Program Directors	2	0	1	1/1,496
Executive Staff Advisor	1	0	0	1/2,993
Rehabilitation Administrator	5	1	1	1/598
Administrative Assistants	21	1	3	1/136
Rehabilitation Counselors	18	0	2	1/166
Independent Living Counselors	7	1	0	1/374
Rehabilitation Coordinator	1	0	1	1/186
Rehabilitation Specialist (Deaf/Blind)	1	0	0	1/43
O & M Specialists	2	1	1	1/84
AT Specialists /Bioptic	5	0	0	1/89
Internal Policy Analyst (fiscal)	0	1	0	1/2,993

**Business Enterprises= 11**

<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Current Filled Positions</b>	<b>Current Vacancies</b>	<b>Projections of needs in 5 years</b>	<b>Staff / Consumer Ratio 2006</b>
<i>Director</i>	1	0	1	1/64
Internal Policy Analyst	1	0	1	1/64
Assistant Director	1	0	1	1/64
Administrative Assistant	1	0	0	1/64
Program Administration	3	0	1	1/21
Vending Technicians	3	1	0	1/16

**McDowell Center Staff = 26**

<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Current Filled Positions</b>	<b>Current Vacancies</b>	<b>Projections of needs in 5 years</b>	<b>Staff / Consumer Ratio 2006</b>
Rehabilitation Administrator	1	0	0	1/121
Administrative Assistants	5	0	2	1/24
Rehabilitation Supervisor	1	0	0	1/121
Rehabilitation Aide	2	0	0	1/61
Rehabilitation Coordinator (Visual Aids Store "See World" Total Customers 2007)	1	0	1	1/3,108
Orientation and Mobility Specialist	2	0	1	1/61
AT Specialist	2	0	2	1/53
Vocational Evaluator	2	0	0	1/45
Rehabilitation Instructor	7	0	2	1/17
Recreational Therapist	0	1	0	1/121
Maintenance Worker	1	0	0	1/121
Nurse (yearly count)	1	0	0	1/121

The total number of personnel is 105. All open positions will be filled with the most qualified candidates following all established procedures as soon as candidates can be recruited, hired and approved by the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet and State Office of Personnel. All attempts will be made to employ rehabilitation professionals certified in their areas of expertise.

**Institutions of Higher Education**

The University of Kentucky is the only institution in the state that offers a Master’s of Rehabilitation Counseling (MRC) program. This is a comprehensive accredited graduate program in rehabilitation counseling. The on line Accelerated Distance Learning Masters program can be completed in sixteen months without on-campus attendance and at in-state tuition rates. Participants in the program are eligible to test for rehabilitation counselor certification after completing 75% of their course work in their final semester. A compressed video site is located at the Kentucky School for the Blind in Louisville. OFB partners with this agency so that a large number of individuals throughout the state have direct access to rehabilitation courses. This provides the opportunity for staff to fulfill their Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) requirements and move up in the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor series. When individuals enroll in other masters level programs out of state, those programs are evaluated to ensure that they meet the eligibility criteria for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor examination prior to being approved for tuition assistance. Two out of state distance learning programs OFB considers for staff are Auburn and Wisconsin Stout.

OFB staff participate on the University of Kentucky Advisory Council. Two OFB staff attended the annual Advisory council meeting. Dr. Malachi Bishop, Ph. D., CRC

Program Coordinator presided over the meeting. The role of the advisory board members was reviewed along with program activities. This included an overview of the year and the State of the Program, Recruitment, Trends, and Changes, RSA Training Grants, Distance Learning Program Updates, Student Activities and Goals, Directions and Faculty Research and Activities.

OFB obtains information from The University of Kentucky annually regarding the number of students enrolled and the number graduating from the program with certification or licensure and /or with credentials to qualify for certification or licensure. The following information was obtained regarding the number of students enrolled in the MRC through the University of Kentucky. Two OFB staff completed the UK MRC program in 2008. One (1) of the two (2) or 50% obtained their CRC certification and the other individual graduating is preparing for the test.

University	Calendar Year	Total Graduates	OFB Staff
UK	2008	54	2

The University of Louisville offers a Master’s Level Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Program with a Master of Education (non-teaching) degree leading to ACVREP certification in O&M. Courses are taught by professors with numerous years of experience and expertise in the field of orientation and mobility. All aspects of the course work are offered via live video streaming and the Internet, with the exception of summer courses, which are delivered in a classroom setting on-campus. Students progress through coursework that addresses content-specific areas, assessment, identification, skills training, instruction, planning, collaboration, instructional technology, and related services. The program recognizes and capitalizes on best practices and on-site activities as the field-based component of the program. OFB encourages staff to pursue this field of study, as there is a severe shortage of individuals in the field to cover the needs of eligible applicants. OFB has made the determination that the agency will have to recruit from within as well as outside to fill these positions. Another effecting factor for this position is that OFB must compete with the school systems for qualified O&M Instructors. OFB pay is equivalent to the school system, however; the fact that school staffs do not work year round is a competitive factor. Currently, OFB has one (1) staff enrolled in the program with a target date of graduation for May of 2009. One individual graduating from U of L is an OFB employee and they have already obtained their O & M certification.

University	Calendar Year	Total Graduates	OFB Staff
U of L	2008	8	2

**Recruitment And Retention Of Qualified Personnel Including Staff From Minority Backgrounds And Individuals With Disabilities**

The Kentucky Office for The Blind shall aggressively recruit, equip, train and work to retain qualified professionals through coordination with institutions of higher education, professional and paraprofessional associations including personnel from minority backgrounds and individuals with disabilities. The OFB recognizes our staff as our greatest resource and is committed to the provision of training state personnel in assuring the provision of quality services to individuals resulting in positive employment outcomes. The OFB will remain current on rehabilitation trends and best practices in the field for the purpose of developing and maintaining its internal training program and securing external training opportunities for its personnel.

The OFB utilizes the state of Kentucky's Personnel Career Opportunities System (COS) an on-line recruitment system in recruitment efforts. OFB strives to achieve a more diverse workforce by recruiting and hiring individuals from protected classes. Recruitment of individuals with disabilities and those from minority backgrounds enables the agency to have highly competent individuals from all segments of society to accomplish its mission. The University of Kentucky's Graduate Program in Rehabilitation Counseling has partnered with Kentucky State University (a historically black liberal studies public institution) and the two state rehabilitation agencies to create an endorsement curriculum at Kentucky State to recruit students into the field of rehabilitation counseling. In 2008 OFB partnered with Kentucky State in the State Co-OP/Internship Program. One (1) Kentucky State students successfully completed a two-hundred (200) hour internship with the Office for the Blind through the Social Work Program. Potential applicants are identified through recruitment, posting, and advertising according to the cultural diversity initiative and the agency's Affirmative Action goals. When applicants are needed, OFB must request applications from Kentucky Department of Personnel registers. Individuals must be on the register identifying as qualifying for the position. OFB works to leverage its successful performance in recruiting individuals who are minorities or with disabilities in the following ways:

- Work closely with consumer groups, attending local chapter meetings, national meetings.
- Hires the most qualified individual realizing that as an agency OFB strives to promote cultural diversity in recruiting disabled or minority candidates inclusive of bilingual candidates.
- Encourage existing minority staff to play an active role in policy and program development, service delivery and program monitoring activities.
- Ensure that programs are accessible to minorities.
- Follow EEO guidelines and Affirmative Action Procedures.
- Utilize Division of Consumer Services demographic and population data to determine the number of minorities and individuals with disabilities in regions, and develop strategies to increase recruitment from these regions.
- Encourage minorities and individuals with disabilities to play an active role in the Office for the Blind's State Rehabilitation Council, participate in forums and provide input into policy and procedures.

The OFB acknowledges the difficulty of recruiting and hiring individuals who are Certified Rehabilitation Counselors. In this narrow occupational field of qualified individuals who hold their certification there is a shortage and competitive salary expectations of graduates usually exceeds salary constraints of the OFB. Additionally, OFB has found it difficult to hire and maintain staff in the rural areas throughout the state because candidates from outside these areas are often unwilling or unable to acclimate to the cultural differences. OFB certainly felt the impact of the loss of veteran staff in 2008. In 2008 OFB lost ten staff members that have been with the agency for 20+ years through retirements. The agency was not prepared for the impact that occurred from the loss of key staff in crucial positions.

The Kentucky Office for the Blind has a personnel classification system in place that enables salary competitiveness with other states. States surrounding the northern and western borders of Kentucky offer higher entry-level salaries based on state demographics and wage studies. There are certain expectations for Masters Level, Masters with Certification, and a Masters Certification with Limited Managerial Responsibilities for existing staff. The system allows for higher entry-level wages for new hires based on their education, certification and experience levels.

The Governor's Office of Minority Empowerment has a Minority Management Trainee Program (GMMTP). This is a recruitment and development tool to increase the representation of minority managers in state government that consists of classroom training, on-the job experience and special programs. Individuals must meet the following criteria to be eligible for the program: 1) be an ethnic minority, 2) Have one (1) year of state government service, 3) Qualify for a grade 10 or higher job classification and 4) Aspire to be a manager and demonstrate exceptional management potential. The Governor's Office of Minority Empowerment produces a newsletter that is distributed to all personnel monthly and holds a statewide conference annually.

OFB offers financial incentives to encourage staff retention and promote the achievement of CSPD requirements M.A. in Rehabilitation Counseling and or C.R.C. The office offers educational tuition assistance, payment of initial certification and maintenance fees, study time allowance per week for staff enrolled in school, alternate hours access to distance learning through state buildings, technology upgrades across the state to allow access to distance learning and training opportunities for maintaining certification requirements through training seminars and professional development conferences.

### **Personnel Standards**

The Office for the Blind is committed to improving the qualifications of its staff and achieving higher standards in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services. The office is committed to achieving 100% qualified rehabilitation counseling staff by 2016, taking into consideration vacancies created by turnover, retirements and upward mobility of staff. The agency along with our sister agency OVR is exploring the implementation of a state standard that will provide more cohesion between CSPD achievement and state personnel standards.

OFB has set standards that are consistent with any national or state approved or recognized certification, licensing or registration requirements. In the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including state personnel requirements) that apply to the profession or discipline will be considered. Those certifications currently utilized are in the disciplines of Rehabilitation Counseling (CRC), Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment (CVE), Rehabilitation Teaching (ACVREP), Orientation and Mobility (COMS), Assistive Technology (ATP), Recreational Therapy (CTRS), Certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialist (CDRS) and other certifications from the National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB). The agency shall pay initial certification and maintenance fees for employees, and will provide opportunities for continuing education courses, in areas required for employees to maintain appropriate professional certification. OFB will take steps to re-train and hire personnel to ensure that such personnel meet appropriate professional standards in the state. Immediately following the passage of the 1992 Rehabilitation Act Amendments the state agency informally implemented hiring policies that provide a preference to individuals with a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, or individuals who are eligible to hold a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) Status. This procedure was formalized with the enactment of the federal standards for the Comprehensive System for Personnel Development in 1997.

Currently the OFB has eighteen (18) rehabilitation counselors. Seventy-eight (78%) percent of OFB's existing counselors (14) hold their Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling. Three (3) staff are enrolled in the University of Kentucky's rehabilitation distance learning or accelerated graduate program. One individual has a Masters in another area and is looking into the requirements needed to obtain her CRC. Eleven (11) of the eighteen 18 or 66% have their CRC certification meeting the state CSPD requirement. Of the remaining eight (7) full-time counselors, three (3) of the newly hired staff must complete 75% of their coursework in the MRC coursework before they are eligible to take the test. One (1) is looking in to the requirements needed for her to be eligible to take the exam supplementing her current degree with additional coursework and the remaining three (3) are preparing to take the exam.

Job title	MRC		Other Masters Degree		Bachelors	
	CRC	Non CRC	CRC	Non CRC	CRC	Non CRC
VR Counselor (18/0 vacancies)	11	3		2	0	2
Field Administrator	1	0	0	2	0	0

Within the Office for the Blind, other employees hold a Doctorate, Masters Degrees, Bachelors, or are currently enrolled in a Masters Program or hold other certifications. There is diversity in the type and scope of educational levels and experience of the OFB personnel. Sixty-four percent (64%) hold a bachelors degree, forty percent (40%) hold a master’s degree and thirty percent (30%) of the staff hold a certification in a specialized area. Five (5) of eight (8) or 62% of the Independent Living (IL) counselors have a Master’s Degree, one (1) is currently enrolled. Three (3) IL counselors hold their CRC or 38%. The following table shows the different degrees and numbers of personnel for the OFB.

<b>Doctorate</b>	<b>Masters</b>	<b>Bachelors</b>	<b>Associate or Coursework Toward a Degree</b>	<b>Enrolled or Planned Enrollment</b>	<b>Certification O &amp; M, CVE, AT, Bioptic, Engineer, CRC</b>
2	46	63	12	7	32 (22 CRC)

- 75% of Orientation and Mobility Staff hold Certification (4) four hold a Masters
- 66% of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors hold CRC
- 100% Deaf Blind Coordinator holds a MRC and CRC
- 100% of Bioptic Instructors also hold MRC and CRC , one (1) CDRS
- 25% of Vocational Rehabilitation Administrators hold CRC
- 62% of IL Counselors holds a Masters and 38% hold CRC
- Two (2) certified CVE on Staff & one (1) holds doctorate in Psychology
- 80% of AT staff have a Masters Degree with Four (3) CRC, one (1) RESNA
- Seven (7) Rehabilitation Instructors have a Masters Degree and one (1) hold the CRC

### **STRATEGIES FOR ATTAINING AND MAINTAINING THE HIGHEST ENTRY LEVEL STANDARDS; TIME FRAMES**

To ensure that professionals providing services are appropriately and adequately trained and prepared in accordance with standards that are consistent with national certification standards that apply to the profession or discipline in which staff are employed, or standards sufficient to ensure the provision of quality vocational rehabilitation services, the Office for the Blind has established standards and objectives for each personnel classification and makes every attempt to provide activities to attain and maintain these standards. The OFB shall not discriminate on the basis of disability with regard to

training and hiring. Based on the Rehabilitation Act Amendment of 1998 recommendations and the professionalism valued by the Office for the Blind, the agency has set the following standards for hiring Professional Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists and training current Professional Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists. These standards are in agreement with Kentucky's statutes and regulations.

**A. Hiring New Employees. OFB will hire the best possible candidate based on the following priority list:**

- 1) Master's Degree in appropriate discipline (Rehabilitation Counseling, Orientation and Mobility, Education) with national certification from the appropriate Certification Commission.
- 2) Currently enrolled in an accredited Master's Degree program in Rehabilitation Counseling, have successfully completed 40 graduate program hours, and will be eligible to hold CRC certification within two years of hire.
- 3) Master's Degree from an accredited college or University in a related field and will be eligible to hold CRC certification within three years of the date of hire.
- 4) Bachelors Degree in a qualifying acceptable discipline that would allow acceptance into the graduate program and a commitment that they will enroll within one year of their initial probationary period.

Preference in hiring and promotion will be given to those individuals who are the most qualified candidates meeting national certification standards from minority backgrounds or individuals with disabilities. There are cases in which the state agency is unable to recruit individuals who meet the national standard. In those instances, the positions will be filled with an individual who has a Bachelor's Degree, and the new employee is expected to meet the national standard within three years of the date of hire. OFB financially assists with the provision of training for those individuals who are current employees working toward obtaining a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and provides other benefits such as time to attend class or work on assignments. OFB offers opportunities for maintaining certification requirements through training seminars and professional development conferences.

**B. Advancement of Current Office for the Blind Employees. OFB promotes acceptable candidates who are current employees when they are the best-qualified applicants for the position. OFB has established a career ladder that is based on the achievement of a Master's Degree with certification as the highest level on the ladder.**

- 1) Current employees with a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation or appropriate area of discipline with certification supplemented by six (6)

- years of experience in counseling, assessment, employer relations or rehabilitation technology.
- 2) Current employees with a Master's Degree in appropriate area of discipline supplemented by two (2) years of professional experience in rehabilitation counseling, assessment, employer relations or rehabilitation technology. Certification will be required within three (3) years.
  - 3) Current employees with a Bachelor's Degree in appropriate area of discipline supplemented by two (2) years experience in a state vocational rehabilitation agency and the completion of a rehabilitation core curriculum met through in-service training or other strategies. Certification appropriate to the job will be required within six (6) years.

Employees will be required to obtain a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation or the appropriate discipline and obtain certification with the highest level of any national or State approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the area in which they are providing vocational rehabilitation services.

The following professional personnel classifications are included in the above standards:

1. **Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor**
2. **Independent Living Counselor**
3. **Rehabilitation Teacher**
4. **Vocational Evaluator**
5. **Assistive Technology Specialist**
6. **Orientation and Mobility Specialist**
7. **Recreation Therapist**

Specific requirements and standards apply to all other personnel classifications. These standards are listed in OFB's Personnel Career Development Policy. These classifications include Nurse, Residential Aide and Driver.

### **Policies And Procedures Relating To The Establishment And Maintenance Of Standards To Ensure That Personnel Are Prepared And Trained**

OFB shall ensure that personnel in all classes of positions are adequately trained and prepared through a system of individual Career Development Plans. Personnel are referred to available on-line approved training programs through Universities and RCEP such as (Ethics and Informed Choice) offered at no cost. Rehabilitation technology and significant research and information from studies of consumer needs and satisfaction surveys shall be emphasized in individual plans and in training programs. Funding for all training for human resource development activities including tuition, books, in-service training programs and individual career development plans is supported from the money received for the agency In-Service training grant. The funding for FFY 2009 is \$18,883.

OFB has a 10% match and has consistently exceeded the required match each year to continue to meet the needs of staff training.

## **Staff Development**

The HRD components of training, organizational development and career development form the basis of the Human Resource Development Plan. In order to adequately meet HRD needs of staff, OFB utilizes a variety of training resources and opportunities throughout the Region. OFB is working with the general agency OVR and the TACE center for our region under the new priority in identifying available resources to continue this valued relationship. Through a system of Individual Human Resource Development (HRD) OFB has developed procedures and activities to ensure that all employed personnel are appropriately and adequately trained and prepared. This includes standards that are consistent with national or state approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration or other comparable requirements that apply to the area in which such personnel are providing vocational rehabilitation services.

OFB utilizes internal and external resources for training. Numerous specialized training seminars and programs are available throughout the state and the agency when it is cost effective participates in national training opportunities. Employees participate in training, based on individual needs and career development plans. Employees then are asked to share the information with others as appropriate. OFB continues to provide training on the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 as well as training on the ADA, Workforce Investment Act and the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIIA). Central office and other support staff as well as members of the State Rehabilitation Council will be included in all appropriate HRD activities. The OFB is vested in using technology and is actively identifying potential web-based training programs that will allow staff the opportunity to utilize these alternative training methods for increased professional development. The OFB HRD coordinator and the general VR agency HRD coordinator discuss shared resources in this area with Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in accessing online training programs such as Confidentiality and Ethics. Consumers will be involved in professional development conferences as part of the planning process and as participants. Implementation, planning and coordination of HRD training activities are the responsibility of the HRD Unit.

Career development allows employees the opportunity to develop and expand their career goals. Tuition assistance is currently provided for employees in the Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling series, who wish to upgrade their skills and acquire a rehabilitation counseling degree. In addition, The University of Kentucky has available RSA-CSPD Training Scholarships to employed state rehabilitation counselors to pursue a masters' degree. Currently, given the economic climate and budget constraints, only staff in crucial CSPD positions are eligible for scholarship opportunities enabling them to work toward their Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling or other specialty areas such as Orientation and Mobility and Assistive Technology. At the new employee orientation, a training track on career development is conducted. Staff are given a comprehensive training on career development stressing that a career is a combination of education,

training and experience related to a specific occupation. Staff are apprised that career development is the responsibility of each employee and his/her immediate supervisor and that career planning is managed and addressed in conjunction with the employee evaluation system. Individual career plans are developed for employees in conjunction with their initial performance plan that will provide opportunities for OFB personnel to upgrade their skills and qualifications and to advance within the agency to higher level paying positions. Career Plans are reviewed at the annual performance review in January and revised as needed.

The Office for the Blind conducts an annual training needs assessment used to provide appropriate in-service training programs; as well as provide information to update individual career development plans to meet identified needs. Plans are based upon: (1) the findings of the needs assessment; (2) the agency's specific goals and directions, and its continuous improvement initiatives; (3) training updates on the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998; (4) staff input regarding OFB issues; (5) State Rehabilitation Council and consumer input; (6) Federal priorities and (7) the Workforce Investment Act.

OFB finalized a three (3) year Strategic Plan with an implementation date of January 1, 2008. The plan has a retirement focus area that specifically addresses the critical issue of loss of the workforce due to staff retirements and other identified areas of focus. OFB is partnering with the general vocational rehabilitation agency in providing leadership training supported by the TACE Center. The first phase will occur in July of 2009. Both agencies will be working with TACE in further development and implementation of the leadership training.

The OFB is supportive of staff in keeping current with up to date best practices and makes sure that staff receive current research and practices. This is done through shared information through workshops, conferences, presentations, publications (Braille Monitor, Council of the Blind, American Foundation for the Blind, and National Federation of the Blind) as well as Internet site resources.

In order to disseminate information on rehabilitation best practices, research and the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, the Office for the Blind staff received and participated in the following trainings for 2008.

- a) Rehabilitation Technology: OFB will continue to support and provide training relevant to rehabilitation technology. At the new employee orientation, OFB staff receive training regarding Kentucky Assistive Technology System (KATS), as an agency that is an expert in accessibility and disability research. KATS staff provides ongoing information and updates concerning rehabilitation technology and how to access those services in an extensive database. OFB AT staff attended the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Summer Workshop on AT sponsored by OVR. One OFB staff attended ATIA the Assistive Technology Industry Association Conference in Orlando, Florida. KATS staff attended the RSA and RESNA-NATTAP Training in Salt Lake City, Utah in April of 2008.

- b) OFB makes every effort to have representation at and participate in national and regional training events. OFB staff attended the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual American Council of the Blind conference in July in Louisville keeping abreast of national issues. Having the conference in Kentucky allowed for several staff to take advantage of this training opportunity. OFB Executive Director and Administration staff represented the agency at CSAVR/NCSAB Fall and Spring Conference. The Deaf Blind Coordinator attended the State Coordinators of the Deaf/Deaf-Blind/Hard of Hearing/ Late Deafened Conference “Partners Building Bridges: Innovations, Enhancements and Future Focus” in Rochester, New York. The Coordinator made a presentation at the conference on the KY Deaf Blind Project. OFB Bioptic Driving Instructor attended the Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialist (ADED) 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference “ADED is Stepping Out in 2008 with a Vision for Practice”. The Independent Living Manager attended the Annual Program Managers Conference in Arlington, VA in March of 2008. One OFB Orientation and Mobility Specialist attended the International AER Conference in July of 2008 in Chicago, Illinois. OFB staff assigned to Ticket to Work and the Social Security Reimbursement process attended the Spring CSAVR Cost Reimbursement Session in Bethesda, Maryland in April of 2008. One OFB staff attended the Southeastern Region National Rehabilitation Association 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Training Conference in Nashville, TN in April of 2008. OFB had one staff as a new Manager attend two sessions in 2008 for the Regional Institute for Supervisors enhancing their leadership skills in the agency. Two staff attended the 2008 RSA National Employment and disAbility Conference in Arlington, VA in September of 2008. In June of 2008 two fiscal staff attended the 2008 RSA Fiscal and Data Management conference: “A Toolkit for Improving VR Performance” in Washington, DC. One OFB Staff attended the SRC Forum in May 2008 in Orlando, Florida.
- c) Dissemination of Knowledge from Research and Other Sources: Current information and research in the field of rehabilitation received by the Office for the Blind is distributed to staff statewide or if applicable posted on our website as a document or as a link to obtain pertinent information. Any staff member, consumer or individual from another agency or advocacy group may access materials through the HRD unit or through the Office for the Blind website. IRI journals, The Braille Monitor, The Braille Forum, Future Reflections, other journals and publications specific to the field are distributed to staff through the HRD unit. Staff can make specific requests for information through the HRD unit and research is done in the area for specific needed information to determine the need to subscribe to a publication or purchase books or materials for the staff.
- d) OFB has representation on the Region IV Employment Partner’s Team. Staff participated in the June 2008 Southeastern Employment Partners Team for the Public Vocational Rehabilitation Program in Atlanta, Georgia. This allows state agency personnel from the Southeast and across the Nation to enhance their skills and share resources. OFB is able to leverage regional employer relationships and enhance our strategies for achieving successful employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

- e) A three-day training was held for all field staff in Region I (July 14 & 15) at Rough River and Region II (June 9 & 10) at Lake Cumberland for all Counseling and their support staff. Staff received training on Transition, Social Security, Job Placement, Marketing, Case Management Coding and Data Entry, Ticket to Work, Assessment, Teamwork, Bioptic Driving, and Deaf/Blind. CRC credits were awarded to certified counselors attending this training for the area of Rehabilitation Services. Independent Living Services held their annual 3-day Professional Training Conference titled "Enhancing the IL Program" in April of 2008 at the Charles W. McDowell Center. The training topics covered Mental Illness and the Aging Population, Team Work, Assistive Technology and Best Practices for Service Delivery. Weeklong training for staff at *The Charles W. McDowell Center* occurred April 7 –10 with sessions on the McDowell 21<sup>st</sup> Century Project with a continuation of Curriculum Skills, Outcome Measurement, Program Benchmarks by Dr. Wayne Mulkey (UT-RCEP), and Teamwork. OFB will continue to provide intensive statewide training to all rehabilitation VR and IL counselors and field staff. The McDowell Center staff had additional training January 24 & 25, 2008 regarding the new curriculum project and implantation of the training modules. Sessions were facilitated by Dr. Wayne Mulkey, UT RCEP. ENTRUST/Security Presentation training occurred at the McDowell Center for all staff conducted by Ed Hoffman and Connie Sharp, Education and Workforce Development Cabinet Technology Services staff. The agency implemented a new Case Management System October 1, 2008. Training on the new CMS was held for the OFB Independent Living Staff and for the Counselors and Assistants in August of 2008.
- f) Orientation for new employees occurred twice in March of 2008 and December of 2008 with a total of 14 staff and one intern participating in the training for the calendar year. New employee orientation gives a comprehensive overview of the agency history and current organization, with modules on agency structure, cultural diversity, rehabilitation and blindness, informed choice, Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and amendments, Workforce Investment Act, State Plan, consumer services, The ADA, disability awareness, sexual harassment,, and workplace violence, eye diseases and terminology, assistive technology and low vision devices, Kentucky Business Enterprises, deaf blindness, standards and indicators, career development, marketing, confidentiality and ethics and the Client Assistance Program. New Employee Orientation will be held in the fall and spring of each federal calendar year based on staff hiring patterns.
- g) In 2007-2008 there was a focus on Job Development and Placement Training and issues surrounding obtaining successful employment outcomes for all rehabilitation counseling staff. As reported last year one critical need identified for training was the area of job placement training for those new counselors brought on staff since 2005. As a result of an RFP solicitation for Job Placement and Coaching training in 2007 a comprehensive contract was awarded to Employment Oakville. A series of workshops were conducted in 07-08 (System of Service Delivery Leading to Employment) to teach placement skills to twenty-seven OFB staff in order to increase consumer employment outcomes. Sessions were held in July, December and March of this reporting period. The first 3 day

workshop held in August was the “Employment Outcomes Professional” focusing on the effective marketing and sales skills needed by vocational rehabilitation staff to secure employment outcomes with employers. In December, the second 3 day workshop “Reframing the Hiring Decision” was conducted focusing on a sales action program for vocational rehabilitation staff teaching advanced sales and marketing skills that are needed to direct hiring decisions. Staff received training on skills that persuade the employer to be confident in selecting candidates that would not have, typically, been the employers’ first choice. The third part of the series “Coaching the Implementation” was held in February. The trainer provided individual coaching sessions to assist staff in the implementation and application of the job development marketing skills learned in the workshops.

- h) OFB staff also participated in several in house and other state trainings offered in 2007. OFB staff attended the following 2008 Conferences: 1) Kentucky National 2008 APSE, “Everybody Can Work, and When Everybody Works- Everybody Wins! held in Louisville, Kentucky , 2) Kentucky Association of Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (KAER), “the Circle of KAER”, 3) Kentucky Rehabilitation Association (KRA) “Uniting Rehabilitation, August 27-29 in Louisville 4) KY National Federation for the Blind State Conference, 5) KY American Council for the Blind State Conference, 6) Rehabilitation Counseling and Military Veterans with Disabilities; A Comprehensive Seminar on Systems, Services, and Rehabilitation Best Practices at the University of Kentucky, 7) Making Test Items Accessible for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired Workshop through the American Printing House for the Blind and 8) IL staff participated in the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Summer Series on Aging . “Rehabilitation Caseload Management,” was conducted in Louisville through UT SRCEP at the Charles W. McDowell Center May 13-15 for all new counseling staff. OFB staff attended the CORE training through the University of Kentucky Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute Training under the Supported Employment Training Project (SETP). Staff participated in online trainings through the Hadley School for the Blind Lecture Series, the Job Accommodation network, and the University of Tennessee RCEP (Ethics, Resilience, & Informed Choice). OFB staff attended the Kentucky Association on Higher Education and Disability ( KYAHEAD) Conference on in May at KY General Butler State Park. OFB staff attended the Governor’s 22st Annual EEO Conference, the Governor’s Summit for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and the Governors’ Minority Conference in 2008. OFB staff also participated in trainings provided through the Commonwealth of Kentucky’s Office for Employee and Organizational Development at Kentucky State University for the areas of: Presentation Skills, Conflict Management, Creative Thinking, Problem Solving and Decision Making and Performance Matters, Ethics, Safety & Health and computer technical training provided through New Horizons.
- i) In April of 2008 , Kentucky Business Enterprises staff attended the National Association of Blind Merchants in Memphis, Tennessee. KBE staff did not complete the online training course in 2008 on the Randolph Sheppard Act.

However, staff has set a goal to complete this by the close of the 2009 calendar year.

- j) All staff is trained in the area of assessment at hire and a refresher on this topic is given at the annual statewide regional trainings for all field staff. The comprehensive training at hire is inclusive of: conducting an assessment in the most integrated setting possible with the individual's needs and informed choice for the area of Eligibility Requirements. Staff receives training on the process of assessment to ensure the counselor gathers as much information as possible about the individual's work history, education and training, abilities and interests, rehabilitation needs, and possible career goals through existing information or the need for the provision of additional assessment services to gather the needed information. The training will stress the importance of presumptive eligibility as well as information gathered in this assessment phase of the VR process and its application to the development of Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The IPE identifies the individual's desired employment outcome, among other things, the steps necessary to achieve the individual employment outcome; the services needed to help the individual achieve the outcome, and evaluation criteria used to determine progress toward the employment outcome. An emphasis is placed on trial work experiences for individuals with significant disabilities.

### **Communication with Diverse Populations**

The HRD team works with the Assistive Technology Unit and the Accessible Textbook Services to ensure that all materials are presented in the most accessible mode of communication that the consumer requires. The Accessible Textbook Unit also assists with producing training manuals and other job related information (personnel manuals, safety information) for consumers and their employers. New Rehabilitation Specialists may attend Mississippi State University's Research and Training Center and the NFB Center in Baltimore for training in Low Vision and Blindness Rehabilitation to learn about low vision rehabilitation and assistive technology for individuals who are visually impaired. All agency counselors are involved in an inter-agency project with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) for Deaf-Blind intervention and receive extensive training in techniques for working with individuals who are Deaf-Blind. OFB has one individual designated to function as the Deaf-Blind Coordinator who has her MRC and is a CRC that works with the OVR in this area. The Deaf-Blind Coordinator provides training at the annual regional staff meetings to VR field staff. On-going training opportunities ensure that skill levels are maintained or increased.

OFB utilizes a Williams Sound FM system for consumer and staff usage. The system will accommodate ten (10) individuals who are hard of hearing. The FM system is utilized for consumer meetings, trainings, conferences, counseling and other service activities. The FM system works for one speaker and several listeners. Counselors have access to Pocket Talkers utilized for conversing one on one with individuals who are hard of hearing. In order to accommodate consumers with different levels of hearing loss,

OFB has a variety of headphones for use such as head earphones, mon/bi/ in the ear, and neck loops for hearing aids that work with the FM system and Pocket Talker.

ASL and Foreign Language Interpreters are contracted as necessary to ensure that individuals who are deaf or who are from diverse cultural backgrounds and need interpreters to access services will be able to communicate in their native languages. Certified interpreters shall provide interpreter services for the deaf. Voice Description is provided for any videos and classroom teaching techniques. All materials utilized and distributed by the OFB are available in an accessible format, including large print, cassette tape, CD ROM, disc, audio recordings, Spanish or Braille with respect to the individual's informed choice.

### **Coordination Of Comprehensive System Of Personnel Development Under The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act**

OFB shall coordinate its CSPD plans within the Kentucky Personnel System, to match the standards and qualifications of our personnel with personnel development under the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, and the standards under the Rehabilitation Act, as amended.

The Kentucky Interagency Transition Council meets on a quarterly basis to address continued fulfillment of the Kentucky Interagency Agreement on Transition Services for Youth With Disabilities. The Office for the Blind, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Department of Education are three of the twelve state agencies that are parties to the agreement. One of the provisions of this agreement is cooperative training and staff development concerning transition issues. OFB staffs attend Community Based Work Transition training offered by the University of Kentucky's Institute for Human Development (HDI). In addition, staffs attend the statewide annual Kentucky Association of Blind Educators Conference each year receiving valuable training and resources.

Rehabilitation counselors work collaboratively with the special education cooperatives, high school education teachers, local directors of special education, and job coaches for students transitioning from high school into employment. OFB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors attend IEP and ARC meetings working with the team in establishing a vocational goal. This assures the development of the students IPE in conjunction with the vocational rehabilitation IEP. OFB provides support to teaching instructors, school staff and job coaches regarding blindness issues and other areas of expertise such as Orientation and Mobility and Assistive Technology to ensure successful placements. Often rural schools do not have the needed resources; therefore OFB staffs offer their expertise based on the individual needs of the student working closely with all staff involved with IDEA.

### **The State Rehabilitation Council**

Members of the State Rehabilitation Council participate in planning and implementation of HRD activities, marketing and public relations, satisfaction of services; annual reporting and they are involved in professional development conferences as part of the planning process and as participants. The State Rehabilitation Council had the opportunity to give input, review and comment on the development of the plan and related policies and procedures at the quarterly meetings held in August and November of 2008 and February and May of 2009. The Council's Special Projects Committee works directly with the agency for this purpose as well as the Business Opportunities and Public Relations committees.

**ATTACHMENT 4.11(a): Results of Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities and Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs**

**(a) Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities**

The Comprehensive Statewide Assessment will be conducted annually over a three-year period and the Attachment 4.11 (a) submitted triennially. In FFY 2007, 2008 and 2009, the agency developed and conducted a statewide needs assessment in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council. This information was used in formulating the stated Goals and Priorities of Attachment 4.11 (c) (1) of this FFY 2010 State Plan. The assessment was conducted for the purpose of identifying the needs of individuals who are blind or significantly visually impaired in the State of Kentucky specifically for:

- Individuals with the most significant disabilities, including the need for supported employment services;
- Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program
- Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system
- An assessment of the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State

The agency utilized existing internal data as well as external data obtained through different methods to determine the needs of individuals who are blind and visually impaired across the Commonwealth.

**Design and Methodology**

The design of the comprehensive statewide needs assessment began in August of 2007. The Special Projects Committee of the SRC began the process of working on the design of the assessment that would target RSA priority areas. Dr. Ron L. Milliman, Professor of Marketing at Western Kentucky University a committee member played a key role in the design of the project.

The committee came up with the following project design for the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

<b>Identification of Potential Clients</b>	<b>Determination of the Best Methods to Reach Potential Clients</b>	<b>Create an instrument or Design Other Medium Formats</b>
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<p><b>Target Population</b></p> <p>Individuals who are Blind and Visually Impaired</p> <p>Viable stakeholders and partners</p>	<p><b>What medium will we utilize?</b></p> <p>surveys forums focus groups state chapter affiliates and conferences mailings newsletters media</p>	<p><b>Topic Areas to be covered</b></p> <p>Adaptive Devices Housing Employment Areas of Independent Living Access to Mainstream Education</p>
<p><b>Age Categories</b></p> <p>Preschool elementary middle school high school college adults</p>	<p><b>Stakeholders and collaborative partners</b></p> <p>Visually Impaired Preschool Services, Visually Impaired Teachers, Talking Book Library, Central Radio Eye. Independent Living Centers, Employers, LC Industries OFB Staff, Kentucky School for the Blind, American Council for the Blind, National Federation for the Blind, Public School Systems, Ophthalmologists Optometrists ,Constituent Services, CAP &amp; P &amp; A, One Stops, Developmental Disabilities Council, Deaf – Blind Services Disability Coalition, CRP’s</p>	<p><b>Design of Medium Formats</b></p> <p>Survey Development</p> <p>Focus Groups held via advocacy organizations facilitated by SRC members</p> <p>Statewide Press Release through the Cabinet</p> <p>Other PR Media forms: postcards, newsletter articles, &amp; disability list serves</p>

In addition to compiling the information gathered from external sources identified in the above chart the committee along with agency staff comprised a list of existing and internal data sources to be included in the assessment.

<b>Internal Data Sources</b>
Agency Performance on the Standards and Indicators
Consumer Satisfaction Surveys
RSA Monitoring Data Reports
Strategic Plan

The following sources of information, organizations and partners were targeted in order to assure that the RSA target priority areas were addressed.

<b>Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities</b>	<b>Individuals from Minority Backgrounds</b>	<b>Individuals Served by Other Components of the Workforce Investment System</b>
Statewide Press Release regarding the Needs Assessment	Statewide Press Release regarding the Needs Assessment	Statewide Press Release regarding the Needs Assessment
Deaf/Blind Services	Deaf/Blind Services	One Stop Managers
Protection & Advocacy	Protection & Advocacy	Protection & Advocacy
Client Assistance Program	Client Assistance Program	Client Assistance Program
Announcement through the different disability list serves	Announcement through the different disability list serves	Announcement through the different disability list serves
Agency Staff	Agency Staff	Agency Staff
IL Centers	IL Centers	IL Centers
Review of data	Review of data	Review of data
Individuals who are blind and visually impaired	Individuals who are blind and visually impaired	Individuals who are blind and visually impaired
Developmental Disabilities Council		

### **Media Outreach**

The Committee and agency staff determined that a variety of methods and approaches would be utilized to inform the public at large, advocacy organizations and other partner organizations of the conducting of the statewide needs assessment. Statewide press releases were sent that encompasses all Kentucky newspapers in both small (weekly) and large (daily) areas plus all cities surrounding Kentucky such as Cincinnati. The announcement also went to all TV and radio stations across the state. The outreach would be estimated at about 350 outlets. Newsletters of partnering agencies were utilized as well as utilizing the advocacy groups for the blind and visually impaired as a method of informing consumers.

In September of 2008, a statewide press release was sent out informing the public of the conducting of the needs assessment. The link to the agency website was contained in the press release in order to direct individuals to the survey that targeted specifically individuals who are blind and visually impaired. In addition, the toll free number as well as staff contact information was contained in the release for individuals who did not have access to a computer. The press release was also circulated through the different advocacy and disability organizations list serves that has a direct outreach to unserved and underserved populations (Kentucky Developmental Disabilities, Kentucky, Kentucky Disability Coalition).

Agency staff participated in two radio interviews regarding the conducting of the needs assessment from stations in Bowling Green and Louisville. These stations then ran brief excerpts from the interview throughout the week informing the public of the purpose of the needs assessment and how to participate in the assessment. Central Kentucky Radio Eye a non-profit organization specific to broadcasts tailored to people who are blind, or have limited vision, or other disabilities making reading difficult ran spots about the assessment.

A second statewide press release was distributed in February of 2009 informing the public of one of four focus groups to be held in Louisville at the Kentucky School for the Blind. This release also contained a link to the website for individuals desiring to participate in the survey as well as agency staff contact information.

The following partnering agencies ran articles in their monthly publications or newsletters.

- 1) Kentucky School for the Blind
- 2) American Printing House for the Blind
- 3) Visually Impaired Preschool Services

A post card “What are Your Needs?” was developed and distributed through a mass mailing campaign. The cards contained information about the needs assessment and directed individuals to the website or gave them the option to call agency contact staff through the toll free number to give input. Sets of the cards were distributed to the following sources.

- 1) Eye physicians to place in their offices for placement in kiosks for Patients.
- 2) Agency staff to distribute to consumers
- 3) Kentucky School for the Blind
- 4) American printing House for the Blind
- 5) Visually Impaired Preschool Services
- 6) Disability Coalition
- 7) Advocacy Organizations
- 8) Deaf Blind Project

### **Surveys**

The Comprehensive Needs Assessment utilized different surveys designed by the SRC through the Special Projects Committee in collaboration with agency staff. They are outlined in the grid below.

<b>Survey Type</b>	<b>Target Population</b>	<b>Data Collection Method</b>
Consumer Survey	Individuals who are Blind and Visually Impaired or parent, family members	Survey Monkey Link available on website or call toll free and participate in survey over the phone
Agency Staff Survey	VR Counselors	Survey Monkey Link sent

	Agency Staff in various positions	through agency email
One Stop Manager Survey (Jointly conducted with General Agency OVR)	One Stop Management Staff	Survey Monkey Link sent through agency email
Eye Physician Survey	Optometrist Ophthalmologists	Survey pen and paper via regular mail
CRP's	SE providers	Survey via email through VR Counselors

**The Consumer Survey Instrument** was designed by the Special Projects Committee along with agency staff. The committee utilized the expertise of Dr. Ron Milliman in the design of the survey instrument. SurveyMonkey is an accessible online survey tool for creating surveys quickly and easily. The tool is very user friendly and it compiles the data allowing for the user to compile reports on different levels in order to analyze the results.

The survey had seven sections with a total of thirty-nine (39) questions. The sections were as follows: 1) Demographics (#1-14), 2) Adaptive Equipment and Devices (#15 - 17), 3) Housing (#18-21), 4) Employment (#22-25), 5) Independent Living (#26-29), 6) Mainstream Education (#30-35), and 7) A set of open-ended questions (#36-39).

All the questions allowed for open ended remarks that were captured and analyzed. The link for the survey was posted on the agency website and sent out through different mediums making it available to the public, consumers and other stakeholders.

**Agency Staff Surveys** were designed to be more specific to service delivery. There were two surveys similar in nature with one distributed to all staff for participation and one specific to VR Counselors.

The VR Counselor survey contained three questions that were specific to: 1) Community Rehabilitation Providers and Supported Employment, 2) Services provided to consumers through the One Stop System and 3) the three top services requested by consumers based on their needs.

The all agency survey contained three questions that would somewhat different in nature. They are as follows: 1) List the three top services requested by consumers based on their needs, 2) identification of primary concerns facing the consumer population, and 3) identify one single action the agency could take to improve services to meet the needs of consumers.

**The One Stop Manager Survey** was developed jointly by OFB and OVR staff in Survey Monkey. The survey consisted of six questions that addressed the following: 1) perception of gaps in services for persons with disabilities, 2) number of persons with disabilities seeking services, 3) training needs of staff, 4) knowledge of differing disability topics, and 4) partner relationships with OVR and OFB.

**The Eye Physician Survey** targeted Optometrists and Ophthalmologist across the state. This was a pen and paper survey sent via regular mail that included copies of the needs assessment cards for placement in the offices across the state. The survey contained five pertinent questions for the areas of 1) the doctors’ awareness of the agency services and field office location, 2) their needs for information regarding OFB services, 3) their method for referring patients to the agency for needed services, and 4) identification of the greatest unmet needs of their patients.

**The Community Rehabilitation Provider Survey** was distributed through the VR Counselors with the objective of that yielding a higher return rate. This survey was a short pen and paper survey containing four (4) questions that was distributed via email and regular mail. The questions on the survey were for the following areas: 1) the provision of services to individuals who are blind and visually impaired, 2) consumer referral process, 3), specialized training areas for the blind and visually impaired, and 4) areas of concern in serving this population.

**Focus Groups**

A sub-committee was formed from the SRC to work on the design and conducting of the focus groups. Four of the SRC members volunteered to steer this committee. Historically, attendance at open forums, public meetings or focus groups has been very low. The decision was made to engage state and local chapters of the advocacy organizations to increase participation. Four focus groups were decided upon. Three would be held in conjunction with other activities of the advocacy organizations as outlined in the grid below. The Advocacy Organization State Conventions were selected as a method for capturing information as individuals from all areas of the state would be in attendance. Another location chosen was the Kentucky School for the Blind for its proximity to the American Printing House for the Blind and the large community of blind residents in that area.

Focus Group	Location
Kentucky NFB State Convention	Louisville /September 2008
Kentucky ACB State Convention	Louisville/November 2008
Kentucky School for the Blind	Louisville/February 2009
Blue Grass Council for the Blind	Lexington/March 2009

The sub-committee came up with a design for the sessions and designated two SRC members as facilitators. The objective of each session was: “To gather information regarding the needs of individuals who are blind and visually impaired” for the five target areas decided upon by the Council. They were: 1) housing, 2) Adaptive Equipment and Devices, 3) Independent Living, 4) Mainstream Education and 5) Employment. The facilitators would introduce the topic areas and invite discussion using questions from the survey design. The facilitators would then carefully reflect back a summary of what was discussed assuring accuracy in capturing the information. One of the SRC members would record the session or capture it on paper while the other was the main facilitator of

the session. The information was then put in an electronic format and shared with agency staff.

## **(i) Results of Comprehensive Statewide Assessment**

### **Data Analysis Summary**

#### **External Data Sources**

#### **The Consumer Survey Instrument**

The survey was specific to individuals who are blind and visually impaired. It was to be filled out by an individual who was blind or visually impaired or answered by a parent, family member or friend on behalf of the individual.

#### **Demographics**

There were 54 respondents to the survey with 52% of individuals filling out the survey reporting that they were blind or visually impaired 48% were a parent, family member or friend completing the survey on behalf of an individual. Sixty-six (66%) of the individuals that the survey pertained to who were blind and visually impaired were forty years of age or older. Fifty-eight (58%) were female and 42% were males for the gender reported of the individual who is blind or visually impaired. Ninety-eight percent reported their race/ethnicity as White, Non-Hispanic with 4% reporting Asian/pacific Islander or other. Fifteen percent (15%) of the respondents were Veterans.

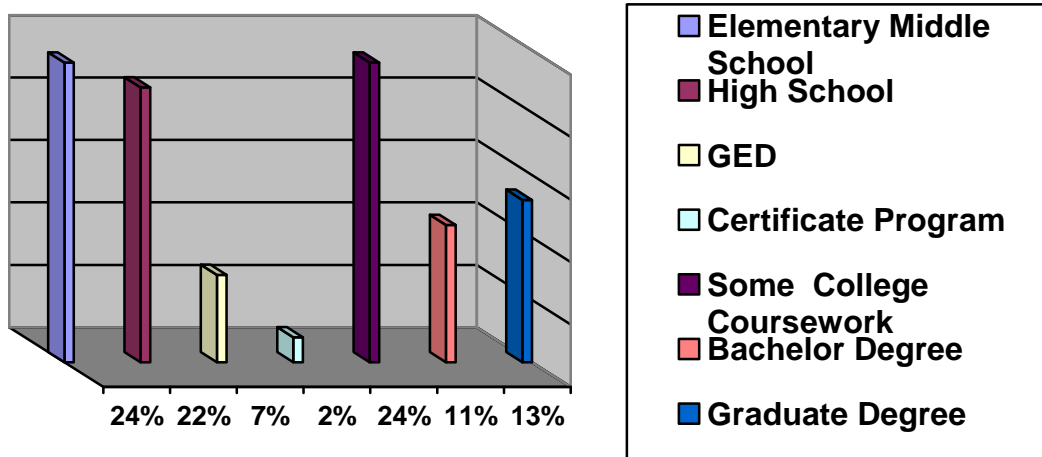
Thirty-six (36%) of the respondents reported living alone, 30% with a spouse or partner, 16% with a spouse, partner and children. Only 2% reported being a single parent. Sixteen percent (16%) reported living with parents or friends. Respondents represented 31 of the 120 counties in the state (25%).

Thirty-three percent (33%) reported having some useable eyesight but not enough to read even large print. Twenty-seven (27%) reported be able to read large print and 12% although they were legally blind could read regular sized print. Ten percent (10%) were totally blind and 12% reported limited eyesight being able to see only shadows and light and dark. The other 6% of respondents reported having what is generally considered normal eyesight.

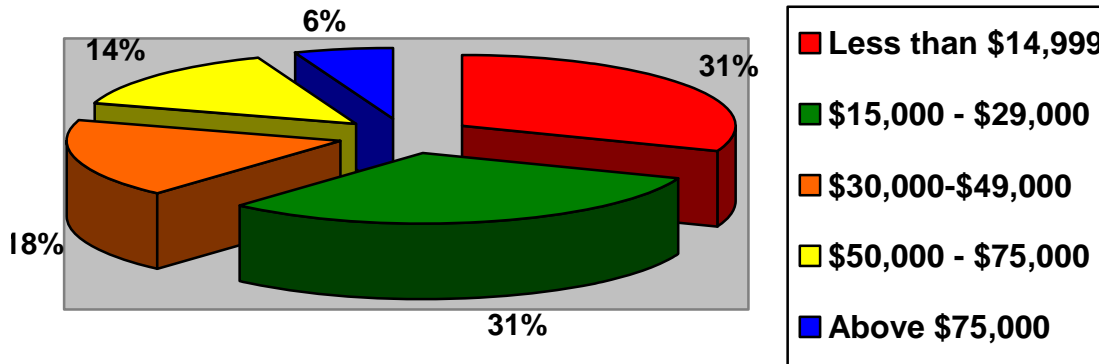
Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents reported the cause of their vision loss for the "other" category that included various causes such as Retinitis Pigmentosa, Toxoplasmosis, Optic Nerve Hypoplasia, and war related injuries. Twenty-two (22%) reported the cause as Macular Degeneration while the other 20% indicated Cataracts, Glaucoma and Diabetic Retinopathy. These numbers are not exact numbers as often the respondent would report the cause for one category choices and then would choose the "other" category where they made detailed comments regarding the cause of their vision loss. As a result there were duplicate counts in this section.

For the area of age of onset of vision loss the highest age range was Birth to 20 years at 49%. Second highest area for age of onset was the 60 -80 years and above age bracket at 24%. Forty (40) to sixty (60) years of age was at 16% and twenty (20) to forty (40) years was 11% of the respondents. Sixty-eight (68%) of the respondents indicated that their vision loss was likely to deteriorate while 32% indicated that it would not. One effecting factor to take into consideration when looking at these numbers is that an individual who are blind are included in the 32% reporting their vision loss was not likely to deteriorate.

The chart below outlines the Educational levels of respondents. Forty-six percent of the respondents reported having a High School Diploma or below. Forty – eight percent (48%) report having some course work toward a college degree or a bachelors or doctorate degree.



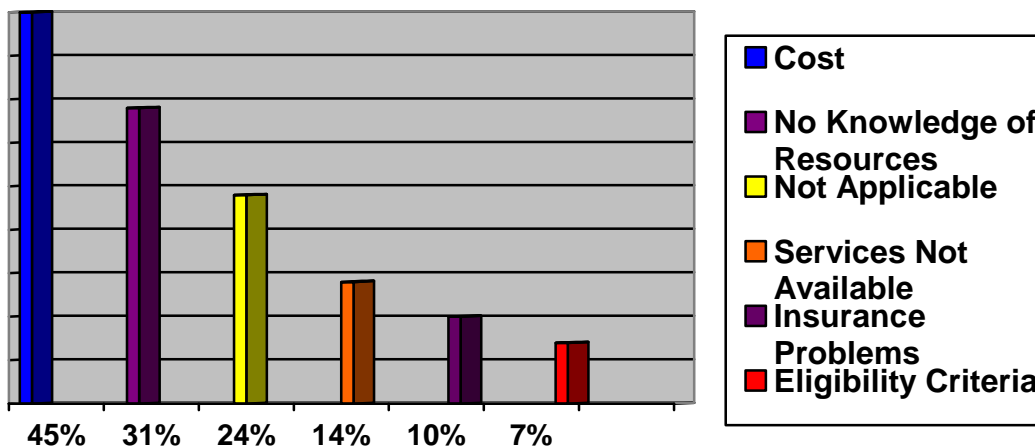
The chart below outlines the household income levels of respondents. Sixty-two percent (62%) of the respondents report an income of \$29,000 or less.



### Adaptive Equipment

There were four questions for the area of adaptive equipment, tools and devices. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the respondents indicated they had a need for adaptive equipment in the past year. Twenty-three percent (23%) indicated they did not. Of note is the fact that within that 23% reporting they did not have a need for adaptive equipment many of the respondents indicated they did not have knowledge of that this type of resource existed. Forty-seven percent (47%) indicated they had no difficulty in obtaining needed devices. Forty percent (40%) indicated that they did have difficulty in obtaining needed devices with 13% indicating this category was not applicable for them.

The chart below outlines the varying types of issues the respondents indicated in not being able to obtain the needed adaptive equipment, tools, and devices within the past year. Of note is the lack of knowledge of resources for this need area at 31%.



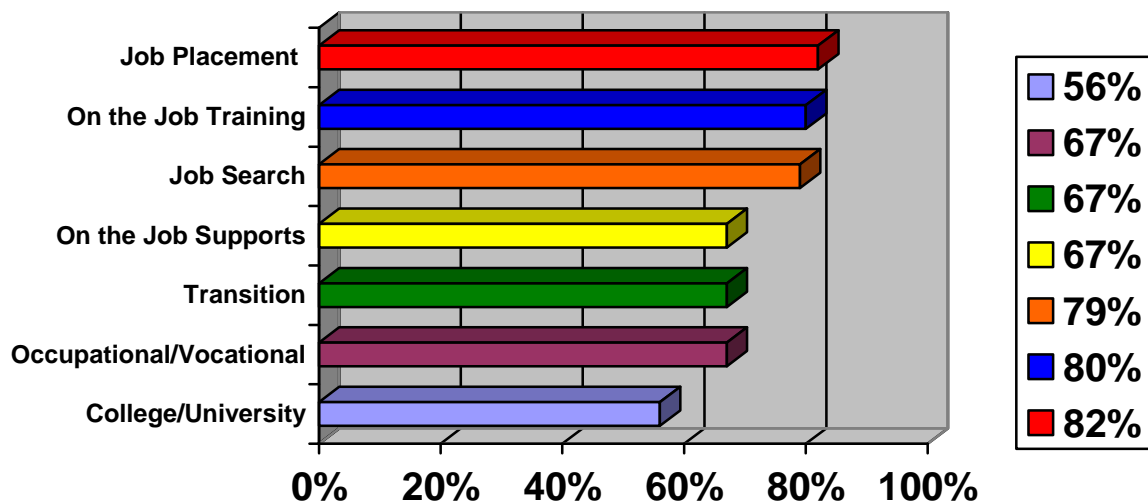
### Housing

There were four questions for the area of Housing. Sixty-five percent (65%) of respondents reporting that they are either currently purchasing or they own their home. Twenty percent (20%) are rent a house duplex, or townhouse and 15% an apartment. Of these 75% reported that they are happy with their current living situation. Twenty-five percent (25%) reported that they are not happy citing issues that are common to individuals that rent such as affordability, noise level, and location. Seventy-six percent (76%) indicated their homes were accessible and 25% indicated they were not accessible due to transportation or home modification needs (accessible ramp). When asked what hindered accessibility for them 37% indicated affordable costs, 25% stated the location of their residents with 51% indicating they were not knowledgeable of resources in regards to housing assistance, or in solving problems with landlords or utility companies.

### Employment

Forty-six percent (46%) of individuals responding to the survey indicated that they were not currently employed. Twenty-nine percent (29%) were employed with 22% of them working full time and 7% part time. Twenty-four percent (24%) of the respondents were retired and 12% were enrolled in school. When asked how many had looked for vocational services in the past year to assist them in becoming employed 76% reported no and only 24% reported yes. For the 24% that answered yes to this questions 60% of them were working with the Office for the Blind, 30% were working with Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, 10% an Independent Living Center and 10% through the One Stop System.

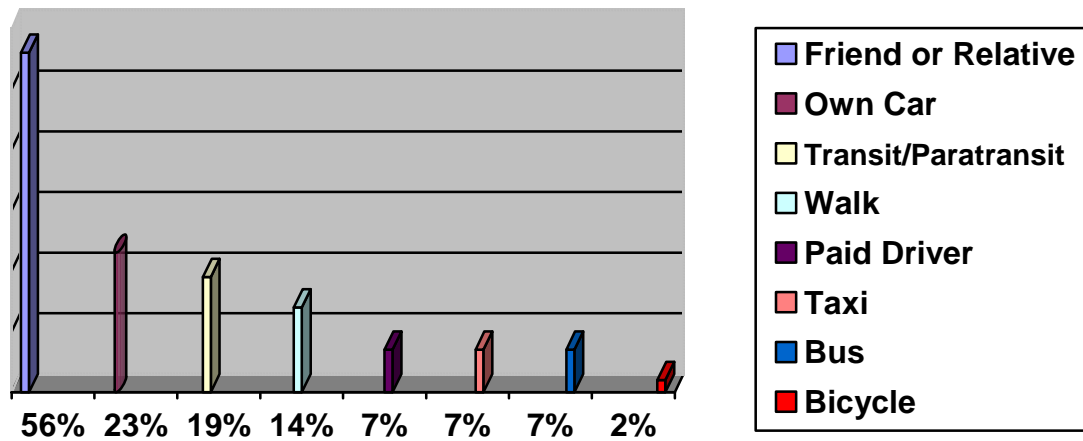
The Chart below indicates the respondents identified areas of need in gaining employment.



Eighty-two percent (82%) indicated that assistance with Job Placement as the highest need defined as help with referral to and hiring by an employer. Eighty percent (80%) indicated On the Job Training as a need areas defined as learning how to apply your skills in your new job setting. The third highest area was Job Search Assistance as indicated by 79% of the respondents defined as resume writing, identifying job openings, interviewing skills and making employer contacts. Sixty-seven percent found the areas of Occupational/vocational Classes, On the Job Supports (such as a job coach) and Transition Services equally important. College or University (getting the right degree for the job you want) was indicated as a need area by 56% of the respondents.

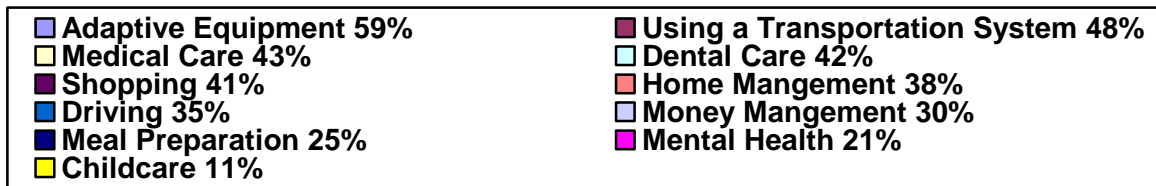
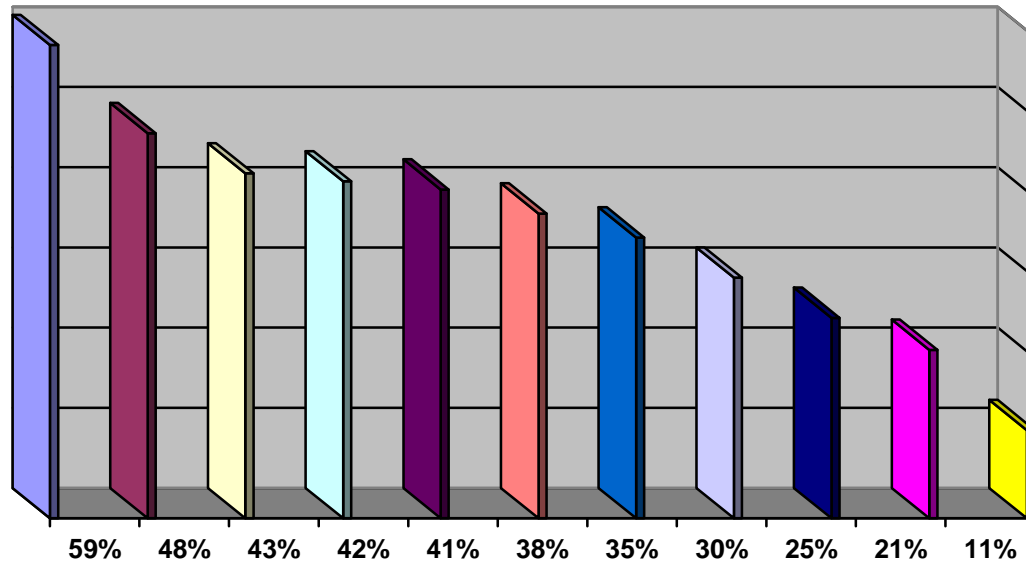
### Independent Living

There were four questions for the area of Independent Living. Sixty-four percent of them indicated that they had not used public transportation in the past year. Thirty-six (36%) indicated that they had used public transportation. Fifty-six (56%) indicated that the most common form of transportation for them is a friend or relative (not paid). The chart below contains the reported means of Transportation.



When asked if there are adequate programs, services and supports in place to assist you in living independently in your home and community 59% of the respondents indicated no while 41% said there were adequate resources. Most of the comments in this area dealt with access to transportation in order to be more independent in the community. There were 22 comments for this question and of those 13 or 59% were related to lack of transportation.

The chart below outlines the areas of need identified for the area of independent living.



### Mainstream Education

There were six questions for the area of Mainstream Education. There was a lower response rate for this area of the survey as the results showed a high percentage of individuals skipped these questions finding them not applicable to their situation. Due to the low response rate this section does not yield strong data.

For the area of assessing whether or not the public school systems are accommodating to students who are blind and visually impaired 71% of the respondents marked not applicable. Twenty-seven percent (27%) indicated yes and 3 % indicated no. Respondents were asked if they responded no to indicate in what way they were not accommodating. Ninety percent (90%) of the respondents marked no applicable. For those answering this question 8% indicated services were difficult to obtain, 4% indicated that the appropriate services are not provided, 4% felt staff were not qualified or trained, and 4% felt the appropriate services were not provided.

For the question on transition from high school to college and the provision of adequate supports 82% of the respondent marked not applicable. For those answering 13% indicated their needs were not met and 5% said adequate supports were in place. Forty-five percent (45%) indicated they had pursued education after high school, 10% did not and 45% marked non applicable. When asked if higher educational institutions had been accommodating to them 33% said yes and 12% replied no to the question. Fifty-five percent (55%) marked not applicable. For those answering no to this question 17%

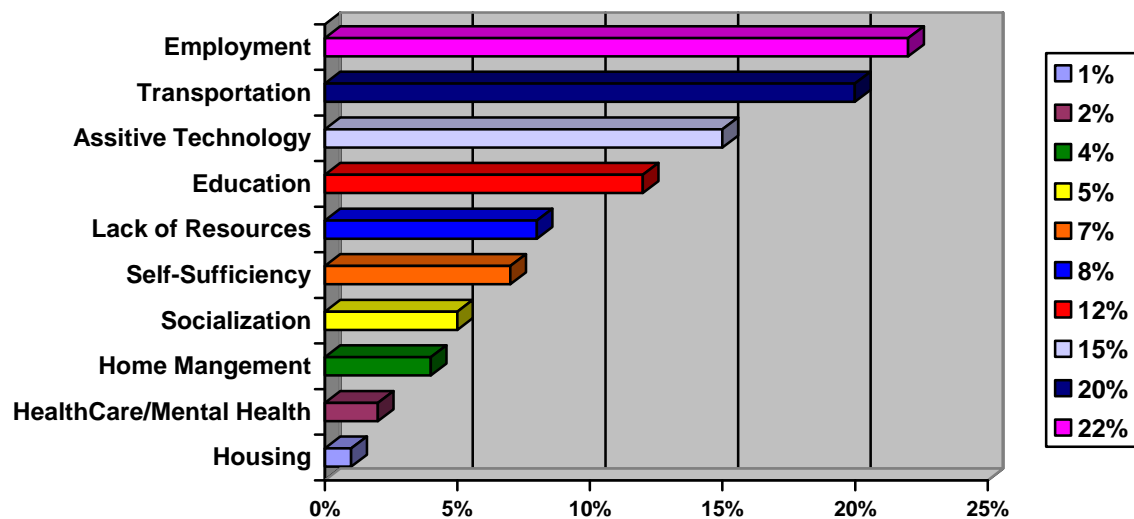
indicated services are difficult to obtain, 8% indicated there are no enough trained or qualified staff, 8% felt that there is a lack of appropriate services and 8% indicated they are not sensitive to issues. Seventy-five (75%) marked not applicable for this area.

Open Ended Needs Questions

The last part of the survey contained four open ended questions. These questions received a variety of responses and were answered by 70% of the respondents. Approximately 30% of individuals completing the survey skipped the open ended response questions. The results are outlined below.

Question # 1: What do you think are the top three concerns facing individuals with a vision impairment over the next five years?

The top three areas of need indicated were: 1) Employment, 2) Transportation, and 3) Assitive Technology. All areas are outlined in the chart below.



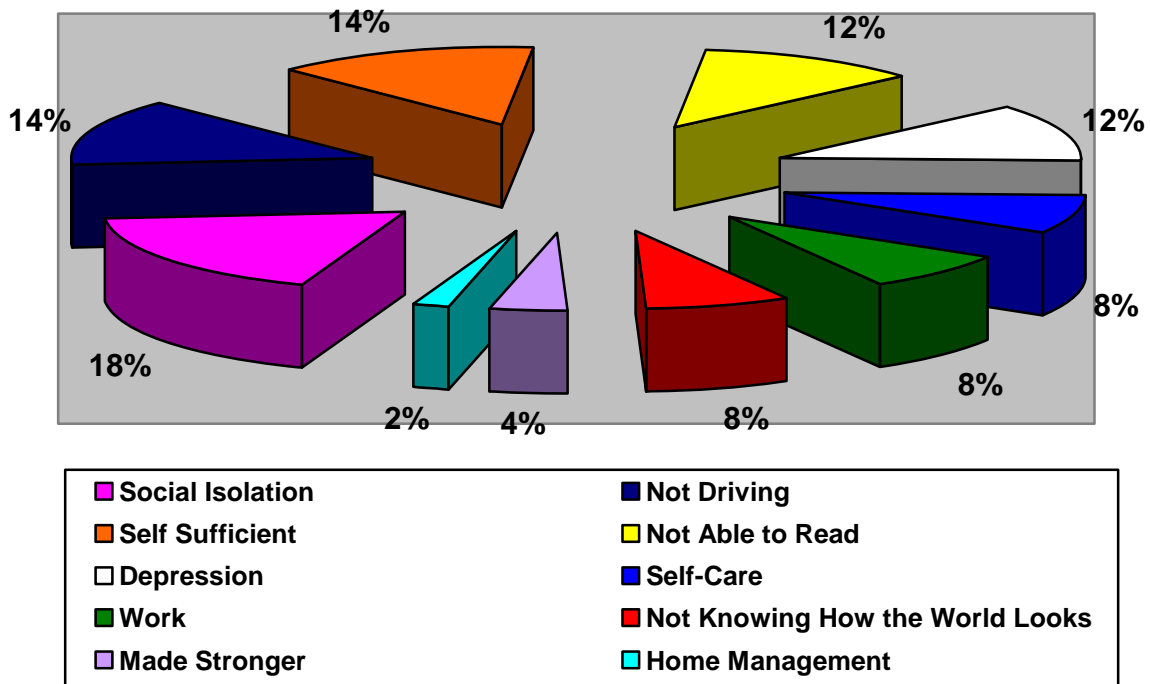
Question #2: What is the most significant unmet need in your life at this time relating to your vision loss?

The top five most significant unmet needs identified were: 1) Transportation, 2) Employment, 3) Unable to Read, 4) Self-Sufficiency and 5) AT, Social Isolation and Home Management (3 areas had equal scoring). Most of the open ended responses for this area dealt with areas of life that effect an individuals independence such as social isolation and a lack of available resources.

Question #3: What has been the most significant impact your vision loss has had on your life?

The top four areas identified as having a significant impact on the individual’s life were: 1) Social Isolation (29%), 2) All areas of my life (20%), 3) Not being able to drive (15%) and 4) Not being able to read as well as the area of self-sufficiency (18%).

In looking at the individual responses for these areas they are further broken out and defined for the overall life areas and self sufficiency in the chart below.



Question #4: What role has your culture, religion, race or ethic background played in helping or hindering you in meeting your needs in regard to your vision impairment?

Thirty-five percent (35%) of individuals that answered this question indicated that religion and their faith played an active role in how they dealt with their vision loss. Thirty-five (35%) indicated that none of the factors had an impact on them and 21% marked this as not applicable to them. Three (3%) of the respondents indicated that all of them had a positive impact on them, 3% indicated that their family was an influential factor and 3% indicated that socio economic status was more of a factor than culture, religion, race or ethic background.

## Agency Staff Surveys

### Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Survey

Staff were surveyed by the two regions. Results were tabulated by Region I and Region II and then jointly for a combined result. For some areas there were two services with an equal amount of tabulated votes. Three questions were asked in the survey. Seven (7) responses were tabulated from Region I and 8 from Region II (83% of Counseling staff responded).

Question #1: What are the top three services requested by individuals?

Region I	Region II	Combined Regional Results
Assistive Technology	Assistive Technology	Assistive Technology
Educational Assistance Orientation and Mobility	Medical Educational Assistance	Educational Assistance Medical
Job Placement	Job Placement	Job Placement

Question #2: How would you rate the level of services provided to consumers through Community Rehabilitation Providers in the provision of Supported Employment? How many CRP's do you refer to on a regular basis?

Region I	Region II	Combined Regional Results
63% rated good to very Good	75% rated good to very good	73% rated good to very good
37% rated poor	25% rated poor	27% rated poor
71% referred average of 2-3 CRP's	88% referred an average of 3 or more	80% an average of 3 or more

Question #3: How would you rate the level of services provided to consumers through the local One Stop? What services available do your consumers access or take advantage of?

Region I	Region II	Combined Regional Results
67% rated good to very Good	63% rated good to very good	60% rated good to very good
17% rated poor	25% rated poor	20% rated poor
16% no answer	12% no answer	20% no answer

Counseling staff reported that the following services are typically accessed:

Employment Opportunities/Register EKOS  
Testing for Employment

College Information  
Child Care Services  
Resume Services  
Workshops for Employment Education  
Veteran Services

Agency Wide Staff Survey

Survey Monkey was used for the agency wide survey of staff that contained three questions. Forty-two (42%) of staff responded .

Question #1: What would you say are the top three services requested by individuals?

1. Medical Restoration
2. Job Placement
3. Assistive Technology

Orientation and Mobility, Educational Assistance and Independent Living Services were the next three services staff scored as requested.

Question #2: What do you think are the primary concerns facing individuals who are blind and visually impaired over the next five (5) years?

1. Employment
2. Transportation
3. Assistive Technology

Affordable Medical Care, a lack of resources and services and the needs of the aging population “Baby Boomers” were the next three primary concerns staff noted.

Questions #3: What single action could the Office for the Blind take to improve services in our state?

Sixty-three percent of the tabulated scores indicated the following top three categories:

1. Increased Marketing and Outreach (24%)
2. Recruitment, Training, and Leadership Development of Staff (20%)
3. Increased funding for Services (9%)

## One Stop Managers Survey

This survey was done jointly with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. The survey contained ten (10) questions. For reporting purposes three of those questions will be omitted from this report that pertains specifically to Vocational Rehabilitation. There were eighteen (18) respondents from across the State.

Question #1: Do you feel there are gaps in services for persons with disabilities in the One Stop?

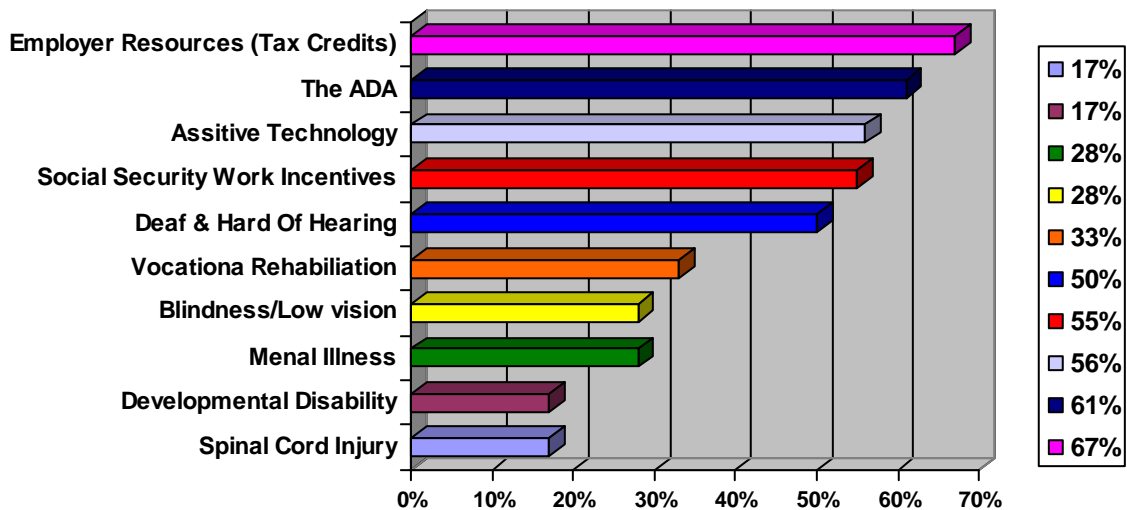
Eighty-three (83%) of respondents indicated no and 17% felt there were gaps in services.

Question #2: In your experience over the past three years, have you seen more or fewer individuals with disabilities seeking services at your One-Stop Center?

Eleven (11%) indicated there are more, 28% fewer and 61% reported more.

Question #3: What kinds of training needs would your staff have related to serving persons with disabilities? Check all that apply.

The grid below outlines the training needs indicated by respondents.



#Question #4: Rate your knowledge of the following topics.

<b>Topic Area</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>
Assistive Technology	0%	33%	61%	6%
Employment Outcomes Strategies for customers with Disabilities	0%	61%	33%	6%
Job Accommodations	11%	44.5%	44.5%	0%
Materials in alternate formats	11%	39%	50%	0%
Self-Disclosure regarding disability/employers	6%	55%	28%	11%
Information about VR Services	17%	78%	5%	0%
Social Security/Impact on working	0%	28%	44%	28%

Question #5: How would you rate your center’s working relationship with local staff of the Kentucky Office for the Blind?

Twenty-two (22%) reported the relationship as excellent, 61% good and 17% fair. Comments for this area were: 1) good working relationship, 2) good communications with partnering agency, and 3) excellent working relationship.

Question #6: If you rated the relationship with the Office for the Blind ‘fair’ or ‘poor,’ do you have any suggestions for improving the relationship.

Comments for this area were: 1) More contact needed as to services that are in the local area and 2) better sharing of services, presentation to staff on what you do.

### **Eye Physician Surveys**

A survey was designed for the Optometrists (150) and Ophthalmologist (150) across the state. This was a pen and paper survey sent via regular mail to 300 offices across the state. The survey contained five pertinent questions.

Question #1: Are you aware of the services the office for the Blind can provide to your patients?

Question #2: Do you need more information regarding services?

Question #3: Are you aware of the closest location of our field offices in your area?

Question #4: In order to ensure that you can refer patients to us with the least amount of difficulty what can our staff do to easily facilitate that process?

Question #5: What are the greatest unmet eye care needs in your community?

Forty-eight surveys were returned by the Optometrists (32%) and 63 from the ophthalmologists (42%). The results are as follows.

<b>Question</b>	<b>Optometrist</b>	<b>Ophthalmologist</b>
#1 Aware of Services	62% Yes 38% No	79% Yes 21% No
#2 Need for Services	62% Yes 38% No	68% Yes 32% No
#3 Aware of field office locations	55% Yes 45% No	64% Yes 36% No

For questions 4 and 5 the answers varied widely for the two different groups.

The following grid outlines the results of question four and the preference of the offices for materials for patients.

<b>Information Processes for Patient referral</b>	<b>Optometrists</b>	<b>Ophthalmologists</b>
Business cards and brochures	43%	20%
Directions/Maps	16%	0%
List of Services	19%	17%
Patient paperwork and referral forms	21%	0%
Addresses/contact numbers to offices	13%	30%
Explanation of processes/screening/eligibility	8%	0%
Other	22%	60%

Comments given in the ‘Other’ category mainly indicated that current processes for referral were very good and worked well for most of the physicians. They cited the user friendly web-site and professional staff that make the process easy for patients. Some physicians asked for follow up with them on referrals sent to the agency.

The following grid outlines the responses for question #5 on the greatest unmet eye care needs in their communities.

<b>Unmet Needs</b>	<b>Optometrists</b>	<b>Ophthalmologists</b>
Low Vision	37%	15%
Financial Needs	29%	33%
Routine Exams	15%	3%
Cataracts	5%	6%
Diabetes	10%	0%
Aids/Devices	5%	12%
Glaucoma	7%	6%
Training/Education	7%	6%
Other	44%	64%

Comments given in the ‘Other’ category were on a variety of themes. They are as follows: 1) preventative care and early diagnosis, 2) transportation needs, and 3) the needs of the aging population (available resources).

### **Community Rehabilitation Provider Survey**

Eighteen (18) Community Rehabilitation Providers were surveyed. The surveys were distributed through email and regular mail by the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. Eight of the eighteen or 44% returned surveys. This was a small sampling of CRP’s. This survey contained four questions specific to the CRP and service delivery to the blind and visually impaired.

Question #1: Does your organization provide community employment services for individuals who are blind and visually impaired? If yes, please list any and all.

All eight agencies indicated that they provided services for the areas of: Supported Employment, Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation, Work Adjustment, and Job Placement Services.

Question #2: Have you received a consumer referral from our organization for employment services within the past year?

Seventy-five percent or 6 of the 8 respondents indicated they had received 1 -3 referrals in the past year.

Question #3: If you answered yes what specialized training have you had specific to serving the blind and Visually Impaired?

The table below outlines the answers for this question. Six of the eight (75%) reported some type of specialized training.

<b>Specialized Training CRP's reported having</b>	<b># of CRP's reporting Specialized Training or Skills</b>
Basic Knowledge	<b>1</b>
College Course Work/no specialized training	<b>1</b>
Core Training UK Supported Employment Project	<b>4</b>

Question # 4: List three training needs you feel your organization or agency needs in order to provide employment services (supported employment) to this specific disability population.

The table below outlines the answers for this question. There were seven respondents for this area.

<b>Specialized Training CRP's indicated as an area of need</b>	<b># of CRP's responding</b>
Braille Related Training	<b>3</b>
Orientation and Mobility	<b>4</b>
Basic Knowledge or Blindness 101 Skills Characteristics/Cultural Differences	<b>5</b>
Assistive Technology	<b>6</b>
Supported Employment and working with individuals who are blind and visually impaired	<b>4</b>

For the area of other concerns in serving the blind and visually impaired providers reported a poor economy, a tightening job market, adjustment to blindness and the need for transportation supports.

### **Focus Groups**

As stated in the methodology section there were four focus groups held across the state. The objective of each session was: "To gather information regarding the needs of individuals who are blind and visually impaired" for the five target areas decided upon by the Council. They were: 1) housing, 2) Adaptive Equipment and Devices, 3) Independent Living, 4) Mainstream Education and 5) Employment. State Rehabilitation Council members Kenny Jones and Charles Allen facilitated at this session. They led discussion around questions pertaining to the five focus areas for the needs assessment as well as a couple of open ended questions. The same questions were used at each focus group. They were as follows:

## Housing

1. What are the most critical areas of need in regards to housing?
2. Has anyone encountered any obstacles such as discrimination in regards to renting or owning your own home.

## Adaptive Equipment and Devices

1. Are you able to obtain needed adaptive equipment and devices? If not, why not?
2. What needs in the area of adaptive equipment and devices do you have that are not being met?

## Independent Living

1. In what areas are you lacking supportive services that would allow you to live more independently in your homes? In your Community?

## Mainstream Education

1. What areas in the public school system and postsecondary educational settings do you feel you or a child experiences gaps in services?
2. Are there any educational needs that you or a child has that are not being met?

## Employment

1. Identify what you feel are the primary barriers to employment?
2. What current unmet needs do you have or what vocational service areas could you benefit from in assisting you to achieve your employment goals?

## Open Ended Discussion Questions

1. What do you think are the primary concerns facing individuals who are blind and visually impaired over the next five (5) years?
2. What single action could the Office for the Blind take to improve services in your community?

The information gained through the four focus groups for needs in the five focus areas and through the open ended questions is summarized below. The focus groups were well attended with a total of 138 participants for the four different groups.

**For the area of Housing** the ongoing theme from all four of the focus groups was the need for accessing information and resources for housing (44%). Individuals shared that often they are not aware of available resources that would assist them in finding housing or purchasing a home. Thirty-one percent (31%) indicated that housing that was accessible and affordable was important to them. When citing accessibility transportation was included in this assuring that an individual can access needed resources and be able to get around in their communities. Twelve percent (12%) indicated that a personal finances course would be helpful for many new home buyers.

**For the area of Adaptive Equipment and Devices** 22% of those individuals participating indicated the need for ongoing training, technical support and upgrades to their equipment and devices. Seventeen percent (17%) indicated that a lending library or “trade swap” for equipment would be helpful along with an inventory of catalogue containing various types of AT equipment available through the agency. This would include various products that an individual could try out. Thirteen percent (13%) shared that affordability of products or that the cost of products hindered their ability to have what is needed for them to be more independent in their homes.

**For the area of Independent Living** 22% of individuals indicated that transportation was a need area for them. Individuals noted that the lack of transportation resources, the cost of transportation and having access to transportation in their communities was a need area. Twenty-two percent (22%) felt that training for consumers is needed on AT equipment, social appropriateness instruction, and organizational skills and planning and that training of staff for the area of multiple disabilities was needed. A reoccurring theme in all groups was connecting individuals with a mentoring program for different life skills areas. Peer supported mentoring in order to connect consumers with other individuals who can share their experiences and serve as a role model.

**For the area of Mainstream Education** forty percent (40%) felt that there was a need for more information sharing or knowledge of agency services for the transition population. This was the most prominent theme from the focus groups the need for transition resources to assist the students transitioning from school to work and post secondary educational settings. Participants in the focus groups indicated the need for increased outreach and assistance to students that will enable them to learn more about the agency at an earlier age. This includes having a greater awareness and knowledge of assistive technology and how that will allow for greater access to instruction. Tuition assistance for students was indicated as a high need area. Not only for those attending full time but for part time students as well. In addition the agency should make sure there is consistency of services provided to students for tuition and for the area of AT equipment.

**For the area of Employment** there were a variety of responses. One area that stood out was an increased need for developing employer relationships and soft job skills training for consumers. Twenty-eight (28%) of the focus group participants highlighted these two areas of need as well as a focus on the use technology in the workplace and additional training for the consumer. Suggestions for training topics for consumers included, interviewing skills, information regarding self employment, the importance of educational and vocational studies, assistive technology, Braille studies, Workplace etiquette, the ADA, and career development that promotes upward movement on the career ladder.

**The open ended questions** yielded the following responses. The top two primary concerns identified by the participants in the focus groups were: 1) assistive technology keeping up with changes and advances in the field of blindness and 2) the shrinking economy and job market. For the question regarding what single action the agency could take to improve services there was not a theme that came from the responses. The following input was given: 1) offer a grant writing course, 2) establish a resource database that a newly blinded individual or consumer can access through a website or by telephone for resources to address their specific needs, such as a job bank, adaptive equipment, 3) obtain increased funding, and 4) recognize consumer choice.

## **Internal Data Sources**

### Standards and Indicators

The agency will not meet indicator 1.1 in 2008 with a performance level of -31. In 2007 the agency had a -39. Although there was an increase in 2008 over the prior year of 17 positive employment outcomes the average over the two years still yielded a negative 31. The agency has consistently met the remaining indicators for the calendar years of FFY 2003 through 2008.

### 2008 Satisfaction Survey

Consumer satisfaction is considered an important component of service quality. The Kentucky Office for the Blind (OFB) sought to determine the satisfaction level of people who have received services. At the request of the State Rehabilitation Council to the Kentucky Office for the Blind, the Human Development Institute at the University of Kentucky coordinated a telephone survey with people who had cases closed with the OFB in fiscal year 2008 (October 1, 2007 through September 30, 2008). The University of Kentucky Survey Research Center contacted individuals between August 15 and August 27, 2008, as well as December 5, 2008 through January 6, 2009 using the survey instrument that had been developed by the Council and the OFB.

A total of 320 people from around the state participated in the survey. This represented a 92.8% response rate. Individuals were considered ineligible under several circumstances, including: disconnected phone number, incorrect phone number, no new phone number,

and person deceased. The response rate for this telephone survey is considered high. The survey instrument is available in Appendix A. Survey results are primarily reported by status group; however, caseload results are presented in Appendix B. Overall results are presented only for the global item of overall satisfaction. The results are also presented in a variety of ways in this report: by narrative text, bar and pie charts, tables of frequencies (percentages), and means. The results are organized by item and are given in a variety of ways in recognition that people take in information in different ways.

Overall, the results of the study indicate that consumers expressed high degrees of satisfaction with their experiences. Eighty-four percent of all participating consumers felt that services they received through the Office of the Blind were “excellent” or “very good”. Over 90% felt that their needs were met through the services they received. There was no statistically significant difference between the Regions of the state in terms of overall satisfaction with services.

Generally, participants had positive regard for their counselors and other staff at OFB. Additionally, satisfaction with specific services (McDowell Center, assistive technology, orientation and mobility, computer training and career development) was also high. As might be expected, those whose cases were closed successfully were somewhat more satisfied, on the whole, with all aspects of the OFB.

At the time of the survey, a little over half (52.8%) of all participating consumers reported that they were currently working in paid competitive employment status, with an additional 7.8% being self-employed. Approximately 13% were unemployed and currently seeking employment and about 17% reported that they were unemployed and not seeking employment. Those with cases closed successfully had the highest competitive employment percentage at almost 60%. This was followed closely by those in the post-employment group with 57.7% being competitively employed.

### RSA Monitoring Data Reports

The data report received from RSA through the monitoring process was reviewed for significant findings or trends. The agency felt that some of the data findings were internal coding issues. As a result, coding issues were identified and staff received instruction on how to correctly code certain areas such as information and referral. There was a significant amount of data for review. The following areas were identified for review for the purposes of the comprehensive needs assessment.

**For the area of disability characteristics** Kentucky had a higher percent with a sensory disability at 6.3% than the U.S. average of 4.3%.

**In looking an individuals served by impairment codes** for the area of blindness and other visual impairments the results for Kentucky were almost in reverse of other blind agencies with a higher incidence of coding for the area of “other visual impairments”. At this time it is difficult to identify what factors are affecting this; however it does

identify a need for the agency to place an emphasis on this in reviewing the data to determine what is impacting the numbers in this area.

**Referral sources for individuals closed who received services** showed numbers for the agency in relation to other blind agencies were higher for physicians or medical personnel or medical institution and lower for self referral. This may be due in part to an increased marketing effort over the past two years to area eye physicians. Given this referral relationship has increased there may be a need to assure that the eye physicians are knowledgeable regarding eligibility and services offered through the agency.

**Employment status at application and closure for individuals** showed a ten percent (10%) variance with the agency having a higher number for those employed at application than other blind agencies. The relevance of this is unknown at this time; however it may be an area of concentration for the agency in assuring new applicants to the agency.

**For the area of transition** there were some areas of need identified. The agency performance was not in keeping with the average of most blind agencies for transition students for the area of employment status at application for both with and without employment. There is the need for the agency to look at these variances and identify and service area needs.

**Staffing Patterns in view of other blind agencies** indicate the need for additional counseling and counseling support staff and administrative staff.

**VR Case Flow** numbers overall show a decrease in the number of new applicants and those determined eligible over the past five years. However, of note the agency numbers for this area of the RSA-113 are higher on an average than other blind agencies. In addition, for the area of Employment Outcomes there is a 6.2% increase and a 6.4% decrease in closures without an employment outcome.

**For the area of Services Provided** the agency is 15% higher for the area of “diagnosis and treatment of impairments” than most blind agencies which translates into costs that are 28% higher. There is the need to assess these services and the costs associated with them in looking at how these monies are expended and for what types of diagnosis and treatment.

**Reasons for Closure** showed a higher amount of individuals than other blind agencies exiting as an applicant with no impediment to employment and exiting without an employment outcome, after eligibility, but before an IPE was signed. These numbers have a direct correlation with performance and caseload expectations. The question arises here as to the need to look at internal expectations set and their impact on these numbers. In looking at employment status at closure for transition-aged individuals the agency has a higher number of homemaker closures as indicated by a 8.7% difference. The agency performance for closure as employed with supports in an integrated setting is lower than other blind agencies by 5.1% (however this only reflects services for one

individual). Average hourly earnings for SSDI beneficiaries and transition aged youth showed a wage of \$5.10 less than the average of all blind agencies.

Although a formal monitoring report has not been received at the time of this report input received during the site visit indicated the need for the development and implementation of an improved outcome and performance measurement system for the agency across programs inclusive of a centralized location for program data.

### Strategic Plan

In 2006 OFB began the Strategic Planning Process. A SWOT analysis was conducted for planning purposes to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the agency. In 2007, agency work teams were formed to work on the focus areas of the plan derived from the SWOT analysis. Target date for implementation of the plan was January 2008. The implementation of the plan is in the early stages. Based on the SWOT analysis the following identified focus areas are the framework areas for the 3-year plan:

### **Staff Retirement**

- Prepare for the 2008 retirement exodus and the depletion of experienced staff and management positions
- To promote and train the next generation of managers for the OFB

### **Personnel**

- Staff recruitment, leadership development, and retention will encompass mentoring and skills building for existing staff- emphasizing management and leadership
- Managers will train new staff and continue to work with their staff to support decision-making.
- Managers in the field will be open-minded to new ideas and encourage creativity within the work environment
- Hire qualified staff, teach them skills to do their job, support as needed.
- Encourage Teamwork
- Focus on upgrading Staff Education, Training, and Qualifications in a standardized manner

### **Funding**

- Budget cuts – so much of our success is based on dollars
- Lack of State Funding and “other funding sources”
- Increase funding sources

- Need to develop plan to maximize value of AT Act program to KY expansion of use of state contracts, grants and state funding opportunities with design that will benefit OFB and its consumers

### **Communication within the Agency**

- Increase communication for building agency-wide cohesion
- Utilization of Central Office staff in working to find solutions-relative answers. Being a small agency we all wear many hats but we must all work together
- Development of a common knowledge across the agency on how funds are being used.
- Increase Communication of Steering Committee-Solve Problems and identify clearly the Role-Function of the group

### **Growing OFB programs in Alignment with National Trends**

- OFB will grow nationally respected programs as the demand for our services grows in accordance to the impending populations trends
- McDowell Land Project

### **Relationship with Partners**

- To increase opportunities for collaboration with other state agencies in programmatic and funding areas
- Good working relationships/partnerships with employers/business
- To build relationships with employers/businesses for placement, PR, and funding opportunities to always ensure we provide specialized services by maintaining an agency with qualified staff.
- Support of consumer constituent groups statewide
- To better utilize our committees – SRC as problem solving versus reporting

### **McDowell Center**

- The McDowell Center will become a national leader in training facilities, etc.
- Maximize utilization of staff and resources of the McDowell Center
- Revamp the Charles W. McDowell center’s curriculum and others programs, such as employment programs.

### **Summary of Findings**

The agency gathered data and information from multiple sources and stakeholders. The following is a synthesis of common-themed findings from all the information gathered for the purpose of identifying key needs, concerns and issues in making recommendations for setting goals, strategies and priorities for the agency for the areas of:

- (A). Individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;**
- (B) Identified Needs of Minority Populations and the Underserved and Unserved Populations**
- (C) Identified Needs of the Statewide Workforce Investment System**
- (ii) Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs.**

The findings of the needs assessment yielded a theme throughout all of the data sources identifying the top areas of need as: assistive technology, employment, medical restoration, educational assistance and the area of independent living or self sufficiency.

The very fact that 98% of the respondents to the Consumer Survey Instrument were white, non Hispanic indicates the need for outreach to Minority Populations. Although the agency and the SRC made every effort through different venues to reach minority populations there was limited information gleaned for the needs of this population group.

The Blind and Visually Impaired and the Deaf Blind population are an underserved and unserved population especially in the rural areas of the state. This was reflected in the open ended responses for the Consumer Survey Instrument that dealt with areas of life that effect an individuals independence such as social isolation and a lack of available resources. The assessment showed an overall lack of knowledge about available resources and services for the areas of independent living.

The Eye Physicians indicated a lack of proper preventative care and the availability for low vision services for individuals as a need area as well as the lack of financial resources for individuals to access proper eye care. There is a higher percentage of individuals with sensory impairments in certain areas of the Eastern part of the state (5% - 11%). This may be due in part to the lower social economic conditions in this area resulting in a lack of resources for preventive care and treatment for eye related diseases. The percentage rate of unemployed individuals with Sensory Disabilities in this area of the state ranges from 65% to 90%.

The results of the Needs Assessment show that overall Office for the Blind and the Office of Employment and Training staff feels that a good collaborative working relationship exists. Some staff indicated a need for improvement in resource sharing and there were several areas of training identified that staff could benefit from.

The Needs Assessment showed that community rehabilitation providers lack the needed knowledge, training and experience in working with this specific disability population. This is due in part to the fact that CRP's statewide have a focus on the MRDD population. This is understandable given that long term follow along funding and supports for Supported Employment is linked to individuals with a MR/DD diagnosis. CRP's indicated they have a lack the experience and expertise to work with the Blind and Visually Impaired and they lack the monetary resources to develop programs specific to serving the Blind and Visually Impaired. As a result there is a narrow service field for

consumers of the OFB outside of the State Agency's own program design, services and expertise of the regionalized teams that provide categorized services.

Information gained through the assessment regarding the needs of individuals who are blind and visually impaired and deafblind centered on the following three focus areas: 1) Service Delivery, 2) Adequacy of Resources, and 3) Effectiveness and Efficiency of Operations.

### Adequacy of Resources

**Availability and knowledge of resources** to meet the needs of individuals who are blind and visually impaired for the area of independent living was a prevalent need area across all data sources. Most individuals reported a lack of knowledge or a lack of resources for the area of housing, transportation, and affordable medical care. This area was very personal for many of the respondents citing social isolation and the need for the very basic right to self-sufficiency in life.

### Service Delivery

**Adaptive equipment, tools and devices** was the number one emerging and critical need though out the needs assessment from all data sources. A lack of resources, affordability, technological advances, maintenance and repair of devices and ongoing training needs associated with use of equipment.

**Employment** for individuals with disabilities in a struggling economy where individuals are competing with a highly skilled workforce. The provision of adequate training and opportunities for skills acquisition for individuals to obtain and maintain employment is a primary area of need. Sixty-two percent of the respondents for the consumer survey indicated an income of \$29,000 or less. Although the sampling was a small number of respondents these statistics are staggering if they are reflective of most of the population across the Commonwealth. High need areas across all data sources were the areas of job placement, on the job training, job search assistance and soft skills acquisition for the areas of resume writing, identifying job openings, interviewing skills and making employer contacts.

**Transition Services** for individuals exiting high school as they enter employment or post secondary educational settings, training or technical schools.

**Educational Supports** for individuals was an area of need given that forty-six percent of the respondents reported having a High School Diploma or below. This also indicates a need for early intervention and counseling supports for students.

**Medical Restoration** services assuring that an individuals medical needs are met in order to assure the feasibility of employment.

**Development and Expansion of Community Rehabilitation Provider relationships** for supported employment services. Providers expressed additional training needs for service delivery of the blind and visually impaired.

**Increased Participation with One Stop Service Delivery System** utilizing existing partnerships and the provision of information sharing and training initiatives.

### Effectiveness and Efficiency of Operations

**Design and Implementation** of an internal performance measurement system with efficiency, effectiveness and satisfaction goal areas. The agency does not have a formal system or method in place in looking at agency performance. Certain practices occur and managers have oversight of the performance of staff and service outcomes but there is not a standardized performance measurement system.

**Maximize** the current Case Management System (CMS) to collect data for all service operations. The new CMS start up date was October 1, 2008. At this time there are still kinks in the new system. The agency is working with the general agency in making needed corrections and adding additional modules to capture all program data.

**Professional Development** opportunities for staff for the area of continuing education and training in order to hire and retain qualified staff. The needs assessment indicated that in making sure staff received the necessary supports, training and skills acquisition is the most important thing the agency can do in assuring quality consumer services.

#### **ATTACHMENT 4.11(b): Annual Estimates of Individuals To Be Served and Costs of Services**

Kentucky's population based on U.S. Census data is **4,205,648**. Prevent Blindness America reports that of that population 3,046,951 aged 18 years and older have vision impairments or an age-related eye disease. There are 14,624 or 3% of the population aged 40 and older who are blind. The Kentucky Office for the Blind has two categories out of four open in Order of Selection.

The following charts give data that represents estimated performance for FY 2010 under this State Plan based on historical data from prior years. The estimated service and category numbers are reflective of the average number of new applicants that we expect to receive in 2008 and it is inclusive of the carry over of consumers from the prior year. The costs are reflective of direct service cost to consumers for the current year to date 2009 and the prior service costs for 2008. They are not inclusive of indirect costs associated with those services. These goals are reflective of rising cost in tuition (ranging from 3% - 5% across the state), medical care, and additional state funding cuts. According to a May 2009 press release through The Council on Postsecondary Education tuition rates at state institutions in Kentucky have set the lowest tuition increase for undergraduate resident students in more than a decade. The Council approved a 3.3 percent tuition increase for resident undergraduates at the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, a 4 percent increase at the comprehensive institutions and a 5 percent increase at the two research institutions—University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville. Kentucky, like many other states, will more than likely face health care spending hikes, as a result of retiree benefits and the expanding Medicaid population.

Category Two includes blind and visually impaired consumers who have experienced a major life or workplace change. These individuals require two or more services

(orientation and mobility, assistive technology) in order to maintain their employment due to increased vision loss and technology changes in their present work environment.

***PROJECTED PERFORMANCE FOR FY 2010***

<u>CATEGORY</u>	<u>ESTIMATE OF # TO BE SERVED</u>	<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED ASSOCIATED COSTS</u>	<u>AVERAGE ESTIMATED COST PER PERSON</u>	<u>EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES ESTIMATES</u>
Category One	893	\$ 960,134.40	\$1,075.50	155
Category Two	797	\$2,162,004.90	\$2,596.98	241
Category Three	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Category Four	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,690</b>	<b>\$ 3,122,139.30</b>	<b>\$1,906.05</b>	<b>396</b>

- **Definitions of Categories on page 2**

**Projected Performance for FY 2010 under Title VI, Part B**

<u>ESTIMATE OF # TO BE SERVED</u>	<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED ASSOCIATED COSTS</u>	<u>AVERAGE ESTIMATED COST PER PERSON</u>	<u>EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES ESTIMATES</u>
29	\$62,000.00	\$2,137.93	8

\*Expenditures exceeding the Title VI-B allotment will be covered with funds from the 110 program.

**CATEGORY DEFINITIONS:**

**Priority Categories** means the following rank of categories of eligible individuals to be followed in the order of selection:

**A. Priority Category One** - Eligible individuals with the most significant disability whose severe impairment seriously limits three (3) or more functional capacities in terms of employment outcome; and whose rehabilitation requires two (2) or more services over an extended period of time.

**B. Priority Category Two** - Eligible individuals with a significant disability whose severe impairment limits two (2) or more of functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome and whose rehabilitation requires two (2) or more services over an extended period of time.

**C. Priority Category Three** - Eligible individuals with a non-significant disability whose impairment seriously limits one (1) or more functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome and whose rehabilitation requires two (2) or more services over a period of time. (This category is closed)

**D. Priority Category Four** – All other individuals. (This category is closed).

## **ATTACHMENT 4.11 (c)(1): State's Goals and Priorities**

The Kentucky Office for the Blind's mission is: *To provide opportunities for employment and independence to individuals with visual disabilities.* This attachment identifies the goals and priorities of the State in carrying out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs. Identified in this section are the revisions in the goals and priorities for 2010 developed collaboratively with the State Rehabilitation Council based on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

The council voted on and accepted the revision of the following goals and priorities on May 26, 2009.

**Goal # 1: Increase the number of quality employment outcomes by providing services to ensure that individuals who are blind and visually impaired secure employment and achieve economic self-sufficiency.**

**Goal #2: Expand and increase services for transition age youth.**

**Goal # 3: Maximize consumer access to affordable assistive technology in order to increase their independence in their homes, schools, and communities and remove barriers to employment.**

**Goal # 4: Maximize the operational management of programs (in order to insure efficiency and effectiveness of agency processes).**

**Goal #5: Maximize Independent Living Services (IL) and Services for Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB). (Increasing the number of individuals who are**

**blind and visually impaired that live independently, work competitively, and are active in their community).**

**The following Priorities were established:**

- **Increase the number of quality employment outcomes**
- **Maximize consumer access to affordable assistive technology**
- **Expand and increase services for transition age youth.**

#### EVALUATION ASSURANCE

The Agency in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council shall conduct an annual evaluation to determine the extent to which these priorities have been achieved, and if not achieved, the reasons that they were not achieved, and a description of alternative approaches that will be taken. The annual evaluation shall be conducted at such time as to permit the consideration of findings in the development of the State Plan and its annual updates.

If the annual evaluation determines that specific goals have not been achieved, alternative plans shall be developed, with the advice of the State Rehabilitation Council and from findings of the evaluation, focus group surveys, consumer satisfaction surveys, public forums and consumer planning workshops.

## **ATTACHMENT 4.11 (c)(3): Order of Selection**

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, requires an Order of Selection of individuals to be served, ensuring that individuals who have the most significant disabilities will be given first priority whenever all eligible individuals who apply cannot be served. The order of selection has been developed with the active participation of the State Rehabilitation Council and is consistent with 34 CFR 361.36. The Kentucky Office for the Blind is operating under a statewide Order of Selection due to budget constraints and a significant decrease in state funding. OFB monitors services and expenditures on an ongoing basis to determine the need to open or close categories.

The order of selection gives first priority to those individuals with the most significant disabilities as defined by the OFB. The criterion to determine individuals with the most significant disabilities and the subsequent order of categories to be followed in selection of individuals to be provided services, is based on a refinement of the criteria set forth in the definition of individual with a significant disability, specifically, the degree by which an individual's impairment seriously limits his or her functional capacities and the number of rehabilitation services needed by an individual.

### **DEFINITIONS**

**1. Applicant** means an individual who has submitted an application for vocational rehabilitation services. An individual is considered to have submitted an application when the individual, or the individual's representative, as appropriate, has filled out and signed an agency application form or has otherwise submitted a signed written request for services, and the individual is available for an assessment to determine eligibility and priority for services.

**2. Legally Blind**, as defined in Kentucky Revised Statutes 163.460 (2), means a visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with correction or a visual field of 20 degrees or less.

**3. Visually Impaired**, as defined in Kentucky Revised Statutes 163.460 (3), means a condition of the eye with correction, which constitutes or progressively results for the individual in a substantial disability to employment.

**4. Eligible Individual** means an individual with a primary impairment of blindness or another visual impairment, who the Office for the Blind (OFB) has determined is an individual with a disability who requires vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, enter, engage in, retain or advance in employment.

**5. Functional Capacities** means the following:

- A. Orientation and Mobility:** The ability to travel independently to and from destinations in the community;
- B. Self-Care:** means the ability to engage in activities of daily living including:  
personal grooming; home management; health and safety needs.
- C. Communication:** The ability to comprehend, respond, and exchange information through: spoken words; written words, sign language, Braille, concepts, gestures or another means;
- D. Work Skills:** The ability to do specific tasks required for a particular job;
- E. Work Tolerance:** The ability to sustain required levels of functioning in work related activities with or without accommodations;
- F. Interpersonal Skills:** The ability to make and maintain personal, family and community relationships; and
- G. Self-Direction:** The ability to independently plan, initiate, problem solve, organize and carry out goal-directed activities.

**6. Individual With a Significant Disability**, as defined in Section 7 (21) of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended in 1998, means:

- A.** An individual with a disability as defined under Section 7 (20) of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended in 1998;
- B.** Who has a significant physical or mental impairment, which for such individual constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment; and seriously limits one

or more functional capacities (such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome;

**C.** Whose vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require multiple vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time; and

**D.** Who has one or more physical or mental disabilities resulting from amputation, arthritis, autism, blindness, burn injury, cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, deafness, head injury, heart disease, hemiplegia, hemophilia, respiratory or pulmonary dysfunction, mental retardation, mental illness, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, musculo-skeletal disorders, neurological disorders (including stroke and epilepsy), paraplegia, quadriplegia, and other spinal cord conditions, sickle cell anemia, specific learning disabilities, end-stage renal disease, or another disability or combination of disabilities determined on the basis of an assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs to cause comparable substantial functional limitations.

**7. Individual With The Most Significant Disability** means an eligible individual with a significant disability whose impairment seriously limits four or more functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome and whose rehabilitation requires three or more services over an extended period of time.

**8. Presumption of Eligibility for Social Security Recipients and Beneficiaries** means that an individual who has been determined eligible under Title I or Title XVI of the Social Security Act is:

- Considered to be an individual with a significant disability; and
- Presumed to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services under Title I (provided the individual intends to achieve an employment outcome consistent with the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual) unless the office can demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that such individual is incapable of benefiting from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of employment outcome due to the severity of the disability of the individual.

**9. Order Of Selection** means the order to be followed in determining which priority categories of eligible individuals shall be provided vocational rehabilitation services when the Office for the Blind does not have funds to provide such services to all eligible individuals ensuring that first priority for services is given to those individuals who have the most significant disabilities.

**10. Priority Categories** means the following rank of categories of eligible individuals to be followed in the order of selection:

**A. Priority Category One** - Eligible individuals with the most significant disability whose severe impairment seriously limits three (3) or more functional capacities in terms of employment outcome; and whose rehabilitation requires two (2) or more services over an extended period of time.

**B. Priority Category Two** - Eligible individuals with a significant disability whose severe impairment limits two (2) functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome and whose rehabilitation requires two (2) or more services over an extended period of time.

**C. Priority Category Three** - Eligible individuals with a non- significant disability whose impairment seriously limits one (1) functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome and whose rehabilitation requires two (2) or more services over a period of time. (This category is closed)

**D. Priority Category Four** – All other individuals. (This category is closed).

## ORDER OF SELECTION SERVICE

### DETERMINATION AND ADMINISTRATION

**1. Order of Selection will not use any of the following factors in determining eligible individuals:**

- **Residency duration**
- **type of disability; age, gender, race, color, or national origin,**
- **source of referral,**
- **type of expected employment outcome**
- **need for specific services or anticipated cost of services**
- **or the income level of the individual or its family.**

2. The order of selection shall be implemented on a statewide basis.

3. The order of selection shall be implemented to assure that eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities are provided services before other eligible individuals.

4. The office shall conduct an assessment to determine whether an individual is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, and the individual's priority under the order of selection. The individual will receive notification of their assignment to a particular category and their right to appeal their category assignment.

5. The order of selection shall not affect the:

- The acceptance of referrals and applicants;
- The provision of assessment services to determine whether an individual is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, and the individual's priority under the order of selection; and
- Services needed by any eligible individual who has begun to receive services under an individualized plan for employment prior to the effective date of the order of selection, irrespective

of the severity of the eligible individual's disability.

6. The office will ensure that all funding arrangements for providing services under the State plan, including third-party arrangements and awards under the establishment authority, are consistent with the order of selection.
7. The Executive Director of the Office for the Blind shall direct the order of selection by designating in written memorandum, the priority categories to be served.
8. An eligible individual shall be immediately reclassified into a higher priority category whenever appropriate justification exists in the case record of the individual.
9. In the order of selection each eligible individual within a closed priority category shall be placed on a waiting list until such time as the priority category is opened.
10. The office will assure that eligible individuals, who do not meet the order of selection criteria, shall have access to services provided through the information and referral system in accordance to the 1973 Rehabilitation Act. These services will include referral to other Federal and State programs including the statewide workforce investment programs.
11. When a priority category is to be opened for services, the Executive Director shall issue an implementing memorandum to staff, with instructions that appropriate services delayed under the order of selection may be provided.
12. At such time that the agency finds that it is able to serve those individuals in any closed priority category, that category will be re-opened. If the Agency finds that they have the resources to serve some individuals but not all individuals in a priority category the date of application will be utilized as a criterion for ranking individuals within a priority category. The timeline for this would be a year, unless the agency's financial situation should change drastically. Circumstances that would allow this to occur include a decrease in the number of referrals or other sources that would result in additional funds, which could be utilized to serve these individuals.
13. Individuals who are presumed to be significantly disabled because they receive SSA benefits will be further assessed to determine if they meet the agency's criteria for "individual with a most significant disability."

## **NOTIFICATION AND APPEAL**

When a request for services by an eligible individual is affected by the order of selection, the individual shall be immediately notified of such in writing, and provided with

information on procedures for individual rights for appeal, and how the Client Assistance Program may provide help in the process.

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**2008 YEAR END OUTCOMES AND COSTS**

**10/1/07 THROUGH 9/30/08**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Active Cases</b>	<b># of Employment Outcome</b>	<b>Actual Associated Costs Per Category Per Closure (26)</b>	<b>Actual Associated Costs Per Category</b>
One	865	153	\$299,105.50	\$1,321,988.30
Two	700	241	\$486,596.98	\$1,345,053.60
Three	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Four	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,565</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>\$785,702.50</b>	<b>\$2,667,041.90</b>

During 2008, there were no individuals in the unserved category placed on a waiting list for services. Consumers determined eligible that fall into a category not being served are given the option to be placed on a waiting list until services can be initiated. OFB staff provides information and referral services to individuals who are eligible for services but fall under categories not being served. Often their service needs are met (i.e. referral is made to Lions Club and Lions Eye Institute for glasses) without placing them on a waiting list. In the event that an individual does not meet the criteria for eligibility and their needs cannot be met through referral, a waiting list for services will be established. Consumers on the list will be reviewed annually to identify the need for additional information or if their status has changed (i.e. limitations) to see if they now meet the categories being served. The office will maintain a written record of all of these individuals.

\*In 2009 the agency discovered that individuals were not properly coded for information and referral. This was corrected and staff were trained on how to properly code and track this information and on the proper procedures in assuring that a written record of all individuals is maintained.

**Total Costs of services and administration for 2008 was: \$10,613,498.00**

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**2009 ESTIMATED OUTCOME GOALS AND TIMEFRAMES**

<b>Time Frame</b>
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10/1/08 through 9/30/09

<u>CATEGORY</u>	<u>ESTIMATE OF # TO BE SERVED</u>	<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED ASSOCIATED COSTS</u>	<u>AVERAGE ESTIMATE COST PER PERSON</u>	<u>EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES ESTIMATES</u>
Category One	890	\$1,450,400.00	\$1,629.66	154
Category Two	725	\$1,512,200.00	\$2,085.79	241
Category Three	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Category Four	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,615</b>	<b>\$2,962,600.00</b>	<b>\$1,857.73</b>	<b>395</b>

\*Year to Date 0 individuals did not meet order of selection criteria and were referred to other services.

**A. # of individuals entering services in 2009 with individualized plans for employment =909  
Estimated Total Costs: \$5,016,749**

**B. Estimated # determined eligible entering services in 2009= 959  
Estimated Total Costs: \$5,596,754**

**C. Total Projected Services and Administrative Costs inclusive of facilities, salaries, benefits, outreach activities, and required statewide studies: \$10,613,503**

**D. Projected revenues and projected number of qualified personnel for the program.** Revenues are projected at a minimal growth and the number of personnel will not increase with a state imposed cap. This will allow the Kentucky Office for the Blind adequate revenue and personnel (105) to cover the costs identified in A, B & C and to ensure the provision of the full range of services to individuals selected for services under the order of selection for the 2009 calendar year.

**2010 ESTIMATED OUTCOME GOALS AND TIMEFRAMES**

<b>Time Frame</b>
10/1/09 through 9/30/10

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>ESTIMATE OF # TO BE SERVED</b>	<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED ASSOCIATED COSTS</b>	<b>AVERAGE ESTIMATE COST PER PERSON</b>	<b>EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES ESTIMATES</b>
Category One	893	\$ 960,134.40	\$1,075.50	155
Category Two	797	\$2,062,004.90	\$2,596.98	241
Category Three	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Category Four	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,690</b>	<b>\$ 3,122,139.30</b>	<b>\$1,836.24</b>	<b>396</b>

**A. Estimated # of individuals entering services in 2010 with individualized plans for employment = 990**

**Total Estimated Costs: \$4,988,480.00**

**B. Estimated # determined eligible entering services in 2010 = 1,065**

**Total Estimated Costs: \$5,761,770**

**C. Total Projected Services and Administrative Costs inclusive of facilities, salaries, benefits, outreach activities, and required statewide studies: \$10,750,250.00**

**D. Projected revenues and projected number of qualified personnel for the program.** Revenues are projected at a minimal growth and the number of personnel will not increase with a state imposed cap. This will allow the Kentucky Office for the Blind adequate revenue and personnel (105) to cover the costs identified in A, B & C and to ensure the provision of the full range of services to individuals selected for services under the order of selection in 2010.

**ATTACHMENT 4.11(e) (2): Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities and Use Of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities**

The goals and priorities for the Kentucky Office for the Blind for the FFY 2009 State Plan were developed in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council and input from consumers and other stakeholders based on the comprehensive statewide assessment conducted in FFY 2006.

The revised goals, priorities and strategies for achievement are outlined in this FFY 2010 State Plan in Attachment 4.11 (c) (1). A revision of the goals, priorities, and strategies as well as innovation and expansion activities for the 2010 State Plan are based on the results of the comprehensive statewide needs assessment.

This attachment contains the reporting of Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities for 2008.

**Identified Goals, Priorities and Strategies for Achievement**

**The following goals were identified as priority areas for OFB:**

- Transition Services in 2009 for students as they move from high school to post secondary activities.
- Focus on minority outreach activities resulting in an increase in the number of minorities and individuals with significant disabilities unserved and underserved served through OFB and strengthen its supported employment services.
- To develop a plan for handling the loss of experienced administrative leadership and field staff through expected retirement and unexpected turnover of positions.

**The OFB has established the following Strategies:**

**Goal 1: Increase the number of positive employment outcomes for Blind and Visually Impaired consumers receiving specialized services from OFB.**

- Establish and maintain working relationships with each of the thirty-one (31) Kentucky comprehensive One-Stop Career Centers and satellites.
- Progress: Good**
- OFB Executive Director represented the agency at the State WIB meetings. OFB staff are appointed and sit on seven WIB's (70%) in Barren River, Green River, Lincoln Trail, Bluegrass, Cumberland and West and Northern Kentucky. In addition, staff serve on local board committees in all ten (10) districts. Staff regularly participates in Job Fairs through the Work One System. Staff are co-located in the Florence, Ashland and the Owensboro One-Stop location. Staff continue to have an itinerant presence in both comprehensive and affiliate One-Stops in Bell-Whitley, Bowling Green, Campbellsville, Clay County Jobsight, Corbin, Danville, Glasgow, Richmond, Hopkinsville, Madisonville, Middlesboro, Mt. Vernon, Georgetown, Paducah, and Pikeville. Staff meet with consumers in the One Stop locations where they have access to employment opportunities information and referrals are made within the other partners of the one stop system to meet the consumer needs. Training on EKOS, a database used by One-Stop and the Employment Services Office is provided to all new vocational rehabilitation counselors. The Executive Director attended joint partner meetings with the general agency the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Office of Employment and Training to discuss common issues encountered for our respective agencies in the provision of workforce services.
  - Increase the quality and scope of services and staff expertise at the McDowell Center

**Progress: Moderate**

In 2008 the agency worked on the development a mechanism for tracking program outcomes. The design and implementation of the development of an Employment Model in collaboration with Citi for a Customer Service

Training focus that teaches higher-level skills utilizing Assistive Technology Equipment was put on hold in 2008. This training project was directly impacted by the economy. Training occurred for skills enhancement for staff at the McDowell Center and was inclusive of: Weeklong training for twenty-one staff at The Charles W. McDowell Center occurred in April with sessions on Teamwork, and the McDowell 21<sup>st</sup> Century Project conducted by Wayne Mulkey, (UT-RCEP) inclusive of Curriculum Skills, Outcome Measurements, and Program Benchmarks. Nineteen (19) McDowell Center staff has also participated in additional training for the Curriculum Skills Building and implementation of the training modules (UT-RCEP), “Rehabilitation Caseload Management, UTRCEP and ENRTURST/Security Presentation.

- Continued Emphasis on bioptic driving program maximizing the # of trainees and licensures

**Progress: Excellent**

Fifty-two consumers received training under the program with 34 licensures. In addition nine individuals had their night driving restrictions removed and received a night licensure. This is a forty-seven percent (47%) increase over FFY 2007 for the number receiving training and the number of licensures. One staff is CDRS certified and one staff is preparing to take the exam. There are two staff positions dedicated to this project and they work directly with the regional branch managers. The program is under the supervision of the Director of Consumer Services. There are three private pay programs to refer consumers to for them to obtain their license on their own. The agency still must do the initial and final evaluation before an individual can test with the Kentucky Department for Transportation according to the Bioptic law. OFB receives some WIA discretionary funding to support this program. Individuals accepted in the program are required to apply for and become WIA certified through their local one-stop in order for them to enter the program.

- Emphasis of technology through OFB’s partnership with the Kentucky Assistive Technology Service (KATS) Network

**Progress: Moderate**

This group explored developing a mutual demonstration/device loan lab between OFB and KATS to focus on Transition from secondary to post-secondary and from secondary to work. Staff from KATS and OFB met in early September 2008 to discuss the development of a mutual demonstration/device loan lab between OFB and KATS. A strategy for deployment of the equipment through OFB field offices was discussed, and an initial equipment list was developed. Policy and Procedures, loan/demo forms, etc were drafted in September 2008. Equipment list was finalized and initial purchases made in late September/ early October 2008. KATS Director maintains and email list of OFB AT staff to send out relevant AT related information via email.

- Business Enterprise Services will increase employment opportunities for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

**Progress: Good**

KBE successfully renegotiated our two military dining contracts into one new combined three (3) year contract. Two (2) new vendors were trained, licensed and placed in a location. Nine (9) new satellite locations were opened in 2008.

- Increase the Number of Tickets being assigned to the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program authorized by the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 (TWWIIA) as a result monies received in SS reimbursement for PEO's with substantial gainful activity.

**Progress: Moderate**

In 2008 calendar year, the Kentucky Office for the Blind had 21 assigned tickets. Thirty-three percent (33%) of them are employed. The remaining fourteen (14) are in school or another status at this time. This is a 7% decrease in tickets assigned from the prior year.

- A special emphasis will be on training in the area of job development and placement to increase employer relationships and positive consumer employment outcomes.

**Progress: 100% met**

As a result of an RFP solicitation for Job Placement and Coaching training in 2007 a comprehensive contract was awarded to Employment Oakville. A series of workshops were conducted in 07-08 (System of Service Delivery Leading to Employment) to teach placement skills to twenty-seven (27) OFB staff in order to increase consumer employment outcomes. Sessions were held in July, December and March of the 2007 reporting period and a follow up session in February of 2008.

- Increased earnings, transportation needs, benefits and career advancement will be a focus of service delivery through quality employer driven initiatives (i.e. average hour wage, average hours worked, health coverage).

**Progress: Moderate**

Based on the 2008 consumer satisfaction survey of closed cases 50% of individuals are working 40 or more hours a week and 24% 30 – 39 hours a week. This equals out to around 74% are working more than 30 hours a week. There were around 58% of these individuals reporting employment benefits in their position. Care should be taken when reviewing these numbers as some maintain benefits through SSI or SSDI. 81% indicated they are happy with their current wages. The average wage was \$12.21 for the year which is 31% below the state mean average in 2007 at \$17.55 (2008 wage data is not yet available). OFB did show a 32.61% in difference in source of support from hire to closure.

**Goal 2: Streamline and enhance the Office for the Blind Functions**

- Increase funding mechanisms to allow for sufficient resources in meeting OFB's goals and priorities

**Progress: Some**

OFB Executive Director advocated for increased funds from local, state and federal officials for additional service needs. The current economic crisis across the nation and the world has affected Kentucky. There are budget constraints, higher costs and shortfalls in most areas. The economic forecast for next year has predicted close to a billion dollar shortfall for the State. Cuts are forecast for all state agencies and programs. OFB is negotiating with Office of Employment and training for additional WIA discretionary funds for bioptic driving for 2009.

OFB remains a part of the Interagency Council that reviews and looks at grant opportunities for collaborative partnership. In 2008, OFB received monies through Kentuckiana Division of Pepsi Americas to assist with financial assistance to students in post secondary education.

- Monitor the Efficiency and Effectiveness of OFB operations

**Progress: Moderate**

State budget constraints have demanded that OFB continue its positioning of efficient budget cost effective measures. OFB Executive Director and Management team reviewed staffing and administrative support needs and how to make the most efficient usage of staff time in delivering services. The new web based case management system became operational October 1, 2008. Issues surrounding CMS and data reporting have been identified and staff are working to resolve those issues along with our sister agency OVR.

- Continue our work and partnership with the State Rehabilitation Council in reviewing program effectiveness.

**Progress: Excellent**

In 2008 the SRC had full involvement in the design, conducting and evaluation of the satisfaction survey conducted of all 2008 closed cases. At the August, 2009 meeting staff from the University of Kentucky Research Program and the Human Development Institute that conducted the 2007 Satisfaction Survey to make an in depth presentation to the Council on the results of the survey. Staff from UK were unable due to scheduling conflicts to make the presentation at the May SRC meeting. OFB staff gave performance and program operation updates at each SRC quarterly meeting in 2008. At the November 14, 2008 quarterly meeting, the Kentucky Office for the Blind (OFB) reported its performance measures on the standards and indicators, satisfaction surveys and numbers served and outcomes for the various programs offered to consumers for 2008. Through the work of the SRC committees recommendations are made regarding program effectiveness.

- The Office for the Blind will meet the Standards and Performance Indicators established by the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

**Progress: Good**

In 2008 OFB had an increase in (17) positive employment outcomes from the prior year of 2007. In 2007 there were 377 and in 2008 there were 394. This is a 4% increase in this area.

- Develop and Implement a Statewide Marketing Plan for OFB services

**Progress: 100% Met**

A retreat for the marketing committee was held in October of 2008 to work on the development of a marketing plan. The retreat was held and a marketing plan was developed consisting of the following areas: Goal # 1: Optimize benefits and increase usage of OFB website, Goal # 2: Maximize OFB visibility throughout the state, Goal # 3: Maximize availability and use of marketing products and materials. Strategies were developed for each of the goal areas. Implementation of the plan began immediately with work on Goal #1.

**Goal 3: Strengthening of the Human Resource Development Program.**

- OFB will support staff through financial incentives, in order to recruit, hire and maintain a quality highly skilled workforce

**Progress: 100% met**

OFB ensures that personnel in all classes of positions are adequately trained and prepared through a system of individual Career Development Plans. In 2008, OFB provided support for five (5) individuals enrolled in MRC programs at UK and two (2) at U of L, Orientation and Mobility program. Eleven (11) staff attended national conferences. OFB agency staff received financial support in attending a variety of statewide and professional rehabilitation organization trainings as well as agency sponsored trainings.

- New Hire Orientation will occur annually

**Progress: 100% met**

OFB held Orientation for new employees occurred twice in March and December of 2008 with a total of 16 staff participating in the training for the calendar year. New employee orientation gives a comprehensive overview of the agency history and current organization, with modules on agency structure, as well as curriculum components required to meet all federal and state regulatory requirements. New Employee Orientation will be held in the fall and spring of each federal calendar year based on staff hiring patterns.

- OFB will plan for the expected loss of employees, including those in leadership positions, so that qualified and well-trained personnel are available to effectively serve our consumers.

**Progress: Some**

The agency was not prepared for the needs created from the loss of staff through retirements and turnover of staff. Although the agency had goals and strategies in place it did not compensate for the loss of veteran staff and the years of experience and knowledge. On a positive note, it is anticipated that the loss of veteran staff to retirements has leveled off.

Most individuals needing to retire within the necessary timeframe in order to maximize their benefits have already left the agency. At this time the agency recognizes a young workforce and is looking at a plan for professional development including training, educational advancement and skills acquisition for staff.

**Goal 4: The OFB will increase Services to minorities and individuals with significant disabilities that are underserved and unserved and strengthen its supported employment services.**

- OFB will identify strategies of outreach to individuals who are minorities, individuals with significant disabilities that are underserved and unserved.

**Progress: Good**

The S & I minority standard was met for 2008. OFB staff continue to work with the VA in both areas as well as statewide and some outreach to churches occurred. Agency staff continue to work with the state “KOIN” emergency preparedness group that consists of several agencies working with minorities across the state. Population).

- OFB staff will work with advocacy groups to increase the quality of services to the underserved and unserved.

**Progress: Good**

In 2008 OFB staff attended, exhibited and made presentations at both the KY National Federation of the Blind and KY Council of the Blind State Conferences. The two transition coordinators for the Agency attended the Kentucky School for the Blind Parent Conference making a presentation to families regarding transition services. Both advocacy organizations played an active role in hosting focus groups for the comprehensive statewide needs assessment.

- OFB will increase and expand the services to the unserved and underserved Deaf/ Blind population.

**Progress: Good**

In 2008 the OFB Deafblind Coordinator attended a refresher on Person Centered Planning Training, facilitated PATH Training, and conducted outreach to some of the ICMFR facilities. Forty-three (43) individuals were served in this program. That is a 17% increase over the prior year.

- OFB will maintained its four (4) regional and satellite offices across the state assuring statewideness in rural and urban areas. To meet the needs of the underserved and unserved each office is staffed with Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Assistants, Assistive Technology, Independent Living and Orientation and Mobility staff. Counselors travel across the state covering 120 county area.

**Progress: 100%**

This goal was met in full in 2008. In order to ensure state wide services by serving the needs of individual through a regionalized approach where the counselor assembles the team required for an individual. This concept allows the appropriate staff to surround the individual with the needed services (assessment, assistive technology, and training) and supports identified for them and the employer in order to assure a positive employment outcome. The team is available for assessment and training purposes of supported employment individuals. Through these regional teams services are provided as the team members travel to work with the employer and individual on the job providing expertise for the area of blindness.

- OFB will increase and strengthen collaborative relationships with other community-based organizations and groups that provide supported employment that is tailored to individuals with more significant disabilities.

**Progress: Some**

In 2008, OFB renewed its agency membership in APSE. One of the Counseling staff serves on the APSE Board. Staff were able to attend the National APSE conference held in Louisville in 2008. New counseling staff are targeted to attend the supported employment trainings held in the state under the Supported Employment Training Project. Staff met regionally with SE providers as an outreach in strengthening relationships with those providers. In most cases, Counselors attend monthly meetings with SE providers and their consumers.

- Develop and add a cultural diversity component to the new hire orientation curriculum

**Progress: 100% Met**

This goal areas was met in full as a component was added to the new hire orientation as a two hour training module conducted by the training coordinator.

- OFB counselors will identify and develop partnerships with local agencies and organizations that have a minority focus in their operations.

**Progress: Good**

In 2008, OFB worked collaboratively with Kentucky State University, a historically black university, in providing an internship site for one student who completed their practicum with the agency. Agency staff participated in the “Thirteenth Annual Race Relations Conference” through the Louisville Metro Human Relations Commission in order to network with other organizations that have a minority focus in their operations. Staff continue to use churches as an outreach to minority as well as local organizations such as the Diabetes Coalition and the Lion’s club. .

- OFB will utilize the expertise and assistance of the Kentucky Office of Minority and Empowerment

**Progress: Good**

Two (2) Staff attended the yearly Minority Empowerment Conference and the (3) the EEOC conference. Quarterly newsletter is distributed to staff. Staff are informed of and encouraged to participate in The Governor's Office of Minority Empowerment Minority Management Trainee Program (GMMTP).

- OFB Management will actively recruit and interview minority applicants from state registers that are qualified for all available agency job openings.

**Progress: Good**

Preference in hiring and promotion will be given to those individuals who are the most qualified candidates meeting national certification standards from minority backgrounds or individuals with disabilities.

The Office for the Blind works with the Education Cabinet maintaining and carrying out the EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT Title VI Implementation Plan.

Currently our rehabilitation center has a minority staff ratio of around 22% with an overall agency rate of about 9%.

**Goal 5: The OFB will place a priority on Transition Services in 2008 for students as they move from high school to post secondary activities.**

- OFB will utilize the agency developed Student Transition Handbook for use as a resource for students and their families.

**Progress: 100% met**

This goal is met in full as staff distribute copies of the Student Transition Handbook to students and families at IEP meetings, transition and job fairs and to professional organizations statewide conferences.

Counselors distribute the handbook to families and students at IEP meetings.

- OFB will continue its partnership with the Big East special Educational Coop, Kentucky School for the Blind, Morehead University and University of Louisville in the provision of INSIGHT, a ten day transition program with junior and senior high school students with significant visual impairments.

**Progress: 100%**

INSIGHT was held in June of 2008 with nine (9) students in attendance. The five partner agencies; The Kentucky School for the Blind, Big East Cooperative, University of Louisville, Morehead University and OFB are each actively involved in the planning of this college preparatory program. The students attended a 10 day program inclusive of a summer class offered by Morehead State University. This post secondary education program is established and has now

completed its fourth year of programming. Outcome based tracking monitoring the effectiveness of the program will be implemented in 2010.

- OFB will produce a video of INSIGHT for promotional purposes in schools and other organizations heightening awareness with professionals in the field regarding transition.

**Progress: 100% Met (2007)**

Due to budget constraints and staff capacity a video was not produced by OFB staff of the INSIGHT program in 2008. The 2007 video was designed and produced as a product that could be utilized for promotional purposes on an ongoing basis to students, families, school system faculty and other community based organizations.

- OFB staff will attend the Southeast Transition Conference and make a presentation on the INSIGHT services model.

**Progress: Not Met**

In 2008 OFB Transition Coordinators were to attend the Regional Conference hosted by Georgia State University and were scheduled as presenters. The conference was cancelled due to low interest and the change that occurred with the transfer from the RCEP to TACE .

- OFB will pursue a partnership with the Jefferson County Schools in developing a mentoring program for visually impaired students.

**Progress: Limited Progress**

OFB Transition Coordinators met with School staff in late fall of 2008 to begin work on this project. A meeting was set for January of 2009.

- OFB staff will develop relationships with the disability support programs at Kentucky's colleges and universities and will attend their annual professional conference

**Progress: Good**

OFB Transition Coordinators and staff attended the KY AHEAD conference in 2008 at General Butler State Park. In addition, OFB staff attended Disability and Transition Fairs throughout the state making presentations and distributing materials about services.

- OFB will develop a resident College Graduate Transition Course to assist college and tech school graduates with transition from academics to work.

**Progress: Some**

Under this project staff came up with the design and format of an instructional class for recent college graduates teaching strategies for obtaining employment. There was a target date for the first week long instructional class for spring of 2008 titled, "Gateways"; however, the class was not held due to low enrollment. Some of the design and format of the class has been incorporated into the teaching curriculum at the Center.

- OFB staff will attend conferences and make a concentrated effort to network with organizations affiliated with transition through exhibits, speaking engagements and written publicity.

**Progress: Moderate**

OFB Transition Coordinators and staff attended the annual KYAHEAD Conference, the Kentucky Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of Visually Impaired students (KAER) conference and the Kentucky School for the Blind Parent Conference. OFB participated in fifty-five (55) different events in 2008 making presentations (job, transition, and health fairs). OFB transition coordinators will work with field staff to identify conferences and organizational meetings in which they might want to attend. This is done on both a one on one basis and during annual regional trainings with all field staff.

- OFB staff will research and identify transition resources, publications and best practices in the field to build a knowledge and library base of materials.

**Progress: Some**

In 2008, staff requested a subscription to the Journal of Vision Impairments and the agency subscribed to this Journal and it is distributed agency wide quarterly.

- All informational materials will be made available in alternate formats for individuals

**Progress: 100% met**

This goal is met. All materials distributed by OFB is made available in alternate formats.

**Reporting of Supported Employment Program Goals**

**The Kentucky Office for the Blind set the following goals for the distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds in 2009 State Plan and this section reports out the progress and achievement of those set goals.**

**Goal 1: Increase the quality, efficiency and service capacity of Services.**

- Supported Employment Services will be customer driven through the setting of goals in the individual plans.

**Progress: 100% Met**

Through a comprehensive assessment information is gathered and compiled from educational assessments, vocational assessments, psychological assessment, medical evaluations, interviews with the individual and family members, school staff supported employment is identified as a needed service in order for an individual to obtain his/her employment goal. Supported Employment Services are identified in the individualized plan for employment (IPE). The plan emphasizes the determination and achievement of a positive employment outcome and is consistent with the information gained through the comprehensive assessment.

- Services will incorporate best practices in the field of Supported Employment and be delivered in a timely manner.

**Progress: Good**

Staff attend the training through the University of Kentucky's Supported Employment Training Project (SETP) that provides support for professionals in the field of supported employment. New staff attended the SETP Core Training that focuses on best practices in the service delivery of supported employment. OFB Staff attended the Kentucky 2008 National Association Persons Supported Employment (APSE) Conference held in Louisville, Kentucky. OFB is a member of the National Association of Persons in Supported Employment (APSE) allowing for access to additional resources on Supported Employment such as electronic access to the Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation (JVR) that offers cutting edge information on supporting people in the workplace.

- Staff will receive training in this area at the annual Regional Staff Meetings.

**Progress: Good**

Staff received a refresher training at the annual Regional meeting in 2008.

**Goal 2: Increase the technical and interpersonal skills of OFB staff in the provision of supported employment services.**

- Provide staff with training on job placement methods and techniques for individuals with significant disabilities.

**Progress: 100% Met**

A series of workshops were conducted in 07-08 (System of Service Delivery Leading to Employment for hard to place individuals) to teach placement skills to twenty-seven OFB staff in order to increase consumer employment outcomes. Sessions were held in July, December and March of this reporting period.

- Provide staff with training or referral information as to Personal Futures Planning, natural supports, benefits planning and the use of other service providers or techniques to maximize employment opportunities for persons who

require

supported employment services.

**Progress: Moderate**

OFB staff attended the Person Centered Planning training in 2008. Staff received training at the 2008 state APSE conference for the area of natural supports through the employment track.

- Utilize the technical assistance of the University of Kentucky Human Development Institute and The Association of Persons in Supported Employment and other service providers who provide specialty employment training services for persons working with individuals with the most significant disabilities.

**Progress: Good**

Staff attend training through the University of Kentucky's Supported Employment Training Project (SETP) that provides support for professionals in the field of supported employment.

**Goal 3: OFB will increase and strengthen collaborative relationships with other community-based organizations and groups that provide supported employment that is tailored to individuals with more significant disabilities.**

- Work cooperatively with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation to plan and implement outcome based agreements, resulting in supported employment options in areas of the state where supported employment options are limited or non-existent.

**Progress: Some**

OFB field staff work with OVR Supported Employment Coordinators. There was not any formal planning or meetings in 2008 between agencies. This was due in part to the loss of staff through retirements. This will be a focus area for 2009.

- Develop working relationships with supported employment providers in order to increase acceptance of OFB consumers in their programs.

**Progress: Some**

An agency staff serves on the statewide APSE board in an effort to increase visibility of our agency to supported employment providers and to increase interactions between OFB staff and supported employment provider staff.

- Provide training and technical support to area providers of supported employment in order to increase their skills, experience and expertise in working with the blind and visually impaired.

**Progress: Good**

Agency staff are planning a training track on vision impairments for the 2009 KY APSE conference.

- Develop partnerships with Kentucky Medicaid programs for extended services

**Progress: Some**

Funding continues to be a critical issue for Supported Employment in Kentucky. Provider's predominately receive "extended services" through mental health and mental retardation funding sources with additional dollars funded by the state legislation for this target population. The acceptance criteria states an individual must have an IQ of 70 or less or a mental illness diagnosis. In the State of Kentucky "extended services" provided through the community rehabilitation providers follow strict requirements and the population served through the Office for the Blind typically do not meet the set criteria making funding for extended services is problematic for OFB consumers. In 2008, OFB has a staff member assigned to the Medicaid Structure work team and the "Money Follows the Person" initiatives.

**Goal 4: Increase linkages and program operations for Transition**

- The OFB will have a focus on Transition and will work directly with the Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) staff and school systems statewide in planning transition services and IPE development for students that require supported employment services.

**Progress: Good**

OFB Transition Coordinator met with Staff at KSB throughout the year in planning and implementing the INSIGHT program at Morehead for 2008. In September of 2008 OFB Transition Coordinators met with KSB staff regarding increased communication and networking between KSB staff and OFB counselors. One of the topics addressed was future projects and supported employment services. OFB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors network regularly with supported employment providers in their local areas. OFB Transition Coordinators also meet quarterly with staff from the University of Kentucky's Human Development Institute that has oversight Community Based Work Transition Program. OFB staff work with KSB staff and school systems staff in assessing the needs of students for community living, housing and residential supports, and benefits planning and other needed resources in the transition planning process. OFB works closely with KSB in placing students in community work experiences providing funding for this.

- OFB will increase their collaborative partnerships through the Interagency Transition Council and its work group the Transition Core Team (TCT). The TCT is comprised of representatives from Kentucky's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (KOVOR), Office for the Blind, Department of Education/Division of Exceptional Children (KDE/DECS) and Division of Career and Technical Education (DCTE); Kentucky Department of Mental Health & Mental Retardation; the Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs; Kentucky's Deaf-Blind Intervention Project; and parent organizations.

**Progress: Moderate**

OFB transition coordinators attend the quarterly meetings of the Interagency Transition Council and are involved in different committees of the Council.

**Goal 5: Increase and expand the services to the Deaf/ Blind population.**

- Provide training to staff that will promote skills acquisition in this area and enhance service delivery to this population with significant disabilities.

**Progress: Excellent**

In 2008 thirty-six (43) individuals received services. This is a 17% increase in the number served from 2007. OFB DeafBlind Coordinator attended Benefits Plus/Social Security Training, Customized Employment, Facilitator/PATH Training, American Council for the Blind Conference and Person Centered Planning Training. The Coordinator also provided training or a presentation at the Southeast Regional Institute of Deafness, DeafBlind Services presentation for APSE, Care Focus Day program Phase I and II, Agency Regional Meetings, and Career and Technical Education.

- Continue work of established DeafBlind Regional Teams.

**Progress: Excellent**

Expanding Horizon's the statewide Deafblind Committee consists of representatives from Mental Health, Division of Aging Services, Kentucky School for the Blind, KY DeafBlind Project, Developmental Disabilities Council, Careers and Technical Education, Commission on Children with Special Needs, OFB, OVR, CAP and consumers and parents. This committee meets twice a year to discuss issues relating to deaf blindness and any issues that are occurring in the regional teams. A focus of the team is to ensure that the Regional Teams work together in the provision of services meeting the needs of the consumers. The DeafBlind Coordinator attended (18) service provision Team meetings during 2008.

- Increase Awareness among legislatures regarding DeafBlind and Service Support Provider Services

**Progress: Good**

- The Kentucky Association of Deaf Blind (KADB- consumer advocacy group) and the DeafBlind Service Coordinators take every opportunity to increase the legislature's awareness regarding deafblind issues and the need for a Service Support Provider Program. The KADB consumer group president is typically the designated person to speak to legislature when an opportunity arise. This individual has first hand experience as a person with a vision and hearing loss and can more effectively relate the needs of the population. The Deaf Blind coordinators are constantly seeking out information from other states with SSP programs for best practices in their states. There were nine different activities that occurred in 2008 for this program.
- Participate in Usher Syndrome Screenings to deaf/hearing impaired high school students

**Progress: Excellent**

The DeafBlind Services team completed Usher Syndrome screenings in the Ohio Valley Co-op, Cave Land/River Region Educational Cooperative, Northern KY Education Cooperative and Central KY Educational Cooperative during this period. The goal remains to train teachers and staff to be able to screen new students who are deaf and hard of hearing during the 2009-2010 school year. Several students were identified with vision issues and were referred to follow up with an ophthalmologist.

- Participate in transition fairs and community advocacy and planning groups (emergency preparedness, Diabetic Support Groups).

**Progress: Excellent**

- The DeafBlind Coordinator facilitates Person Futures' Planning teams for consumers, participates in the Bluegrass Fair sponsored by the Lion's Club, maintains resource information for Hearing Aid resources for low income consumers, and collects data information for the deafblind registry which is sent to the Helen Keller National Center. In 2008 there was an increase in the aging populations. The Coordinator participates in the KOIN (KY Outreach Information network) for emergency preparedness and other community activities (DeafFestival, Vision and Hearing screenings at the Bluegrass Fair, and consultation with staff at Helen Keller National Center.

### **Reporting Requirements/Standards And Indicators**

#### **Number of Applicants Determined Eligible Receiving Services**

During FY 2008, there were 1,630 active cases in the vocational rehabilitation program. There were 394 individuals who had employment outcomes all of whom (100%) were significantly disabled. Of those individuals who achieved employment outcomes as a result of vocational rehabilitation services, 305 have incomes above minimum wage.

#### **1998 REHABILITATION ACT STANDARDS AND INDICATORS**

OFB is committed to providing the highest quality services to persons with blindness or visual impairments and to the development of and adherence to a full system of accountability. The office recognizes the following standards of excellence that include evaluation standards and performance indicators. These Vocational Rehabilitation standards comply with all requirements of the Workforce Investment Act, The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 as well as the goals listed under the strategic plan for the U.S. Department of Education.

Pursuant to section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, the office will assess its performance on these standards and indicators and the state performance measures established under section 136 (b) of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to the extent the measures are applicable to individuals with disabilities. The Office for the Blind will report these results on an annual basis.

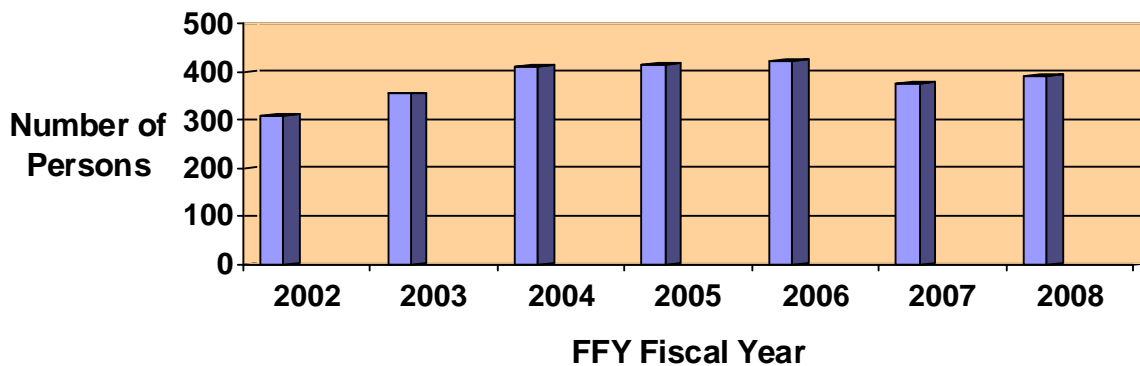
#### **Evaluation Standard One: Employment Outcomes**

**Performance Indicator 1.1:** The number of employment outcomes;

*This standard was met*

The number of employment outcomes for 2007 was 377. The number of employment outcomes for FY 2008 was 394. This was an increase of 17 over the prior year. In looking at the two year average of the prior and current year numbers OFB is still below showing a negative 31; however given the gains of the current year the expectation is that this will be a positive number in 2009. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the counseling staff have been with the agency five years or less. Intensive training has been a focus for these newly hired counselors; however, it takes time for them to acquire the skills, knowledge and field experience to be effective in the area of job placement. Overall the agency was still able to place a number of individuals into SGA that are receiving SSI or SSDI. The following chart depicts the last eight years of employment outcomes for the Office. **RSA Standard: equal or exceed previous year**

### Positive Employment Outcomes



**Performance Indicator 1.2:** The percentage of cases with employment outcomes; **RSA Standard: 68.9%**

The percentage of cases with employment outcomes for FY 2008 of the total number of cases was **79.98%**.

**Primary Indicator One (Performance Indicator 1.3):** Percentage of all individuals determined to have achieved an employment outcome who exited the OFB program into competitive, self, or KBE employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage. **RSA Standard: 35.4%**

For FY 2008 the percentage was **83.14%**

**Primary Indicator Two (Performance Indicator 1.4):** Percentage of individuals with significant disabilities as a percentage of all individuals who exit the VR program into competitive, self, or KBE employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage. **RSA Standard: 89%**

For FY 2008 the percentage was **100%**

**Primary Indicator Three (Performance Indicator 1.5):** The average hourly earnings of all individuals who exit the OFB program in competitive, self, or KBE employment with earning levels equivalent to at least the minimum wage as a ratio to Kentucky's average hourly earnings for all individuals in the state who are employed. **RSA Standard: .59**

For FY 2008 the ratio to the average Kentucky hourly wage for all categories was **.65%**.

**Performance Indicator 1.6:** Self-sufficiency resulting from employment;  
**RSA Standard: 30.4 mathematical difference**

For FY 2008 the percentage change between application and closure was **32.61%**.

**Evaluation Standard Two: Minority Access**

**Performance Indicator 2.1:** Service rates for all individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio to the service rate for all non-minority individuals with disabilities for FY 2008 was **.92**. **RSA Standard: .80 ratio**

This performance indicator was met.

## **INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES**

During FY 2009, the State Rehabilitation Council had a budget of \$42,400.00. These dollars came from Title I funds. The projected budget for FY 2010 is the same at \$42,400.00.

OFB does not use any basic support dollars to support the Statewide Independent Living Council. The only funds that they receive are from the Independent Living Part B funds to support the statewide Independent Living Conference.

During FFY 2008 a total of \$ plus staff expenses in Title I Funds were allotted and spent for innovation and expansion activities. The following is a summary of how these funds were expended:

### Charles W. McDowell Center

The following is a progress summary of the expansion activities at the Charles W. McDowell Rehabilitation Center.

McDowell Center staff continued their work on the innovative project the "21<sup>st</sup> Century McDowell". The purpose of the Charles W. McDowell Rehabilitation Center is to empower individuals who are blind and visually impaired to achieve greater educational outcomes, become more effective in the workplace and enjoy participation in community

life. Staff took the information gained through the in depth evaluation of the rehabilitation program, the needs assessment and information compiled of best practices in other states that had similar rehabilitation centers for the blind and visually impaired and utilized it in the revamping of the program. Dr. Wayne Mulkey with the UT RCEPT continued to provide technical support in the area of Curriculum Building and in the development of an outcome measurement system to track the efficiency and effectiveness of the program as well as consumer satisfaction.

Fifteen (15) major changes to the residential program of the Rehabilitation Center were implemented in 2008. The changes to the program design were made to assure that the training opportunities at the Charles W. McDowell Rehabilitation Center promote independence, family, education, problem solving techniques, and employability that assist individuals in achieving their highest potential in career and personal goals.

Two (2) vocational tracts and one (1) independent living tract for orientation and evaluation were implemented. Individualized empowerment training to meet the student's needs occurs immediately following an evaluation. The two vocational tracts are: 1) one track for individuals who are ready to enter the workforce with limited supports and 2) a second track for individuals needing intensive training in order for them to obtain and maintain their employment. The tract for independent living covers the areas of personal development, blindness skills and the life skills.

The new curriculum was implemented fully during the 2008 FFY year. Some adjustments and revisions to the curriculum occurred. Due to the loss of the Director of Consumer Services, there was not as much progress as anticipated on the development and implementation of monitoring of program outcomes for efficiency, effectiveness and satisfaction. This will be a focus for the Center in 2009.

The project that aligns with Transition an instructional class for recent college graduates that teaches strategies for obtaining employment and addressing the difficulties consumers face in obtaining employment did not occur due to low enrollment in the classes. As a result some of the curriculum components were incorporated into the daily curriculum of the center.

This pilot project of the Customers Service Training Program that had an implementation date of October 1, 2008 did not occur. There were a couple of effecting factors. There was two OFB staff dedicated to this project. One staff received a promotion through internal mobility and was no longer involved in the project. This staff had a crucial role as the software developer and trainer. Secondly the most effecting factor was the economic crisis in our country that occurred. The labor market changed with lay offs occurring and companies restricting their hiring in the area of customer service. There were not enough enrollments in the classes to merit startup of the program as outlined in the 2009 state plan. However, individual consumers that have a vocational goal for this area may are being referred to the program for individualized training.

### **Transition**

Kentucky is divided into 120 counties with county and city schools totaling approximately 200. There are thirteen state Co-Op's covering the various areas formed with the specific purpose of utilizing shared resources for purchasing and training staff and the provision of student services. OFB has worked collaboratively with the special education teachers in the co-op's to make a smooth transition for students. OFB vocational rehabilitation counselors initiate contact when students are in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade and act as a vocational consultant at Annual Individual Learning Plan meetings.

OFB staff have an active role on The Kentucky Interagency Transition Council (KITC) that is made up of a wide range of representatives (e.g. parents, agencies, consumers) and has served as a state level, volunteer interagency steering committee for all of Kentucky's statewide secondary transition initiatives from the transition model demonstration projects to the systems change and state improvement grants. KITC has a primary work group which we called the Transition Core Team (TCT). The TCT is comprised of representatives from Kentucky's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (KOVOR), Office for the Blind, Department of Education/Division of Exceptional Children (KDE/DECS) and Division of Career and Technical Education (DCTE); Kentucky Department of Mental Health & Mental Retardation; the Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs; Kentucky's Deaf-Blind Intervention Project; and parent organizations. The TCT's vision and resulting plan served as the catalyst for taking our state level collaboration to the next level by focusing on the development and implementation of an infrastructure which would support youth with disabilities in achieving their desired post-school outcomes.

The following is a report of OFB's innovative Transition activities.

In 2008, two OFB Transition Coordinators were responsible for the coordination of activities. One counselor is assigned to Region I of the state and the other counselor is assigned to Region II allowing for a higher concentration of staff time in coordinating transition within the regions and statewide. INSIGHT is a collaborative Transition Project and college preparation Project between the University of Louisville Orientation and Mobility Department, Big East Special Education Cooperative in Ashland, KY, Morehead State University, Kentucky School for the Blind and Office for the Blind. It is a pre-college experience for Blind and Visually Impaired High School Juniors and Seniors designed to give students a realistic "insight" into what education is like after high school. The purpose is to assist young students who are visually impaired prepare for transition from high school to post secondary education.

INSIGHT was held in May and June of 2008 at Morehead State University with nine (9) visually impaired high school juniors and seniors from across Kentucky in attendance. The program components were: 1) OFB services 2) Review of Available Coursework, 3) Class Scheduling, 4) Time Management, 5) Organizational Skills 6) Reviewing Available Services, 7) Readers and Scribes, 8) College Library 9) Financial Aid (FAFSA), 10) Mentoring, 11) Campus Orientation and Mobility 12) Academic Advisor, 13) Self-Advocacy, 14) Student ID, 15) Student Disability Services, 16) Study Habits and Note

Taking, 17) Develop a Weekly Class Schedule, 18) Dorm Life and Living with a Roommate, 19) Vocational Planning, 20) ACT Testing, 21) Accessible Computer Equipment and 22) Campus Laundry Services. Upon completion an action plan and Orientation & Mobility report of the student's activities and experiences was prepared and sent to parents, their school district, and their OFB Counselor to be incorporated into the student's individual learning plan. Extensive man hours by the agency are invested in this project with two (2) agency staff working for the entire ten (10) day program.. Various other services providers were scheduled to work with the students and an exhibit area was available to enable parents and students hands on experience with various assistive technologies and provide information regarding OFB services.

In 2009 INSIGHT will be held with an emphasis on increased enrollment and students will participate in college coursework. A focus for 2009 will be the development of a tracking mechanism that compiles data in the new Case Management System program to track the progress of students participating in INSIGHT and to better identify their success in post secondary education and integrated employment. This longitudinal study will assess the viability of the program and its impact on transition students. In 2009, the Developmental Disabilities Council became a collaborative partner in working with the other agencies involved in the program. INSIGHT is an established post secondary and college preparation program in its fourth year of operation.

OFB Counselors met regularly with the VI teachers in the school system and participate in the school systems cooperatives transition showcases and regional meetings. Each student referred to the OFB is provided a Handbook for Transition and they are made available to the community at large via our web site. OFB partners with Special Education Coops, School Districts and VI teachers. Contact information is provided annually to the VR counselors on VI Teachers and the Coops for students with visual impairments in their school District and the Deaf Blind Child County by District and Age by the Department of Education. The Kentucky School or the Blind provides OFB with its Individual Learning Plan student schedule for the school year. OFB Counselors attend school sponsored Disability Fairs Days. As reported in the goals section, OFB sends representation, makes presentations and has had exhibits at the annual Association of Educators for Rehabilitation, Kentucky AHEAD, and other transition related conferences.

## **ATTACHMENT 6.3: Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services.**

### **PRINCIPLES**

Supported Employment is paid competitive work that offers ongoing support services in integrated settings for individuals with the most significant disabilities. Supported employment is intended for individuals for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred or has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a most significant disability, and who need ongoing supports to maintain their employment. This includes transitional employment for individuals with the most severe disabilities due to mental illness. This employment outcome is obtained by providing intensive service and is maintained through the provision of extended service. The level of employment participation may be full-or part-time based on the interests and abilities of the individual. Individuals will be compensated at or above minimum wage, but not less than the customary or usual wage paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled.

The Office for the Blind is committed to the principle that individuals with the most significant disabilities, including those who have not traditionally experienced competitive work, are capable of engaging in employment in integrated settings. Supported Employment services provide for a system of intensive, life-long work and community and natural supports, allowing individuals needing these services the tools to perform competitive work in an integrated setting. The Office for the Blind is committed to the principle that there is no disability too significant, which would impede an individual's ability to work.

### **PROCEDURES**

The Office for the Blind established written procedures in the OFB Counselor Manual whereby all rehabilitation counselors may provide supported employment services to those individuals who have the most significant disabilities and who qualify for services under the definition of supported employment. These procedures contained in the Counselor Manual include competitive work, integrated work setting, on-going support services, transition services, transitional employment, eligibility requirements, funding, vendors, referral, individual plan for employment, outreach, application, assessment, job development, job placement, on-the-job skills training with job coaches or employment

specialists, community supports, post-employment services and extended services for the duration of the individual's current employment or future employment.

The Office for the Blind has uses the same process as our sister agency Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) in establishing vendors and payment schedules. The Agency coordinates with OVR supported employment efforts, which includes developing agreements with supported employment vendors. The Agency partners with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, consulting with vocational rehabilitation counselors and supported employment vendors concerning program issues, tracking supported employment caseloads, and advising necessary staff concerning training activities and program changes.

### **COLLABORATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES**

The Office for the Blind participates with other state agencies, including the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities, Interagency Council, the Kentucky Interagency Transition Council and the Kentucky Council on Developmental Disabilities, and the University of Kentucky Human Resource Development Institute with the purpose to collaborate in the provision of supported employment services. The Agency collaborates with the Community Based Work Transition Program in identifying and providing financial support for those high school students who qualify for supported employment services and who are eligible for Office for the Blind services. A pilot project for self-employment has been developed in conjunction with the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Kentucky Council on Developmental Disabilities. A team approach is being utilized with consumers with specialists of different disciplines participating in the Individualized Plan for Employment.

### **PROGRAM PROVIDERS OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT**

There are 72 not-for-profit community programs statewide providing supported employment services. These services include personal futures planning, job development, job site training, job coaching and counseling.

### **QUALITY OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**

Organizational systems, which help to assure the quality and effectiveness of supported employment, are in place. The Department for Vocational Rehabilitation has an established program, which provides technical assistance and training to service providers and monitors quality assurance. The Office for the Blind assists these same providers through staff training and consultation to ensure that the unique needs of individuals who are blind are met.

Supported Employment services are supplemented with unique services, which may be necessary for individuals who are blind. These services include rehabilitation engineering, assistive technology, orientation and mobility, Braille, daily living skills, communication skills, advocacy and independent living skills.

Consumer waiting lists in the Commonwealth are lengthy. This is due to the number of supported employment providers and the lack of adequate funding and the set criteria for accessing that funding for extended services. This is further complicated by the lack of knowledge of area providers regarding the blind and visually impaired. Counselors offer to partner with provider staff assisting them with job placement in order to address specific needs issues surrounding blindness that present a major challenge. The Office for the Blind follows the rates of payment process and agreements; however, efforts are made to work individually with all providers advocating for our consumer base.

### **TIME LIMITED SUPPORT SERVICES**

Supported employment services provided by the agency are time-limited. During the initial phase of SE, a comprehensive assessment is imperative. There is collaboration between Office for the Blind and provider staffs in the development of the IPE in order to further define services with the consumer. A fee schedule is set for reimbursement of these initial services. Job Placement and Retention payment points are outcomes based.

Ongoing support services can be provided for a time not to exceed 18 months unless special circumstances are noted in the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and the vocational rehabilitation counselor, the consumer, and the supported employment provider are in agreement that further time is needed to reach the vocational goals of the consumer. The employment goal of the individual shall be consistent with these criteria: the maximum numbers of hours per week in employment possible in an integrated setting, based on the strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual.

### **TIMING OF TRANSITION FROM SUPPORT SERVICES TO EXTENDED SERVICES**

The time-limited supports must be identified as to OFB involvement and the service provider must be in agreement that they will provide these supports or identify another agency or program in agreement to provide extended services of support to the individual for the duration of employment. On-going support services identified by the agency will be specified in an individualized written rehabilitation plan. At a minimum, these extended services shall include twice monthly monitoring at the work-site. If the IPE provides for off-site monitoring, it must, at a minimum consist of two face-to-face meetings with the Supported Employment consumer and at least one contact with the employer each month.

As state, OFB will continue to provide short-term blindness specific skills, such as Orientation and Mobility in the case when there are substantial changes involving the consumer's employment or status of their job. This option for supportive services alleviates some of the fears of providers in accepting referrals from OFB.

## **EXTENDED SERVICES**

Extended Services are ongoing support, follow-up services, and other appropriate services that are needed to support and maintain a consumer in supported employment after the consumer is no longer being funded and/or supported by the agency. In order to be approved to be a supported employment vendor for the agency, the supported employment agency must make extended services available using a funding source other than the agency. This will typically begin after the 18-month period in which the consumer has been receiving services funded by the agency and after the consumer has successfully transitioned into work. Examples of follow-up services include facilitation of natural supports on the work site and regular contact with the employer, the consumer, family members or advocates of the consumer, and/or other suitable informed advisors. This follow-up is intended to reinforce and stabilize successful employment. Systems of natural supports, including agreements with community service organizations and employers, may be initiated to provide extended supports for the duration of the employment of the individual. Office for the Blind staff is called upon to consult as needed.

## **TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO EMPLOYMENT**

The Office for the Blind may also provide supported employment services for youth in transition from school to employment. These services are a coordinated set of activities for a student designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities. They must promote or facilitate the achievement of the employment outcome identified in the student's IEP and IPE developed prior to graduation. OFB has a cooperative agreement with the Kentucky School for the Blind and its outreach program for a comprehensive assessment to occur the summer between the students junior and senior year. This is often conducted at the agency's rehabilitation facility at the Charles W. McDowell Center. This includes all students encompassing those referred for supported employment as well as those entering the post secondary education system. The assessment provides the counselor information to assist with the development of the IPE and the identification of needed services. The Office participates with twenty other state agencies in the Kentucky Interagency Transition Council. The purpose of this organization is to provide a system of collaboration among agencies and schools in a shared responsibility for the education and employment of youth with disabilities. Through an Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) for each individual, the IPE is coordinated with the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and if appropriate, the Individualized Developmental Disabilities Plan (IDDP).

OFB staff serves in a consultative and technical assistance role to educational agencies in transition planning for students at the seventh and eighth grade level. The agency provides

information and referrals to needed services to schools for all age levels as a proactive preventive measure in offsetting challenges or issues for this population before they occur.