

Procedures and Activities Regarding the Establishment and Maintenance of a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development [Attachment 4.10]

This description reflects Louisiana Rehabilitation Services' procedures and activities for the establishment and maintenance of a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) to ensure an adequate supply of qualified professionals and paraprofessionals with respect to the information provided below. The Louisiana Rehabilitation Council can review and comment on the agency's plan upon request.

- I. Data collection and analysis on an annual basis of qualified personnel needs and personnel development.

Data on Qualified Personnel Needs

Personnel Category	Number of Current Personnel	Number of Individuals Served	Number of Persons Needed by Category	5-year Projection of Personnel Needs
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors	119	23,614	128	153
Employment Develop. Specialists	5	340	10	9
Support Staff/ Paraprofessionals (client services)	103	N/A	115	117
Managers (client services)	18	N/A	27	19
Supervisors (client services)	26	N/A	28	30
Evaluators and other CRP staff	46	1054	48	55
Administrative Staff (Exec & Admin)	29	N/A	32	32
Support Staff (Exec & Admin)	11	N/A	11	11

Data on Personnel Development

Institutions of Higher Education	# Students Enrolled (as of Fall 2005)		# Students Graduated (2005)	
	Undergraduate	Graduate	Undergraduate	Graduate
Southern University Department of Psychology & Rehabilitation Services	157	40	31	5
LSU Medical Center School of Allied Health Dept. of Rehabilitation Counseling	7	23	13	16

- II. Plan that addresses current and projected needs for qualified personnel including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.
- LRS developed a succession plan for training individuals interested in promoting to management positions within the agency. Thirty-five percent of management staff will be eligible for retirement by 2010 and succession planning is key to a smooth transition.
 - LRS currently has 10 counselors who are eligible for retirement and has identified 20 who will be eligible for retirement in the next 5 years.
 - The LRS Program Coordinator for Training serves on the advisory committees for the Southern University Rehabilitation Counseling graduate and undergraduate programs; Southern University Family Health Nursing Graduate Program Advisory Council; the Louisiana State University Medical Center, Department of Rehabilitation Counseling and the University of North Texas Rehabilitation Counseling Graduate Program.
 - LRS' Human Resource Director, Program Manager, and Program Coordinators participate in Career Days at universities having degree programs in rehabilitation.
 - LRS has entered into an agreement with the rehabilitation programs of Southern University (a historically black university) that provides for a referral process for individuals that have participated in the RSA Scholarship Program grant.
 - In order to recruit individuals with disabilities, Counselors advise

consumers about the career opportunities in rehabilitation.

- LRS provides cross training to other agencies and programs, such as the Office of Family Security and WIA Partners. Through these initiatives, LRS provides information about careers in the field of rehabilitation.

III. Standards to ensure that professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately prepared and trained.

Minimum qualification requirements for the entry-level Rehabilitation Counselor and Evaluator positions in LRS ensure that personnel have an adequate background to successfully enter the profession. A synopsis of the qualification requirements are as follows:

- a. A baccalaureate degree plus one (1) year of professional level experience in social services, teaching, vocational counseling, employment counseling, psychiatric counseling, social services counseling, guidance and counseling, rehabilitation counseling, personnel, nursing, recreation therapy, music therapy, physical therapy, art therapy, rehabilitation instruction, rehabilitation evaluation, worker's compensation dispute resolution, or worker's compensation rehabilitation dispute resolution.
- b. A baccalaureate degree in rehabilitation counseling or master's degree in any field may substitute for the one (1) year of required experience.

Louisiana R.S. 37:3447 requires the following academic degrees for licensure as a Licensed Professional Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, which is known as LRC.

- Master's degree in vocational rehabilitation counseling or related field.
- A bachelor's degree in vocational rehabilitation counseling or related field.

There are no national, State-approved or State-recognized requirements for Rehabilitation Evaluators. However, in order to ensure a qualified Evaluator staff, LRS has opted to impose the same level of academic degree requirement for Evaluators as is being done for Counselors.

There are only two universities in the State of Louisiana that have accredited rehabilitation programs. Because of this, the agency is not changing the qualification requirements for the entry Counselor and Evaluator positions at this time. Doing so would dramatically affect the ability to fill positions, particularly those located in more rural areas.

Instead the agency has implemented methods to attract individuals already possessing a degree in rehabilitation. The agency now offers the following

starting salaries based upon level of education and field of study.

- Entry Rate of Pay
 - Bachelor's degree in Rehabilitation 12% above minimum
 - Master's degree in related field 17% above minimum
 - Master's degree in Rehabilitation Midpoint of the range
 - PhD in Rehabilitation or related field 3rd quartile of pay range
(i.e. midpoint ÷ maximum/2)

The agency also enters into an agreement when hiring new staff that does not meet the guidelines of being a "qualified" individual. This will assure the individual's commitment to attaining the higher educational requirement.

The State Department of Civil Service approved the agency's request to upgrade the level of the counselor, evaluator and specialist jobs, and establish master level jobs in each of these series. In order to qualify for these series Individuals must possess a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling, evaluation, or related field. This level will allow for the advancement and retention of qualified professionals.

Staff not meeting the agency's established requirements will be retrained in accordance with the agency's CSPD Re-training Plan. LRS' CSPD Re-training Plan is maintained by the Human Resource section, the plan is utilized to track LRS' progress toward meeting the CSPD mandate. This plan is updated at least every six months and lists all Counselors, Evaluators, Employment Development Specialist, District Supervisors, Facility Managers, Regional Managers, and State Office Managers and Administrators along with their level of education.

All staff listed on the Re-training Plan that does not have a master's degree in rehabilitation or a related field are considered to be in a "re-training priority" category. LRS has established two categories – higher and lower priority groups for re-training. The lower priority group consist of the "non-masters degreed" employees that are either currently eligible for retirement or within five years of retirement eligibility. The higher priority group consists of the remaining "non-masters degreed" employees on the re-training list. The Program Manager responsible for coordination of the CSPD initiative meets with those "non-masters degreed" employees annually to encourage enrollment and work with them to address and resolve any barriers that may be preventing them from pursuing the Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling degree. Staff in the higher priority for retraining who choose not to pursue their master's degree or complete all requirements of a masters degree program will not be eligible for advancement to the master level jobs, and will not be given priority for consideration when filling supervisory and management level positions.

All counselors are projected to meet the personnel standards per 34 CFR 361.18 (c)(1)(ii)(B) by 2010. The following depicts the educational breakdown of

Counselors and Evaluators on board as of April 20, 2007:

Job Classification	Total # Staff	# with Masters in Rehab Counseling or Related	# without Masters in Rehab Counseling or Related, but at Lower Priority for Retraining	# Staff at Higher Priority for Retraining	# Staff at Higher Priority Currently Enrolled	# Staff at Higher Priority Needing to Begin Training	% of Total Staff at Higher Priority for Retraining not currently enrolled
Counselors	120	64	12	44	10	34	28%
Evaluators	23	13	4	6	0	6	26%

Several options are available to staff, particularly Rehabilitation Counselors, Evaluators and Specialists, for retraining to meet the required standard. Additional state funds have been obtained to match federal dollars to provide for these training options.

The graduate degree training options are:

- Part-time enrollment with availability of educational leave for those courses that cannot be taken after regular work hours.
- Distance learning with use of agency computer equipment, where available, in order to obtain the required Internet access.

The agency is utilizing two universities for web-base “distance learning Masters Degree Program in Rehabilitation Counseling.” The two universities are the University of North Texas (UNT) and Southern University Baton Rouge. LRS Counselors, District Supervisors, Regional Managers, and Professional Administrative Staff are participating in the program from their workstations. This cost-effective method of re-training will provide all staff with the opportunity to reach the personnel standards set forth in the CSPD.

All new counselors are required to attend the LRS Counselor Training Academy, which is an intensive two-week program. The Academy is held on an annual basis. Due to travel restrictions, the Counselor Training Academy was postponed in SFY 05/06. Two Academies were held in SFY 06/07 with a total of 31 participants attending.

LRS has implemented a paraprofessional position entitled Rehabilitation Counselor Associate (RCA). The qualification requirements ensure applicants are prepared for this position by requiring experience in a social service setting.

In addition, the agency has specific monthly in-service training requirements (4 hours per month) which are conducted by the regional field offices to ensure continuous education for all professional and paraprofessional staff. Some examples of training topics covered include assessment, counseling skills, vocational planning, job placement, rehabilitation technology and other timely topics as needed. This training is provided by the LRS Training Section, other experienced staff or by knowledgeable community providers who specialize in the area of training required. RCAs are required to attend all In-Service trainings with the counselors and attend separate training as needed conducted by the LRS State Office Training section.

- IV. Standards to ensure availability of individuals trained to communicate in the appropriate mode of communication or in the native language of an applicant or eligible individual.

Each office is authorized to obtain the services of a foreign language interpreter/translator as the need arises (i.e. LRS has had consumers who spoke Spanish, French, and Vietnamese). When this need is identified, LRS staff will arrange for the foreign language interpreter/translator to be provided and will also utilize any community resource available. LRS also has several staff that are bilingual.

In order to insure that individuals who are deaf, deaf-blind, hard-of-hearing or blind will be able to access services and offices, LRS has implemented the following procedures:

- Receptionists, Specialists for the Deaf statewide, and some Specialists for the Blind have been equipped with TDD's. Appropriate staff has been trained in the use of this equipment.
- Specialists for the Deaf must be skilled in sign language.
- All Specialists must attend a graduate program on Orientation to Deafness at the University of Tennessee, Northern Illinois University, Western Oregon University, University of Arkansas, San Diego State University or other applicable program approved by the agency. There they will learn about hearing loss and the Deaf culture, and will be taught basic sign language skills, if needed.
- Specialists must attend an annual 2-3 day training related to deafness training sponsored by the agency.

- Specific needs are accessed on an individual basis and appropriate training is obtained for each Specialist in their respective region.
- Specialists' sign language skills are evaluated through the applicable evaluation instrument as approved by the Program Coordinator for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Services.
- The agency has implemented a series of coursework for the Specialist for the Deaf position, which requires the completion of specific training for advancement. To move to the Specialist 2 level, an individual must obtain sign language skills equivalent to a minimum of the intermediate level on the applicable evaluation instrument approved by the agency, **OR** interpreter certification equivalent to a minimum of the state's Level III certification, **AND** attend the Orientation to Deafness Training or Orientation to Deaf-Blindness Training at the University of Tennessee, Northern Illinois University, Western Oregon University, San Diego State University or other applicable program approved by the agency.
- To advance to the Master level Specialist for the Deaf, an individual must have a masters degree plus sign language skills equivalent to a minimum of the advanced level on the applicable evaluation instrument approved by the agency, **OR** interpreter certification equivalent to a minimum of the state's Level IV certification, and a minimum of nine hours of specialized college course work in deafness or deaf-blindness related areas approved by the agency.
- In order to ensure that individuals who are blind or visually impaired will be able to access services and offices, LRS has implemented the following:
 1. Braille printers and Braille translation software have been provided to each regional office. Braille translation is produced both in-house and through private contractors as needed. All agency publications can be provided in alternative formats upon request.
 2. Specialists for the Blind must complete specific training.
- Specialists have completed introductory course work in Braille and will continue to receive training in this area.
- The agency has implemented a series of training for the Blind Specialist position, which requires the completion of specific training for advancement. To move to the Specialist 2 level, an individual must complete Braille Literacy - Grade 1, Introduction to Orientation and Mobility Training, and Introduction to Assistive Technology, which includes Braille Technology, and Assistive Technology.

- To advance to the Master level, an individual must have a master's degree and have completed a minimum of nine hours of specialized college course work in blindness related areas approved by the agency to include Braille Literacy - Grade 2, and Orientation and Mobility Training.

V. Staff development to ensure staff receives appropriate and adequate training: Louisiana Rehabilitation Services' Bureau of Program Planning/Resource Development researches, develops, implements, and maintains standards to meet this assurance. Such practices include:

Development and maintenance of Chapter 9 of LRS' Technical Assistance and Guidance Manual which provides formal procedures to promote the development of qualified rehabilitation staff as the key to quality service delivery. The staff development program, which is funded largely through the LRS In-Service Training Grant, includes the following components:

Training

- Local office orientation of new employees to cover orientation to Civil Service employment, to the rehabilitation agency, to the work group, and to the specific job.
- Central office orientation includes Academy training for professionals and paraprofessionals that provides new staff with in-depth training on the competencies necessary to function in the job.
- On-the-Job Training is shaped by individual need; however, the training follows a prescribed format. Appropriate managerial or supervisory level staff implements this training.
- Four (4) hours of monthly in-service training conducted in each region. This training is conducted to meet assessed employee training needs for skills, knowledge, and attitudes, and to train staff on new policies and procedures.
- Training continues to be provided on an on-going basis for staff to keep abreast of new information pertinent to the field of rehabilitation. Through In-Service training conducted in the regional offices, all professional and paraprofessional staff, approximately 317 staff, received four hours per month of training in 2005. This training covers such areas as assistive technology, current disability related research, Rehabilitation Act Amendments, informed choice, the Workforce Investment Act, minority outreach, etc.
- LRS utilizes the continuing education opportunities provided by the University of Arkansas (CURRENTS) and the University of North Texas Region VI Continuing Education Community Program. In 2006, staff

participated in Project Management Training (FOCUS) provided by CURRENTS.

- Management level staff continue to be encouraged to strengthen their skills and knowledge by availing themselves of leadership and management training opportunities offered through various entities including:
 - Comprehensive Public Training Program (CPTP) which provides 12 hours of mandatory supervisory training and offers the Certified Public Manager Program
 - Regional Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program (CURRENTS) in Arkansas which offers the Region IV CLICK training program
 - San Diego State University/George Washington University's which offers the National Executive Leadership Seminar

All agency supervisors are required to complete the twelve hours in leadership coursework offered through CPTP. Twelve staff participated in the Region IV RCEP Click Training and three participated in the Executive Leadership training.

Education

LRS recognizes the need for continued professional growth. Staff members are provided with the opportunity to enroll in university credit courses. The retraining options available to staff to pursue a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or closely related field are outlined in III. above.

Career Enrichment/Development

Classes are offered through the Comprehensive Public Training Program (CPTP) for all state employees at all levels to further enhance their professional skills and development. Through this program, specialized training is available in areas such as management development, supervisory techniques, skills training for non-supervisory personnel, and web-based computer skills and professional development training. LRS allows all agency staff to participate in applicable CPTP training classes offered annually.

Acquisition and Dissemination of Significant Knowledge From Current Research and Other Sources

LRS maintains a central library that contains information on a wide variety of rehabilitation related topics, including research findings from a myriad of sources, such as the publications from the Institute on Rehabilitation Issues and NIDDR. This information is available to all LRS staff statewide on a loan basis. For the most up-to-date information, all LRS Counselors and Management staff have computers on their desk with access to the Internet to be used for research purposes.

VI. Coordination of the agency's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) continues to collaborate with the State Department of Education (SDE) to jointly provide staff training for effective provision of transitional services for those youth with disabilities leaving the secondary education system and pursuing successful employment opportunities in adult life. This is accomplished through LRS/SDE's formal interagency agreement which includes specialized training for both LRS' and SDE's staff.

LRS' Program Coordinator for Transition and SDE's Program Manager collaborate on joint agency training and meetings throughout the year to network and share information. They are also responsible for assisting in the coordination and provision of transition services within each agency to assure effective service provision and training through the support of local interagency core teams, cross-agency training, outreach, and other needed activities; capacity building of young adult and family outreach efforts; and continuous provision of information and technical assistance.

Some examples of collaborative training efforts conducted jointly include a Transition Summit which is held annually covering a wide array of subjects which have included use of new technologies, effective transition service practices, and techniques for effectively working with and involving parents. This summit is attended by LRS staff, the Department of Education, the Office for Citizens with Development Disabilities, Families Helping Families, and other interested individuals attend these trainings.

LRS has a Program Coordinator specializing in Assistive Technology who conducts statewide in-service training annually to keep field staff abreast of the most recent technology available to assist individuals with disabilities.

Specialized training is also provided for our staff working with low-incident disabilities to include such training as orientation to deafness, mobility training, sign language coursework, deaf-blindness training, and graduate level training

specific to working with low-incident populations (i.e. visual impairment/hearing impairment/significant cognitive impairment)

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) also provide cross-training to LRS staff to include:

- providing LRS staff training on the IEP service page;
- facilitate appropriate orientation meetings among LRS staff, student and family members;
- provide time for LRS staff to meet with teachers, guidance counselors, and other appropriate personnel for such purposes as information sharing/gathering at both the individual and agency levels;

In line with the CSPD and IDEA requirements for personnel qualifications, LRS has defined its state recognized certification standard as a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling for all professional staff working with individuals with disabilities (this is inclusive of transitioning youth with disabilities).