

Employment Services for People with Disabilities

Mission

To assist people with disabilities in achieving economic self-sufficiency, integration, and full inclusion in the mainstream of American society through employment.

Summary of Activities

The Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) program of the **Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA)**, assists people with disabilities to obtain essential employment-related services which will empower them to achieve equality of opportunity, gainful employment, independent living skills, economic and social self-sufficiency, and full inclusion in society. Vocational rehabilitation services help individuals prepare for, enter, and retain or regain an employment goal of the individual's own informed choice. Services provided by VRS include: counseling and guidance, referrals to vocational/community supported employment agencies, job skills training, restoration services, and job placement assistance. Services are initiated in the individual's home community whenever possible, through partnerships with local agencies, rehabilitation programs, and employers.



Eligibility is based upon whether an individual with a physical or mental impairment which resulted in a substantial impediment to employment would benefit from or require vocational rehabilitation services to achieve an employment goal.

VR Services are coordinated through 28 local offices, which assisted 31,039 individuals in 1999. Service providers include health care providers, state-supported colleges and universities and other training programs, community rehabilitation programs, employers, and numerous other resources. In 1999, the VR program purchased services on behalf of its customers from 18,883 such vendors statewide. Services provided include the Randolph Shepard Blind Vending Program, independent living centers, and supported employment for the developmentally disabled, deaf and hard of hearing. Two additional independent living centers are being established, making a total of seven across the state.

Eligibility for both VR services and federal Social Security disability benefits is determined by the FSSA Disability Determination Bureau, which adjudicates approximately 74,000 applications for Social Security benefits each year, including both Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income disability claims. The value of this function is critical in assisting those who qualify to maintain a source of income necessary to sustain themselves and their families.

External Factors

Recent federal legislation has focused on integrated community employment, with a resulting emphasis in state plans. More people with disabilities are considering small business and self-employment as a viable employment outcome. The federal Ticket to Work and Work Incentive Improvement Act (TWWIIA), passed by Congress in 1999, will allow individuals with disabilities to get job-related training and placement assistance from an approved provider of their choice, and expands health care coverage. Implementation of TWWIIA will start on a pilot basis with 12 states beginning in January 2001. Although Indiana is not one of the pilot states, identifying implementation issues and developing preliminary plans are underway.

In contrast with other state employment programs, economic upturns do not usually decrease the numbers of VR applicants and program participants. The number of individuals served by the VR program has actually grown during the last few years, rising from 28,801 in 1996 to 31,039 in 1999, at the very height of the current economic expansion and its high rate of new job creation. On the other hand, economic downturns and high unemployment rates do tend to increase the numbers of applicants and program participants, while also increasing the difficulty of placing them in jobs.

Evaluation and Accomplishments

The number of customers achieving employment through services provided by VRS has increased from 3,844 in 1997 to 4,825 in 2000. A successful rehabilitation is defined as meeting the following conditions: the customer has obtained and retained employment for a minimum of 90 days, the job is stable, and both the individual and VRS are satisfied that the employment achieved is appropriate.

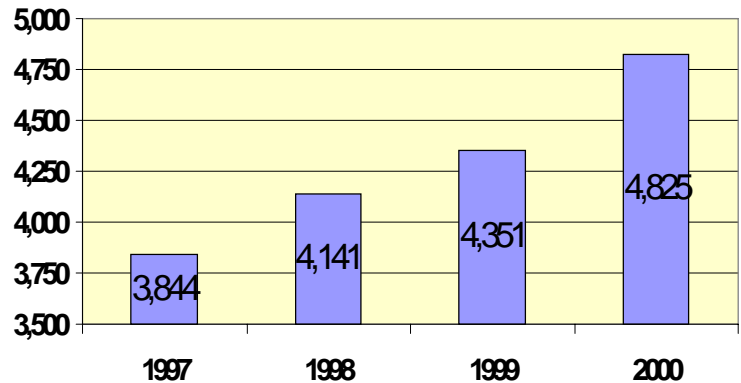
The Blind and Visually Impaired Services program had nine individuals graduate from training and eight start new training in 1999. The program also continues to serve 70 licensed Blind Vendors across the state who operate vending concession businesses in government and commercial locations. Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Services served approximately 3,613 people in 1999, provided approximately 2,000 information and referral contacts, and provided interpreters and case management services for over 1,600 deaf persons. Interpreter standards have been developed to ensure that qualified interpreters are available to effectively communicate on behalf of deaf persons.

Plans for the Biennium

Community employment will continue to be an integral part of Vocational Rehabilitation. Partnerships and closer working relationships with the **Department of Workforce Development**, the fuller utilization of One-Stop Centers, and coordination of services and placement for people with disabilities into employment will be pursued. The focus will be a seamless system, where choice and self-determination are key components for the customer. An automated case management system will be brought on line to meet growing VR case management needs.

Employment Placements by VRS

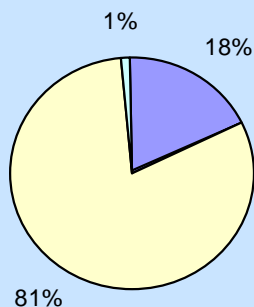


Program: 0350

	FY 1999	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003
Appropriation (All Funds)	\$101,414,061	\$109,764,528	\$104,974,729	\$121,270,802	\$125,125,926
Expenditures	\$98,981,080	\$112,938,864	\$118,602,647		

Sources of Funds
FY 2001 (Approp)

Legend: General (blue), Dedicated (red), Federal (yellow), Other (white)



Uses of Funds
FY 2001 (Approp)

Legend: Personal Services (blue), Distributions (red), Capital (yellow), Other (white)

