

USOR has identified the following concerns regarding the provision of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services for individuals who are blind or visually impaired: (1) An environment lacking sufficient internal controls, (2) Counselor isolation and a lack of knowledge about co-occurring disabilities, (3) Casefile records which demonstrate a lack of compliance with state and federal purchasing procedures and other documentation requirements, and (4) A lack of consistency across Divisions in the way USOR policies are interpreted and applied. These concerns have been identified and substantiated through numerous casefile audits and reviews.

In an attempt to improve the provision of VR services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired, USOR is proposing the following goal/strategies be added to the VR State Plan.

- Goal 1.6: Improve the provision, consistency and quality of statewide VR services for individuals who are blind and visually impaired.
  - Strategy 1.6 (A): Transition supervision of VR Counselors currently assigned to the Division of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DSBVI) to the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS).
    - Activity A.1: Provide training to DRS supervisors and directors to increase knowledge and understanding for the specific needs and services for individuals who are blind and visually impaired.
    - Activity A.2: Provide targeted training to VR Counselors for the blind and visually impaired to improve knowledge and application of VR program services and policies.
    - Activity A.3: Conduct regular meetings between DRS and DSBVI staff to coordinate VR Program, Business Enterprise Program, Orientation and Mobility Training, Adjustment Training and other available services to meet the needs of individuals who are blind and visually impaired.
    - Activity A.4: Begin to transition VR Counselors who are assigned at DSBVI locations into combined DRS Counseling offices as appropriate.
  - Strategy 1.6 (B): Create a statewide committee comprised of VR Counselors for the blind and visually impaired, supervisors and agency leadership.
    - Activity B.1: Develop a learning collaborative to assess needs, identify supports and share information to strengthen service provision to individuals who are blind and visually impaired.
    - Activity B.2: Identify and address ongoing cross training needs for all VR Counselors on services and supports for working with individuals who are blind and visually impaired.
  - Strategy 1.6 (C): Increase outreach to individuals who are blind and visually impaired.
    - Activity C.1: Establish and maintain local level VR Counselor liaisons to the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind.
    - Activity C.2: Update electronic and accessible materials regarding information, services and resources for individuals who are blind and visually impaired.
    - Activity C.3: Provide Job Readiness Workshops to students and youth who are blind and visually impaired.

The intent of these changes is to improve service delivery for individuals who are blind or visually impaired while assuring fiscal accountability and regulatory compliance. Additional opportunities for cross-training and shared expertise will increase counselor knowledge across USOR about the needs of individuals who are blind or visually impaired and improve access to services and opportunities for all individuals with disabilities.

It is also the intent of USOR to maintain service continuity for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. These changes are administrative in nature. Funding levels for programs and caseloads which serve individuals who are blind and visually impaired will be maintained and clients will receive the same services, in the same offices, from the same counselors as prior to the change.