

## **Attachment 4.8(b)(1) Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Investment System**

This attachment describes interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce investment system with respect to:

- Federal, state, and local agencies and programs;
- If applicable, Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture; and
- If applicable, state use contracting programs.

Coordination and planning with other New York State (NYS) agencies are critical functions in improving access to appropriate vocational training and employment opportunities, particularly for individuals with significant disabilities who often have multiple needs requiring the intervention of more than one State agency. Other State, federal and local agencies are a significant referral source for the individuals referred to ACCES-VR for services. ACCES-VR continues to coordinate and work cooperatively with agencies that are not in the Statewide Workforce Investment System to increase employment opportunities for people with significant disabilities. However, ACCES-VR is not currently involved in a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture. ACCES-VR's vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs are not directly involved in state use contracting programs.

Coordinating the support needs of people with disabilities (such as transportation, medical care, housing, case management, family supports and work incentives) is essential for many individuals to be able to obtain and maintain their integrated employment. Interagency cooperation and coordination in service delivery is a driving force within Title IV of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and Chapter 515 of the Laws of 1992 (New York State Integrated Employment legislation). This interagency collaboration occurs at both the State and local levels through coordinated planning and service delivery initiatives, as well as through the implementation of formal Memoranda of Agreement.

### **Memoranda of Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding:**

ACCES-VR works closely with a variety of entities to enhance vocational rehabilitation services and placement opportunities for ACCES-VR consumers. These efforts are described in the Memorandums of Agreement and the Memorandums of Understanding. Several of the key agreements include:

- Memorandum of Agreement for the Workforce Investment Act: Title II, Adult Education and Family Literacy between the New York State Education Department Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services –

Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) and Local Workforce Investment Boards, June 30, 2000;

- Memorandum of Agreement to Provide Services to Individuals who are Deaf/Blind, November 1999 between the Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services – Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) and Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH);
- Memorandum of Interagency Understanding regarding Supported Employment, October 1999 between ACCES-VR, CBVH, Office of Mental Health (OMH) and Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD);
- Memorandum of Understanding between the State Education Department's Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services – Vocational Rehabilitation and the OMH, October 1999;
- Memorandum of Understanding between the State Education Department's Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services – Vocational Rehabilitation and the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), April 1999;
- Statement of Collaboration between the New York State Education Department's Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services – Vocational Rehabilitation and New York State Financial Aid Administrators Association (NYSFAAA), March 1, 1998;
- Joint Agreement between the New York State Education Department's Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services – Vocational Rehabilitation and the Office of Higher and Professional Education (OHPE), August 4, 1994; and
- Joint Agreement between the New York State Education Department's Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services – Vocational Rehabilitation and Public Institutions of Higher Education (IHE), (SUNY and CUNY) August, 2007.

### **Designing Our Future:**

In January 2006, the Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES-VR) presented the Designing Our Future recommendations to the Board of Regents. The primary goal of ACCES-VR is to assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining employment that is consistent with their skills, abilities and interest. It is expected that the job opportunities available to individuals with disabilities will be consistent with those accessed by the general non-disabled population. Therefore, ACCES-VR seeks to provide quality training in marketable, high demand professions that enable ACCES-VR consumers to effectively compete with their non-disabled peers.

As part of Designing Our Future, ACCES-VR has developed strong interagency partnerships and is leading key initiatives aimed at improving employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities in New York State:

- ACCES-VR is chairing the Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC) Employment Committee which is developing a comprehensive statewide strategy;

- ACCES-VR coordinates the Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team that focuses on providing supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities in cooperation with the NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH), NYS Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) and the NYS Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH);
- ACCES-VR and the NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) are forming an OASAS-ACCES-VR Statewide Team to create joint policies, procedures and training to better serve individuals with chemical dependencies;
- ACCES-VR and the NYS Department of Labor (DOL) Disability Program Navigator Initiative are working cooperatively to improve the effectiveness of Disability Program Navigators at the One Stop Career Centers across the State to ensure access for people with disabilities; and
- The ACCES-VR Veterans Service Action Plan is working closely with State and federal Veterans' organizations to make sure that veterans with disabilities obtain the services necessary to return to work.

### **Description of Designing Our Future Partnership Initiatives:**

The employment rate for people with disabilities in New York State is 33.5 percent as compared to 76 percent of people without disabilities (Cornell University RRTC on Disability Demographics and Statistics, 2006 Disability Status Report: New York). The challenge for New York State is to close the employment gap by increasing the number of individuals with disabilities entering the workforce. To ensure this outcome, ACCES-VR must invest in partnerships with public and private entities. It is through leveraging of resources and collaboration of efforts that individuals with disabilities will be able to fully participate in employment opportunities available in the State of New York.

To better integrate individuals with disabilities into the New York State workforce and increase employment outcomes, ACCES-VR must partner with other stakeholders. ACCES-VR completed the initial design phase of this strategic planning effort with considerable input from partner agencies, providers, consumers and staff. Implementation of the new design will be an important feature. The implementation of the following partnerships will assist ACCES-VR in meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities statewide:

### **NYS Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC):**

Through legislation and executive action, New York State has established the Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC) to implement the Supreme Court Olmstead Decision, which requires states to provide services to individuals with disabilities in the least restrictive community settings. The formation of the MISCC was the result of Chapter 551 of the laws of 2002.

In January 2008, OMRDD's Commissioner, at the recommendation of the full MISCC, asked ACCES-VR to lead an executive-level interagency committee focused on

employment of individuals with disabilities. ACCES-VR, in cooperation with the Commissioner of OMRDD and the MISCC, established the MISCC Employment Committee. ACCES-VR's Assistant Commissioner was the designated chair for the Employment Committee.

In December 2008, the MISCC Employment Committee submitted its initial report to the Governor and New York State Legislature with a comprehensive set of recommendations for closing the employment gap in New York State. ACCES-VR will continue to play a leadership role on the MISCC Employment Committee as priority recommendations are implemented.

### **Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team:**

ACCES-VR initiated the re-formation of an interagency work team to discuss ongoing concerns with the implementation of supported employment intensive and extended services in New York State. The Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team consists of mid-level managers from OMRDD, OMH, CBVH and ACCES-VR. The Team meets monthly to discuss program issues, facilitate cross-systems implementation and identify program areas for further development.

The Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team remains committed to continuous quality improvement in employment services. During 2009, the State agencies will work on revisions to the Supported Employment Memorandum of Understanding to reflect a renewed commitment to supported employment.

### **Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS):**

Several years ago, ACCES-VR and OASAS established the Brooklyn/Queens Consortium as a pilot project to coordinate and integrate provisions of vocational rehabilitation services to persons in recovery. Based on the successful work of this regional consortium, ACCES-VR and OASAS agreed to renew statewide collaboration. A Statewide Team is being established to undertake the following activities:

- Evaluate the referral process developed by the Brooklyn/Queens Consortium to determine how this can be a model for statewide implementation;
- Research current ACCES-VR and OASAS data in providing employment services to this population;
- Update ACCES-VR Alcoholism Policy (2001) and develop a Technical Assistance Brief on Chemical Dependencies;
- Examine ACCES-VR and OASAS collaboration in the context of other Statewide collaborative initiatives (MISCC, OMH and DOL);
- Develop collaborative ACCES-VR-OASAS and Provider Agency cross-training curriculum and training plan; and
- Update the ACCES-VR and OASAS Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The existing MOU between ACCES-VR and OASAS has been in effect since 1999.

## **Model Transition Programs:**

In 2008, ACCES-VR reported establishing a transition consortium involving school districts, ACCES-VR (vocational rehabilitation and special education), Elementary, Middle, Secondary and Continuing Education (EMSC), Office of Higher Education (OHE) and other stakeholders to improve students' access to educational, vocational and community supports as they transition from school to employment or to post-secondary training. This consortium developed into the Model Transition Program (MTP). The MTP provides funding for 60 projects that include more than 180 private and public high schools to develop school-wide plans, activities and programs to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities to postsecondary placements. These placements include college, vocational training programs and competitive employment with and without supports. The primary goal of the MTP is to facilitate future employment opportunities for students with disabilities. At the end of this project, successful transition strategies will be identified and shared with high schools throughout the State. Over the period of the MTP, thousands of students with disabilities will be made eligible for vocational rehabilitation programs and services.

To assist in meeting the objectives of MTP projects, the State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo provides training in key areas in support of these activities. Using data provided by the projects, Cornell University is working with ACCES-VR's vocational rehabilitation administration to identify critical elements of the data collection, analysis and reporting processes.

During the first academic year, significant progress has been made in the implementation of transition activities, formation of partnerships, training, and data collection/analysis. As reported by Cornell University, MTP has generated extensive individual student data regarding participating student demographics, employment and postsecondary preparation, ACCES-VR referrals, and collaborative service delivery. As of June 2008, a total of 9,454 students have received transition services; over half of those were expected to achieve a Regents Diploma. Highlights include:

- Sixty-five percent (6,104) of the MTP students had measurable postsecondary goals in their Individualized Education Program (IEP);
- Sixty-one percent (5,769) of students participate in career development activities;
- Nineteen percent (1,782) of MTP students participated in paid/unpaid work experiences, most of this being part-time work;
- Eighteen percent (1,664) of MTP students participated in activities aimed to facilitate transition to postsecondary education. Most of these were college information nights and assistance with college applications; and
- More than 3,000 referrals to ACCES-VR have been made.

Due to shifting budgetary demands, the MTP projects will conclude on November 30, 2009. ACCES-VR will complete an evaluation of the program and will continue coordination with school districts to sustain the gains achieved during the project. Using data provided by the projects, Cornell University is working with ACCES-VR's vocational

rehabilitation administration to identify critical elements of the data collection, analysis and reporting processes. Successful transition strategies will be identified and shared with high schools throughout the State.

### **ACCES-VR-DOL Disability Program Navigator MOU:**

ACCES-VR and the NYS Department of Labor (DOL) are in the process of completing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for ACCES-VR to contribute toward the statewide Disability Program Navigator (DPN) initiative. ACCES-VR will contribute \$1.2 Million in VR funds over the next two years to support the network of DPNs at the local workforce investment areas (LWIAs) across the State. The role of the DPN is to promote accessibility to the full range of 'One Stop' system employment services for people with disabilities. ACCES-VR funding will support eight full-time equivalents, about 23 percent of the total \$2,605,000 operating budget for the total Statewide DPN program for Program Year 2008.

### **ACCES-VR Business and Industry Initiatives:**

ACCES-VR Placement and Marketing Representatives in the 15 District Offices have continued to build on the following collaborations: statewide disability employment training initiative with Cornell University; local job placement and marketing initiatives with the Society for Human Resource Management; and continued coordination with several local Chambers of Commerce and The American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) unions across the State. The agency is also strengthening its regional alliance with national businesses through participation in the CSAVR/RSA collaboration on the National Employment Team (The NET).

### **Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC):**

The DDPC is a State agency charged with providing input services to families with members who have developmental disabilities. The Council is directed by an appointed membership that includes parents and persons with disabilities as voting members who direct the activities of the Council. The DDPC has played a key role in innovation in New York State. ACCES-VR works with the DDPC to review employment grants related to developing sector-based employment using Project Search, promoted by the United States Department of Labor.

### **Department of Health (DOH):**

ACCES-VR continues to work cooperatively with the DOH in the delivery of services to individuals with traumatic brain injuries (TBI), the implementation of the Medicaid "buy-in" program and the use of Medicaid for medically necessary physical and mental restoration during the rehabilitation process. In 2001, ACCES-VR and DOH collaborated on a Technical Assistance Brief on Acquired Brain Injury which is part of the VR Policy Manual at:

[http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr/current\\_provider\\_information/vocational\\_rehabilitation/policies\\_procedures/technical\\_assistance\\_briefs/braininjury.htm](http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr/current_provider_information/vocational_rehabilitation/policies_procedures/technical_assistance_briefs/braininjury.htm)

### **Federal Department of Veterans' Affairs/State Division of Veterans' Affairs:**

ACCES-VR maintains an ongoing liaison with the Federal Department of Veterans' Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation program to assure that veterans with service connected disabilities are able to access appropriate services from both agencies. ACCES-VR continues to work with the State Division of Veterans' Affairs and is participating on an advisory council developed by the State Division of Employment and Training Officers in a number of State agencies to coordinate the provision of services to veterans with disabilities.

ACCES-VR has joined with other offices within the State Education Department (SED) to mutually support veterans' services. SED, including ACCES-VR, is actively engaged in a statewide veterans and family interagency collaboration under the leadership of the NYS Division of Veterans Affairs and the NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS). This statewide initiative is engaged in crafting and implementing a State Plan for New York's Veterans and Families.

ACCES-VR has initiated ongoing outreach to veterans with a particular emphasis on returning veterans with disabling conditions from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). This campaign includes a consistent ACCES-VR presence at veterans' job fairs and veteran Stand Down events across the State. Efforts are underway to develop a comprehensive veterans' services web page linking ACCES-VR consumers with a wide range of underutilized veteran/family employment-oriented service options for all branches of service and reserves.

ACCES-VR has convened an internal workgroup representing all levels of the vocational rehabilitation service system to identify best practices and gaps in services. The action plan will promote best practices statewide and identify new services and/or strategies for effective veterans' services.

### **Conclusion:**

During the next year, ACCES-VR and its partner State agencies will invigorate the dialogue on how to close the employment gap for individuals with disabilities. The State agencies will strengthen collaboration for achieving an increase in integrated employment outcomes. We will examine barriers to more effective employment services, identify evidence-based employment practices and implement strategies that will improve the overall performance of our employment programs. We will assure that the full array of employment services meet high standards for performance and result in successful employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities in New York State.