

Rhode Island Department of Human Services  
Office of Rehabilitation Services  
and the  
State Rehabilitation Council



# 2012 Annual Report

*Lincoln D. Chafee*  
Governor

*Sandra M. Powell*  
Director

## *The Mission of the Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services is*

“To empower individuals with disabilities to choose, prepare for, obtain and maintain employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence and integration into society.”



### *Values*

We value the worth, dignity, rights, responsibilities, and empowerment of all persons with disabilities in achieving their individualized goals.

We value staff who reflect pride and commitment to excellence in achieving our mission.

We value a management style that fosters responsibility and accountability while encouraging creativity, initiative, and leadership throughout the organization.

We value community support in achieving the agency's mission.

We value leadership which promotes clarity of purpose.

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# Message from the Director

## Sandra M. Powell



It is my pleasure to provide you with the Annual Report for Federal Fiscal Year 2012 for the Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS). ORS is charged with empowering Rhode Islanders with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence and full integration into society. Vocational Rehabilitation Services; Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI); and Disability Determination Services (DDS) provide a myriad of resources and services which enhance the quality of life for Rhode Islanders with disabilities.

Younger individuals with disabilities and their families work with vocational rehabilitation counselors in order to make that important transition from school to post-secondary education and careers. The

business and labor community depend on ORS for trained, job-ready applicants.

Rhode Islanders applying for social security disability benefits get accurate and timely decisions, and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired provides services for individuals who have a visual impairment. ORS provides a comprehensive array of personalized services to Rhode Islanders with disabilities.

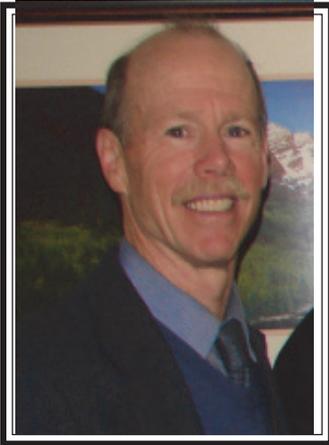
In FFY 2012 7,343 persons with disabilities were provided vocational rehabilitation, training and employment services. The Disability Determination Services adjudicated 18,327 claims for social security disability benefits.

We are proud of the partnerships that our staff has developed with our citizen advisory councils, our customers and the community, which has contributed so much to the quality of life for individuals with disabilities in Rhode Island.

*Sandra M. Powell*

# Message from the Associate Director

## Stephen J. Brunero



On behalf of the Office of Rehabilitation Services, I am pleased to present to you the 2012 Annual Report. The purpose of the Office of Rehabilitation Services is to provide customized and comprehensive services to individuals with disabilities that will maximize their quality of life, self-reliance, and economic independence in the community.

We have included success stories that reflect the diversity of our customers and their needs. We want to illustrate the partnership between our staff and our customers that makes rehabilitation work.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program increases revenue at all levels of government and decreases the burden of income maintenance programs. As persons with disabilities achieve an employment outcome, they become tax-paying citizens and more than pay back the cost of the program.

In 2012, ORS assisted 602 individuals with disabilities to obtain competitive employment. With an emphasis on serving individuals with the most significant disabilities, ORS is making a real difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families. The accomplishments outlined in this annual report reflect favorably on the efforts of the staff who, by hard work and commitment, have continued a long tradition of serving Rhode Islanders with disabilities.

We are also indebted to the Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council, Statewide Independent Living Council, Governor's Advisory Council for the Blind & Visually Impaired, State Committee of Blind Vendors, and Rhode Island Council on Assistive Technology for their partnership and help in maximizing the potential of persons with disabilities. I also extend my appreciation to our hard-working and capable staff along with our many public and private partners.

*Stephen J. Brunero*

# Message from the State Rehabilitation Council Chair Dr. Kate McCarthy-Barnett

On behalf of the members of the Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council, I am proud to share this 2012 Annual Report. During this past year, the members of the State Rehabilitation Council demonstrated leadership and strong partnerships working closely with the Office of Rehabilitation Services to ensure Rhode Islanders with disabilities were able to obtain and keep meaningful and satisfying employment. The intent of this report is to provide a summary of the activities undertaken by the State Rehabilitation Council.

Over the past year, the State Rehabilitation Council's four standing committees continued to advise and work with the Office of Rehabilitation Services on program and policy issues. The State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance Committee provided feedback to the State Plan; partnered on consumer satisfaction surveys; and participated in the Rehabilitation Services Administration site review. The newly-created Outreach Committee focused on identifying strategies

to increase public awareness and employment partnerships with underserved communities in the State. The Nominating and Leadership Committee provided the forum for members to increase their knowledge and skills on new and innovative employment programs and projects through an active speaker's bureau of presentations. The Transition Committee has committed to increasing opportunities for youth to make successful transitions to employment. In addition, the Executive Committee met with the Office Rehabilitation Services leadership team on a regular basis to provide assistance and guidance in meeting the goals and mission of the agency. Also, the State Rehabilitation Council continued to support the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils.

Although faced with ongoing economic challenges, the Office of



## Members

Rehabilitation Services has maintained consistent and quality services to Rhode Islanders with disabilities. This commitment is demonstrated by the agency supporting 602 Rhode Islanders with disabilities to secure employment in 2012. The State Rehabilitation Council is proud of this commitment and the outstanding work of Mr. Stephen Brunero, Associate Director and the leadership team at the Office of Rehabilitation Services.

The State Rehabilitation Council shares an open invitation to join us for a Council meeting. The meetings are open to the public and information on the Council can be found on the Office of Rehabilitation Services website.

It is a privilege to serve as Chair of the Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council. The members of the Council are honored to provide leadership and work in partnership with the Office of Rehabilitation Services.

*Dr. Kate McCarthy-Barnett*

Dr. Kate McCarthy: Barnett Chairperson

Jeffrey D. Machado: Vice-Chair

Catherine Sansonetti, Esq: Secretary

Corey J. Allard

Janice A. Belasco

Bryant Lemus Berganze

Christine Botts

Rocco Bruno

Thomas Clemons

Kelley Conti

Cynthia M. Cote

Dr. Mona Dorsinville-Phanor

Dr. Judith Drew

Joan Fino

Dorothy Furlong

Jeanne M. Giroux

Paul Harden

Micheal Hazard

Margaret Hoye

Roger Andrew Iannetta

Diana B. Kriner

Anne LeClerc

Aracelis Maria

Doreen D. McConaghy

Daniel C. Pieroni

Vincent Rossi

Jane Slade

Juan Troncoso

Willa Truelove

Herb Weiss

Kim Wennermark

Nancy Baker: Facilitator

# State Rehabilitation Council Committees

## Nominating and Leadership

Continuing the mission of the State Rehabilitation Council, the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee sustained its efforts toward ongoing and active recruitment of qualified individuals to its membership. The Committee routinely endeavors to solicit members who will enrich the partnership with the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS), represent the interests of the Stakeholders, grow the skillset of the Council through information sharing and educational presentations, as well as diversify the composition of the group so as to reflect the needs of the populations served, while also meeting the Federal requirements.

We are happy to report six members were submitted for reappointment and 4 new members were recruited to the Council in 2012, representing a broad range of individuals across the State of Rhode Island, including persons with disabilities.

The Nominating and Leadership Committee will continue its commitment to member recruitment by maintaining efforts to solicit membership of underrepresented populations, businesses, and employers around the State of Rhode Island. These efforts strengthen the partnership with

ORS and Community Stakeholders as well as promote and enhance the mission of the SRC.

Our Leadership Development Speaker Program moved inward in response to the RSA monitoring visit. We focused time at each meeting around the Council's primary functions in assisting ORS in advocacy, maximization for employment, training, jobs, and our work on the annual updates to the State Plan. Training was provided to members in these areas and on the purpose of the State Plan and the role the Council has in helping ORS with it.

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Laurie DiOrio & Dominic DiOrio,  
Co-chairs*

# Outreach

The objectives of the Outreach Sub-committee for the coming year are to increase awareness and communicate the mission of the Office of Rehabilitation Services to a broader constituency. Specifically, the goals of the Committee in the coming year will be to identify specific groups that are being under-served.

Once specific groups have been identified, we will develop strategies to increase public awareness and educate as to the services available to them.

Lastly, to analyze the best ways to communicate with these selected groups, to ensure the delivered information reaches the intended target groups in the most efficient and cost-effective way as possible.

*Respectfully Submitted,*

*Jeffrey Machado & Juan Troncoso, Co-chairs*



2012 SRC Annual Meeting  
May 8, 2012

*Members L-R Front Row: Dr. Kate McCarthy-Barnett, Wheeler Clemons (ORS), Janice Belasco, Michael Hazard, Middle Row: Joan Fino , Dr. Judy Drew, Catherine Sansonetti, Dr. Mona Dorsinville-Phanor, Elizabeth Graves, Bryant Berganza, ,Guest , Stephen Brunero (ORS) Rear Row: Juan Troncoso, Jeff Machado, Anne LeClerc, Doreen McConaghy, Roberta Greene Whittemore (ORS), JoAnn Nannig (ORS), Linda Deschenes (ORS), Lynn Paola, Willa Truelove, Kim Wennermark, Christine Botts, Guest, Nancy Baker, Ron Racine (ORS)*

# State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance

The State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance Committee of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is charged with advising the agency about its plans and policies in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act. Also, the committee is concerned with the quality of services delivered to ORS consumers and continuous quality improvement.

This year, as with prior years, the SRC provided annual feedback and public testimony regarding the draft State Plan. Prior to providing the feedback, the committee participated in the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) ORS site review as part of the RSA section 107 monitoring process that now occurs approximately once every five years. In doing so, the committee was able to learn about the issues RSA noted with regard to ORS' guiding principles and service delivery. The agency significantly revamped the State Plan in order to more effectively aim to find customers quality competitive employment outcomes that could be measured in terms of hours, wages, and benefits. The SRC strongly supports the agency's effort to integrate people with disabilities into the workforce in a meaningful way.

This year, the committee also commented that we recognize ORS can take a leadership role in providing supported employment services for those individuals with the most significant disabilities who need supported employment services. We look forward to learning more about the ORS collaboration with supported employment providers.

The committee continues to utilize a timeline for review of the State Plan. As part of our timeline, we meet with the agency to learn about the details of the State Plan. As ORS works on the new State Plan goals for quality employment outcomes, we anticipate that data will become available for committee review. We therefore have set a plan to revisit data collection and analysis as the data becomes available for review.

In addition to State Plan work, the committee comments on proposed ORS policies. This year, there were no additional policies for review. We also work with ORS on continuous quality improvement and look forward to continued participation in reviewing the Comprehensive Needs Assessment to assess customer satisfaction.

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Catherine Sansonetti & Kate McCarthy-  
Barnett, Co-chairs*

# Transition

The Transition Committee is charged with advising and assisting the Office of Rehabilitation Services in:

- ◆ Increasing the knowledge and awareness of transition related events/resources;
- ◆ Development of targeted outreach to particular youth (i.e. students on 504 plans); and
- ◆ Identifying potential barriers and challenges that youth in transition encounter.

This charge will support the ORS mission to improve opportunities for youths with disabilities to make successful transition to employment.

The committee members are as follows: Diana Kriner, Christine Botts, Maryellen Hagerty, Joan Fino, Dan Pieroni, JoAnn Nannig, Dr. Judith Drew, Doreen D. McConaghy, Paul Harden, Roger Andrew Iannetta, Lea Colardo (co-chair), and Jane Slade (co-chair).

## Goal One

Provide awareness to ORS regarding state, regional and local transition-related events for students, families and professionals.

## Goal Two

Advise and assist ORS in developing outreach strategies targeted for transition age youth (18-24) that may not be receiving special education services (i.e. students on 504 plans).

## Goal Three

Assist ORS in identifying barriers and challenges for transition-age youth in order to strategize effective interventions.

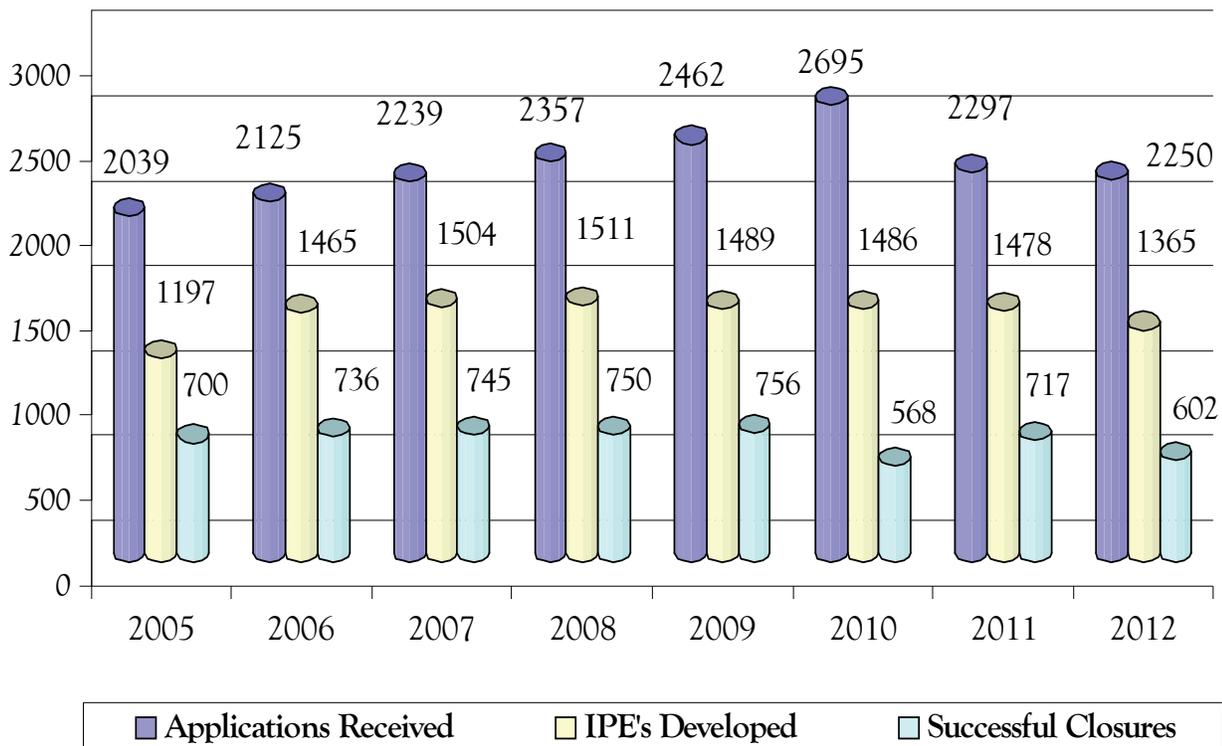
*Respectfully Submitted,  
Lea Colardo, Co-chair*

# Program Highlights – Federal Fiscal Year 2012 October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012

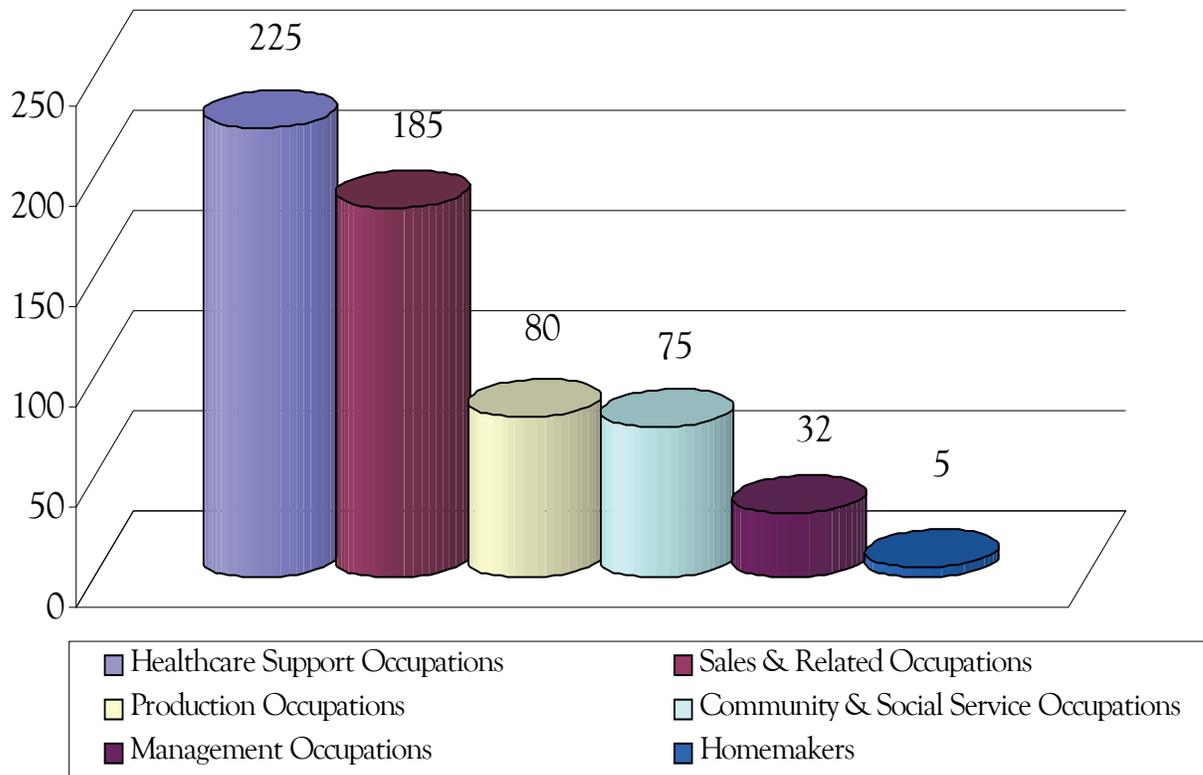
## 602 individuals were successfully employed

- 2,251 individuals applied for vocational rehabilitation services.
- 7,343 individuals with disabilities were provided vocational rehabilitation services.
- 1,365 individuals worked with a vocational rehabilitation counselor to develop a new Individualized Plan for Employment [IPE].
- 4,233 individuals received Counseling and Guidance Services from vocational rehabilitation counselors.
- 3,110 individuals received services purchased from vendors. Services ranged from evaluations, medical and psychological therapies, training, personal assistant services, job placement and training.

**2005-2012 Statistical Comparisons**



## Primary Occupation of 602 Persons Successfully Employed

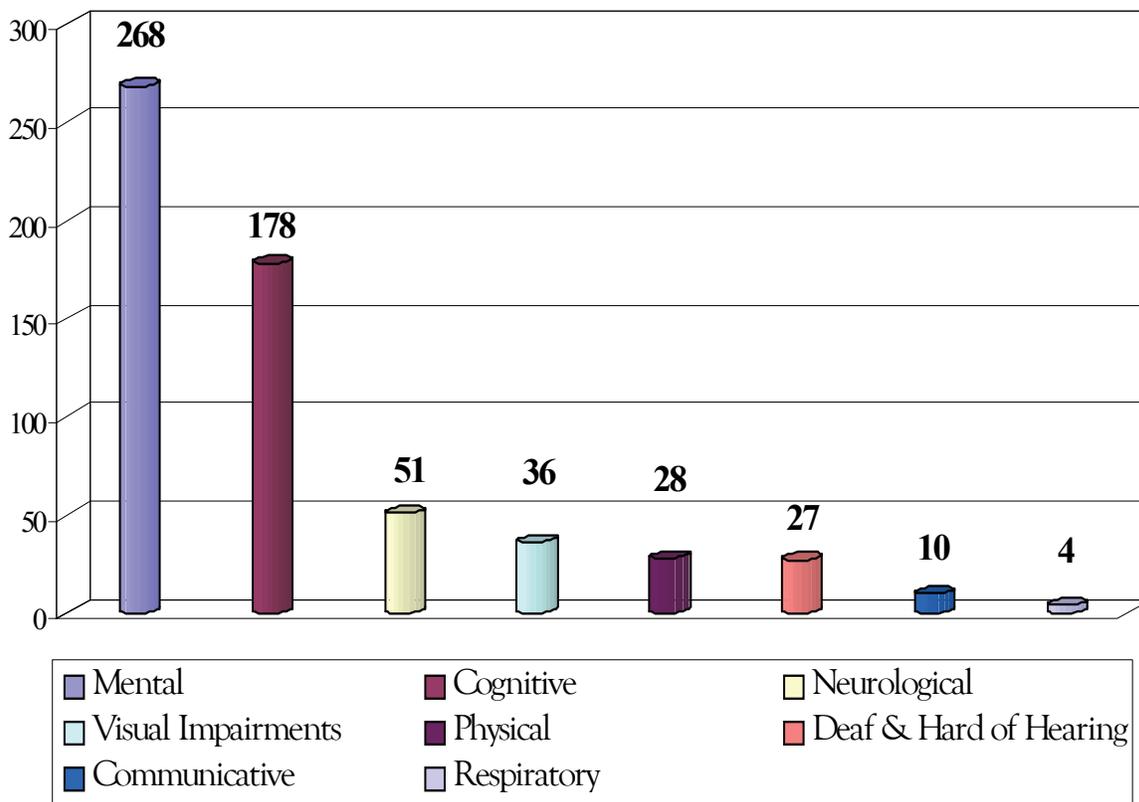


- 336 individuals received rehabilitation technology services to assist them to prepare for and to enter employment.
- 1,662 individuals received information from Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP) Resource Centers about assistive technology and funding options.
- 2,684 individuals received AT training, demonstration, loans or assistance with recycled AT devices.
- 344 individuals were provided specialized equipment through the ATEL (Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan) Program.
- 1,255 youth with disabilities ages 14-24 have been provided transition services by 18 VR counselors.
- 13 vending facilities were supported by the Business Enterprises Program (BEP) at Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired. BEP sales totaled approximately \$1.56 million.
- 450 individuals were registered for NEWSLINE, a newspaper reading service.

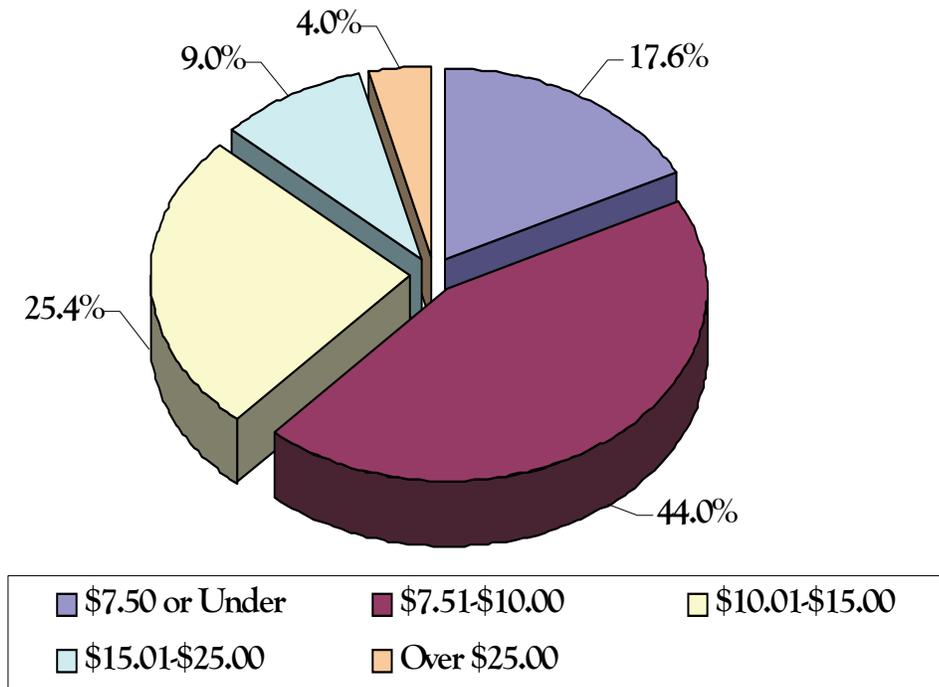
787 elderly individuals who are blind or visually impaired received services from the Independent Living for Older Blind Program 517 low vision aids, 335 rehab teaching, 95 mobility services and 787 service coordination.

94% of this group reported that they feel more confident in their independent living, and 39% indicated they had considered nursing home placement prior to services, but were able to remain in their own homes.

### Primary Disability of 602 Persons Successfully Employed



## Hourly Wage of 602 Successfully Employed Individuals with Disabilities



### Disability Determination Services

- 18,270 total cases were received by the Disability Determination Services
- 18,327 claims were successfully processed by the Disability Determination Services
- 11,560 initial claims were filed
- 2,165 Continuing Disabilities Review cases completed
- 303 Pre-Hearing Cases processed, resulting in 237 Disability Hearing Unit decisions
- 7,352 Cases with Consultative Examinations purchased
- 14,284 Cases with Medical Evidence of Record purchased
- \$1,945,474 Total Medical Costs with a Total Budget of \$8,297,497
- \$451.05 Cost per case

Production Per Work Year (PPWY) efficiency rate was 403.0. The national rate was 324.2. The performance accuracy rate for RI was 98.8%. The net accuracy was 98.8%. The regulatory standard is 90.4%.

\*Based on the Monthly Obligation Report for 9/2012.

# Vocational Rehabilitation

The Vocational Rehabilitation process consists of assisting an individual with a disability to assess his/her vocational abilities and to identify, coordinate and provide services needed to realize employment. The partnership between each individual with a disability and their Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is a key component in the Vocational Rehabilitation process. The individual and his/her Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor work together to develop an Employment Plan which will assist that individual to reach his/her employment goal. Vocational Rehabilitation services that may be incorporated in an Employment Plan may include:

- ◆ Counseling and Guidance to help plan vocational goals and services
  - ◆ Transition Services from School to Career
  - ◆ Rehabilitation Technology Services
  - ◆ Assistive Technology Services
  - ◆ Diagnostic Evaluations
  - ◆ College or Vocational Training
- ◆ Job Development and Placement Services
  - ◆ Vehicle Modifications
  - ◆ Housing Modifications
  - ◆ Post-Employment Services
  - ◆ Other Goods and Services
  - ◆ Job Training and Job Supports

## Deaf Services...

The Office of Rehabilitation Services helps individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing obtain services to meet their needs, provides counseling and guidance to help plan vocational goals and services, and assists the individual to obtain employment. They serve as a resource to professionals, state agencies, community organizations, and the public providing information related to employment, training and accommodations for persons who have a hearing loss.

## **Independent Living Services...**

The Office of Rehabilitation Services purchases assessments and independent living services from the two Independent Living Centers, PARI and OSCIL, as part of preparing individuals with significant disabilities for employment.

## **The Rhode Island Learning Disabilities Project ...**

The LD Project is a unique Department of Human Services intra-agency initiative between the Office of Rehabilitation Services and the RI Works program. This collaborative relationship was created to help identify parents on cash assistance with learning disabilities, and to provide the necessary accommodations and vocational training programs in order for those individuals to become independent and economically self-sufficient. During 2012, the nationally-recognized LD Project served **292** individuals and assisted **85** individuals with learning disabilities to reach their employment goals.

## **Supported Employment...**

Supported employment assists individuals with the most significant disabilities who need ongoing supports to choose, find and keep competitive employment in community-integrated settings. After initial services by ORS, long-term funding is provided through other funding sources.

## **Transition...**

The Office of Rehabilitation Services has a strong commitment to assist students with disabilities with transition planning to adult life. ORS counselors assist all school districts and students with disabilities and their families to plan services to help students reach career goals. ORS counselors provide technical assistance and information to school systems and work in partnership with school transition staff, 5 Regional Educational Collaboratives, and 4 Transition Academies to improve transition planning.

# Other Programs

## **Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan (ATEL) Program...**

The ATEL Program loans telephone equipment to residents of the State of Rhode Island who have hearing, speech, or neuromuscular (unable to dial or hold a receiver) impairments and have a signed certificate of disability. Equipment is issued on a first-come, first-serve basis.

## **Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP)...**

The Office of Rehabilitation Services is the lead agency for the Rhode Island Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP). ATAP is a statewide program funded under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, which works to reduce or eliminate barriers that impede access to, and funding for, assistive technology devices and services for individuals with disabilities of all ages.

## **Home Modification Program...**

The Office of Rehabilitation Services administers federal and state independent living funds which provide home accessibility and adaptive equipment for individuals who are significantly disabled, to enable them to meet independent living goals in their homes and communities.

## **State PCA Program...**

The Office of Rehabilitation Services contracts with PARI Independent Living Center to be the fiscal agent for the State Personal Care Assistance program for individuals who are not eligible for Medicaid-funded waivers. Through this program individuals are able to continue living in the community rather than in a nursing home.

# Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI)

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) offers a wide array of services to eligible individuals who are blind or visually impaired through its Vocational Rehabilitation Unit, Business Enterprises Program, and Social Services Program. The various services offered by these programs are designed to help individuals of all ages achieve independence at home, in the community, and in the workplace.

**Vocational Rehabilitation Program...** is a Federal/State Program created to assist people who are blind or visually impaired to obtain or maintain employment. Services provided include evaluation, orientation, mobility training, rehabilitation technology, guidance and counseling, career assessment, educational planning, vocational training, provision of adaptive equipment, job development, placement, and follow-up services.

**Business Enterprises Program...** is a Federal/State Program which establishes vending facilities in state, federal or private buildings for operation by persons who are legally blind. Licensed blind vendors operate vending facilities at 13 locations throughout the state and are assigned to these locations on the basis of their seniority within the program. Types of facilities range from small snack bars serving light snacks and beverages to larger food-service sites serving hot and cold entrees prepared on-site. All operate under the name of "Coffee Plus".

**Newsline...** is a comprehensive newspaper reading service available to individuals who are blind, visually impaired, or print handicapped, that is accessible through the use of any touch-tone telephone. Individuals can access more than 200 newspapers and magazines, including The Providence Journal, The New York Times, USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, and the AARP Monthly Newsletter.

## Social Services Program...

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired coordinates a federal comprehensive service program which focuses primarily on children from birth through age 14, elderly individuals, and individuals for whom a vocational goal is not feasible.

- ◆ **Children's Case Management Services** include family casework, coordination with Early Intervention Programs, educational guidance, summer camp for youth, arrangement of ophthalmological and low vision evaluations, and information and referral to appropriate community programs.

- ◆ **Vision Screening Program** provided through *Saving Sight RI* utilizes an MTI photoscreening device to take pictures of the child's eye without the child having to read an eye chart. Screenings are done in day care centers, nursery schools, public schools and other community locations.

- ◆ **Independent Living for Older Blind Program** provides case management services, along with ancillary services for mobility and orientation, rehabilitation teaching for skills training in activities of daily living, management of low vision, provisions of adaptive equipment, and information and referral to support groups and appropriate community services.

## Disability Determination Services (DDS)

Disability Determination Services (DDS) is the unit within the Office of Rehabilitation Services that determines the medical eligibility of Rhode Island residents (both children and adults) who have applied for benefits under the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI) programs. The DDS, although fully-federally funded by the Social Security Administration (SSA), is a state agency responsible for obtaining the medical records and other information needed to determine whether the applicant meets the criteria for disability, as defined by the SSA rules and regulations.

Over the past 7 years, the Rhode Island DDS (RIDDS), as a part of the national SSA initiative, has transformed itself from a paper-based institution to a fully electronic record-keeping system. With the inclusion of Continuing Disability Reviews (CDR's) into the electronic process in early FY 2009, the DDS gained the capacity to process better than 98% of its current workload electronically. Using national scanning contractors, in-house casual processing, and a system of inbound and outbound faxing, the images of all medical records are now stored in an electronic case folder. This allows multiple individuals to be working with a case record simultaneously and for exchange of case information with experts nationwide throughout the Social Security disability network.

The RIDDS continues to play an important role in determining the design of the adjudicative model for the Social Security Disability Program. This is accomplished by testing, evaluating, and incorporating the innovations which make the system more user friendly and navigable for the disability applicant. The RIDDS is involved with the development of a new Disability Case Processing System, which is currently being piloted in Idaho. This legacy data tool will standardize the information technology and maintenance of all the DDS's nationwide, and eventually tie in with all other operatives within the Social Security Administration disability adjudication program.

In FY 2012, the RIDDS achieved measures of accuracy and productivity which ranked in the top 10% in the nation, while processing over 18,000 disability applications for residents of Rhode Island. The number of individuals seeking disability determinations has increased dramatically over the past few years, both in Rhode Island and nationwide. The Baby Boomer generation aging into its most disability prone years, coupled with the widespread economic downturn, have contributed greatly to the heightened number of applications. The RIDDS, with a diminished staff, has struggled to keep pace with its workload. The by-product, unfortunately, has been a progressively longer wait for disabled Rhode Islanders to receive information as to the

outcome of their disability applications. The case processing time in Rhode Island is among the longest in the country, approaching double the national average. Nonetheless, the dedicated and responsive staff at the RIDDS continues to maximize all of their available resources to provide quality service to the citizens of Rhode Island.

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## Local Social Security Field Offices

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380 Westminster Mall, Room 318  
Providence, RI 02903  
1-877-402-0808

30 Quaker Lane, 1st Floor  
Warwick, RI 02886-0111  
1-866-964-2038

4 Pleasant Street  
Pawtucket, RI 02860  
1-866-931-7079

Pavilion Plaza  
2168 Diamond Hill Road  
Woonsocket, RI 02895  
1-877-229-3542

130 Bellevue Avenue  
Newport, RI 02840  
1-866-253-5607

2 Shaws Cove, Room 203  
New London, CT 06320  
1-866-643-3401

## Recognizing Success

*“As reported, ORS assisted 602 individuals to obtain employment in jobs that were consistent with their goals and aspirations. ORS would like to showcase some individuals who exemplify the benefits of employment.”*

**Client:** Linda Pacheco  
**Occupation:** Housekeeping  
**Employer:** Hospital  
**Counselor:** Paula Berard

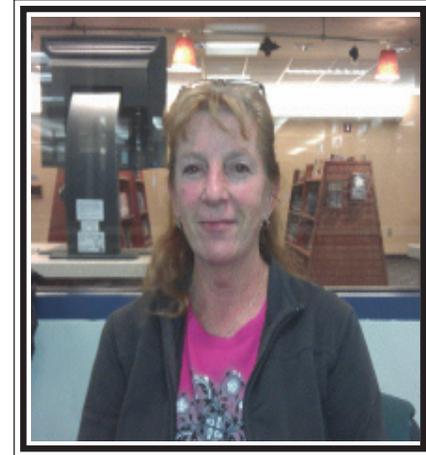
Linda received services from the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) which assisted her in securing full-time employment with full benefits. She has a hearing loss which provided multiple barriers to employment. With counseling and guidance from her Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, she was able to address obstacles and return to work.

Twelve years prior, Linda was hired to work as a sales representative at a small hardware store. Because she demonstrated the skills and abilities and had excelled as a sales representative, she was promoted into the position of assistant manager. Her job responsibilities included communicating job performance expectations to her co-workers, talking with with customers, and to trouble shoot delivery and order

problems. She enjoyed her position tremendously; however, found over time that she had increased difficulty with her hearing. She was diagnosed with bilateral sensorineural hearing loss. She found her job tasks more difficult to perform, but was not able to afford hearing aids. Linda could still communicate face to face effectively, but found she had great difficulty talking on the telephone.

Upon finding out that the facility would be closing in nine months to a year, the manager left to pursue other employment. Linda was asked to be acting store manager, which required increased communication over the telephone, with both customers and employees

When the store closed, Linda collected unemployment for a time, but still knew she wanted to work. She had to consider the demands of the job and her ability, as well as the necessity to communicate in a new job. She was referred to the ORS and met with Paula Cardi Berard, a VR Counselor who works specifically with individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Linda had much anxiety about returning to work, and felt overwhelmed with finding a job that would be a good fit to her skills. Additionally, in looking for employment, her hearing loss had to be addressed, accommodations identified, and the appropriateness of the job considered. Her hearing was evaluated by an audiologist and Linda received hearing aids suited to her



hearing loss and the type of work that she planned to pursue.

To assist in obtaining employment, Linda was referred to Mike Powers, a Job Developer who works with ORS clients in their job search. He and Linda created a resume, refined her interviewing skills, and then sought a job. Since Linda had no desire to work in retail any longer, the team investigated other career options, utilizing transferrable skills. Eventually, Linda started to work for an area hospital in Housekeeping. She was trained specifically to maintain rooms in the busy and demanding operating room where her management skills are utilized every day. Additionally, Linda has full benefits and vacation time. Hearing aids specifically prescribed for her make communication with coworkers easier and less anxiety producing. Linda's determination along with the assistance that she received from ORS enabled her to put employment back into her life.

**Client:** Sheri Lasso  
**Occupation:** Dog Groomer  
**Employer:** Self-employed  
**Counselor :** Jeffrey Milette



Sheri Lasso came to ORS in the summer of 2010 for assistance with getting started learning to be a dog groomer. Sheri reported feeling a substantial amount of anxiety that impacted her confidence. She sought counseling to help straighten out her life and remain focused on her goals. She reported working at a variety of retail stores, however was not really happy with those jobs. Upon exploration and deeper understanding of her vocational potential, she discovered she would thrive more in jobs involving creativity and animals.

After thoroughly researching the field, she selected a training program with Little Rhody's House of Dog Grooming. There she immersed herself in training, learning every aspect of the business, often staying extra hours to absorb any additional knowledge she could.

At the end of her training she felt passionate about opening her own dog grooming business and began to engage in every training available through the Small Business Association.

A list of tools was developed and ordered through Pet Edge, giving her everything she needed to work as a Pet Groomer. She could continue to work on

her long-term goal to open her own dog grooming business, while obtaining real work experience.

Upon receiving the tools she was immediately hired at Petco. She started washing animals and doing some dog grooming. Petco gave her additional access to service training, knowledge of the workplace, but also most importantly, it raised her confidence in herself. She knew she could do much better on her own.

Sheri left Petco and has recently opened her own dog grooming business called Adogable Grooming Salon in Pawtucket, RI. She is prospering and creating many happy customers (by customers, that usually means the dogs) and owners.



**Client:** Jason Gaudreau  
**Occupation:** Programmer Analyst  
**Employer:** Computer Sciences Corporation  
**Counselor:** Paul Hughette



***Jason's story is a story of success!***

When Jason's vision began to deteriorate, he struggled with the knowledge that it was a permanent condition. Instead of becoming discouraged, Jason motivated himself, and decided to earn his degree in Computer Programming from Rhode Island College.

Jason's academic career was stellar, and he graduated with honors! But the success did not stop there. Jason hit the ground running after graduation, and in no time was offered a position with The Computer Sciences Corporation as a full-time Programmer Analyst Associate Professional.

Upon being asked if he had any words of encouragement for people who were coping with a visual impairment or blindness, here's what Jason had to say.

***"I think the best advice I could give anyone with a visual impairment who is thinking of returning to work or school is: Don't be afraid to try. All too often, people will defeat themselves before they even try. It can be easy to think that going back to work is too hard, or that you won't be able to adapt. But it is possible. It won't be easy, but it is possible with hard work and dedication. Also, don't be too prideful to take advantage of services designed to assist people with disabilities that are offered by the State, your school, or your employer. I fully support taking every advantage I can get that will help me succeed."***

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired assisted Jason with training grants, technical assistance, guidance and counseling and assistive technology.

**Client:** Brian Garant  
**Occupation:** Cashier  
**Employer:** Saver's  
**Counselor:** Jessica Palumbo

Brian was referred to ORS in 2009 through the RI Works program. He is married and the father of two small children. Brian indicated that he had difficulty reading and writing. The Office of Rehabilitation Services referred Brian for a learning disability evaluation that diagnosed a phonological disorder and a reading disorder. He also had pain in his right leg due to an injury he sustained in 2004 where he required surgery to insert a plate in his leg. He is unable to stand or walk for extended periods of time.

Brian had been out of work since 2004 when he had to leave his position as a stock clerk due to his injury. He successfully completed the Learn to Earn Employment Program at Goodwill Industries funded by ORS and was motivated to return to a work environment. Along with his Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Jessica Palumbo; Brian decided after receiving vocational guidance, counseling, and career exploration that he would like to work in a retail environment.

Brian was interested in continuing at Goodwill and started job development services. He accepted a warehouse position with Ocean State Job Lot, but left after only the first two hours stating that his



leg was hurting. He needed a job that he could sit down and have the opportunity to get up and walk for a few minutes. He stated that he was not sure what type of job could accommodate him.

Through Goodwill, and funded by ORS, Brian was offered a two-week community work experience as a cashier at Saver's. The worksite supervisor was aware of Brian's physical limitations, and he was offered the use of a chair at the register. His supervisor was very impressed with how quickly Brian was able to learn the job and stated that he was pleasant and a hard worker.

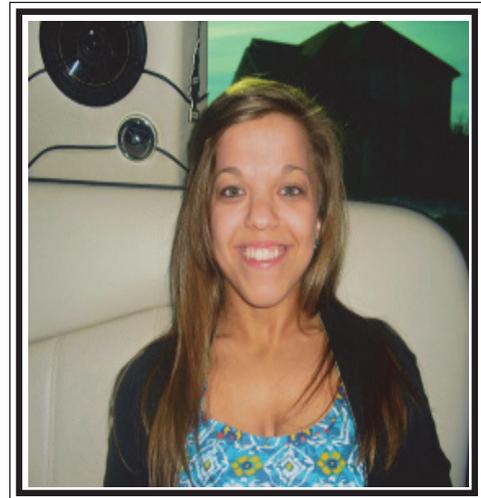
Brian was offered a part-time position that he accepted. He started working two days a week, and after doing so well was able to increase his hours to four days a week.

**Client:** Jessica Juday  
**Occupation:** Credit Union Teller  
**Employer:** Pawtucket Credit Union  
**Counselor:** Kathleen Neun

Jessica started working with ORS in 2006 when she was in high school. She needed assistance in identifying her vocational interests and aptitudes as well as possible assistive technology and ergonomics. Jessica had a 504 plan in high school as she had some physical limitations because of her small stature. With the guidance and counseling that she received from ORS, Jessica decided that she wanted to go to college to become a math teacher. Following labor market research, her career goal was agreed upon.

After graduation Jessica attended Rhode Island College and begin her vocational journey. She was awarded Federal grants, as well as an ORS training grant. Before moving to campus, ORS referred Jessica to a rehabilitation engineer for an assistive technology evaluation. As a result of the evaluation, Jessica was also awarded computer hardware and software that would best support her career goal.

Jessica graduated from Rhode Island College in the spring of 2011 with her Bachelor's degree in Mathematics. While in college she maintained her job at Marshalls, but wanted to pursue a job dealing with math. She thought about going back to school to get her graduate degree but wanted to gain some experience first.



In August 2011 Jessica started a training program for a teller position with Pawtucket Credit Union (PCU). She was offered the job after she applied online. After being accepted for the job, Jessica met a member of the branch administration team and manager who asked her what accommodations she would need. Three stools were provided to her and were placed throughout the East Greenwich branch where she would be working. One was at Jessica's station; one at the drive up window; and one by the main vault and printers.

Jessica currently works between 30-35 hours as a part-time employee. She provides customer service by assisting with questions about accounts, loans, rates; as well as processes deposits, withdrawals, and payments. Jessica also makes recommendations about bank products such as checking accounts, online banking, and PCU credit cards.

**Client:** Joshua Barboza  
**Occupation:** Bagger/Cart Retriever  
**Employer:** Shaw's  
**Counselor:** Meredith Wright

Joshua applied to the Office of Rehabilitation Services in January 2009 after having been referred by his special education case manager at Mount Hope High School. He was found eligible for ORS services and participated in a vocational evaluation, situational assessment, and summer work program. Joshua graduated from high school in June 2010 and completed a travel training program in support of helping him get to and from work.

Joshua had tried to obtain employment in the past on his own, but he was unable to secure a job. His Rehabilitation Counselor, Meredith Wright, and he decided to enlist some assistance in his job search. So ORS authorized, after discussion with Joshua, Work Opportunities Unlimited to help

him with job development and placement assistance.

In November 2011, Joshua obtained employment at Shaw's as a bagger/cart retriever. As he is shy and wanted help with his customer relations skills, ORS authorized job retention services. These job retention services were intended to assist him in becoming more friendly to customers. Joshua also needed training on reading the Shaw's work schedule, protocol for calling in sick, and time management skills.

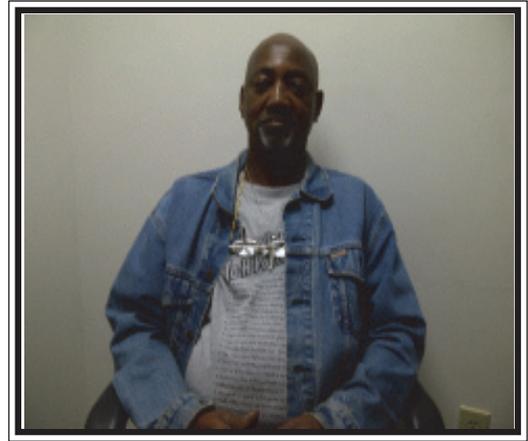
Over a three-month period, Joshua has improved in his interaction with customers and has demonstrated the required behaviors around work protocols. He is very happy with his employment and works 20 hours per week and is paid \$7.50 per hour.

**Client:** Randy Archie  
**Occupation:** Maintenance  
**Employer:** Johnston Senior Center  
**Counselor:** Sheridan Lomax

## *Persistence Pays*

Randy Archie is a 51-year old married man who was referred to ORS by the Department of Human Services, due to having a disability. He has been coping with his medical disabilities for 15 years. Even though he has multiple medical issues, and had been in chronic pain for years, he worked through these issues with his medical provider, as he was adamant about becoming employed. His ultimate goal as he had mentioned many times was to find employment as a Janitor/Maintenance person. His last employment that he held for over six years was in 2006 in South Carolina.

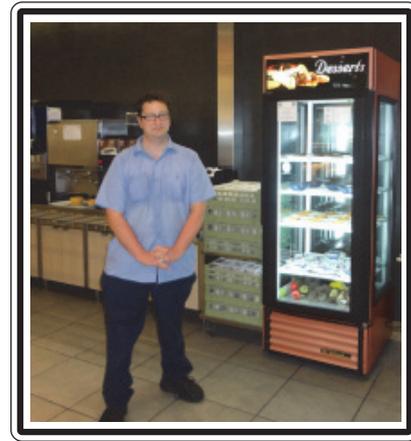
Randy was referred by his ORS Rehabilitation Counselor, Sheridan Lomax, to a four-week work readiness program at Goodwill Industries. The focus of this program was to assist him in making decisions that would help him move toward a vocational goal. Through his participation in the four-week program that focused on Work Readiness Skills, Job Seeking Skills, and Self-Esteem; he demonstrated that he was very motivated and work ready. He was



very friendly, outgoing, and the voice of reason in the classroom. He had a great sense of humor and was a pleasure to have in class. At the completion of the Goodwill Program, Randy was funded by ORS to participate in a Situational Assessment in the Community (SAC) - a part of the assessment process at Goodwill Industries. This SAC enabled Randy to try out a job in his interest area for 10 paid days as part of his job exploration. This process gave him a real life work experience after not working for six years.

Randy was placed at the Johnston Senior Center, in Johnston, Rhode Island in a job in the Maintenance Department. The placement was an instant success. The staff gave him glowing progress reports. He was eventually given more responsibilities and was hired in February 2012. Randy was determined to succeed and fully utilized the supports and resources to obtain a job in spite of his limitations and barriers. His will to succeed triumphed.

**Client:** Benjamin Wilson  
**Occupation:** Kitchen Attendant  
**Employer:** Gulf Coast Enterprises  
**Counselor:** Teresa O'Brien



Benjamin was initially referred to ORS when he was an 18 year old, high school student at Chariho High School. Upon initial intake, Benjamin wanted to pursue a degree in Science. Benjamin stated he had significant strengths in reading and math. However, he needed to improve his articulation and oral communication skills. Through a medical evaluation, it was determined that he had difficulty with expressive language due to motor and organizational issues. Upon graduation from high school, Benjamin lost contact with ORS. However, he reinvented himself with services in 2011, and this time he stayed involved until he got a job.

Benjamin graduated from Chariho High School and reapplied for services. In the interim, he had completed some credits at the University of Rhode Island (URI) in the Chemistry field. However, he had since decided he did not want to pursue Chemistry. Benjamin had discovered that his interest in accounting and finance or some other area might be a better fit. ORS and Benjamin decided to complete a vocational evaluation to help him make an informed choice for an employment goal.

Previously, Benjamin had worked at Sears as a stock room manager but had to leave the job when he became sick and was unable to continue working. He and his family reluctantly considered applying for Social Security Disability, but did not think he was eligible for these benefits.

Just as Benjamin and his family were ready to give up on employment, his ORS counselor alerted him to a job opportunity working for Gulf Coast Enterprises (GCE). He is now working full time, earning \$12.57/hour with benefits as a kitchen attendant on the Navy base.

Benjamin's job has enabled him to purchase a car and pay rent. In addition, he is able to articulate his thoughts and feeling in a very clear manner.

What a success!

**Client:** Allyson Dupont  
**Occupation:** Graphic Design Work  
**Employer:** Self-Employed  
**Counselor:** Patricia Ianieri

Allyson has Spinal Muscular Atrophy, a medical condition that has limited her mobility and presented many challenges in her daily life. Because of this, she was referred to the Office of Rehabilitation Services while still in high school and has been actively involving herself with this organization since then.

With perseverance and ORS assistance, she graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2009 with a Bachelor's degree in Graphic Design. Allyson started doing freelance design work, in both print and web, shortly afterward. In addition to those services, she created a line of handmade paper products and custom invitations. After spending some time building up her freelance work, Allyson decided that she was ready to grow. Earlier this year she contacted her Vocational Counselor, Patricia Ianieri, because she wanted to "take it to the next level". She wanted to be more competitive in her graphic design business and to increase her capacity to produce her handmade paper goods.

Allyson had developed a business plan with the assistance of a DD Council grantee and needed to obtain some hardware and software upgrades to grow the business. Her plan was reviewed by the Self-Employment Committee at ORS. The plan was solid and the committee was able to easily identify its potential for success.

The key to Allyson's success, besides her own drive to make it happen, was the importance of purchasing the right equipment, computers, technical consultation, and assistance. ORS made it possible for her to obtain the highest quality items that the graphics industry requires in order to compete with others in her market.

In 2011, Allyson has been able to take her company further and has landed more web and print design work, reports an increase in product orders, and is selling in more retail locations. Her website [www.allysondupont.com](http://www.allysondupont.com) showcases her work and design talents.

# Standards and Performance Indicators as of 9/30/12

## Standard 1 Employment Outcomes

Indicator 1.1 - Number of Employment Outcomes - Federal Standard Equal to or greater than prior year

|         |             |
|---------|-------------|
| FY 2007 | 9 greater   |
| FY 2008 | 5 greater   |
| FY 2009 | 6 greater   |
| FY 2010 | 188 less    |
| FY 2011 | 159 greater |
| FY 2012 | 116 less    |

Indicator 1.2 - The percentage of individuals who exited the VR Program after receiving services who achieved an employment outcome. (Federal Standard - 55.8%)

|         |        |
|---------|--------|
| FY 2007 | 59.89% |
| FY 2008 | 62.81% |
| FY 2009 | 62.79% |
| FY 2010 | 40.72% |
| FY 2011 | 60.18% |
| FY 2012 | 28.80% |

Indicator 1.3 - The percentage of individuals who achieved an employment outcome and are earning at least the minimum wage. (Federal Standard - 72.6%)

|         |        |
|---------|--------|
| FY 2007 | 92.62% |
| FY 2008 | 95.73% |
| FY 2009 | 96.30% |
| FY 2010 | 97.89% |
| FY 2011 | 97.52% |
| FY 2012 | 99.20% |

Indicator 1.4 - Competitively Employed (minimum wage or higher) who have a Significant Disability  
Federal Standard 62.40%

|         |         |
|---------|---------|
| FY 2000 | 100.00% |
| FY 2008 | 100.00% |
| FY2009  | 100.00% |
| FY 2010 | 100.00% |
| FY 2011 | 98.31%  |
| FY 2012 | 98.80%  |

Indicator 1.5 - Earnings Ratio of Minimum Wage or higher for ORS vs. State Average

|                  |              |
|------------------|--------------|
| Federal Standard | Ratio of .52 |
| FY 2007          | .530         |
| FY 2008          | .520         |
| FY2009           | .510         |
| FY 2010          | .540         |
| FY 2011          | .500         |
| FY 2012          | .500         |

Indicator 1.6 - Self-Support (report own income at closure vs. own income at application)

Federal Standard 53% mathematical difference

|         |        |
|---------|--------|
| FY 2007 | 64.78% |
| FY 2008 | 55.43% |
| FY 2009 | 54.40% |
| FY 2010 | 62.95% |
| FY 2011 | 67.28% |
| FY 2012 | 70.10% |

## Standard 2 - Minority Ratio Equal Access to Services

Federal Standard Ratio of .80 for n=100+

|         |      |
|---------|------|
| FY 2007 | .854 |
| FY 2008 | .884 |
| FY 2009 | .847 |

|         |      |
|---------|------|
| FY 2010 | .890 |
| FY 2011 | .910 |
| FY 2012 | .730 |

## Building a Better Partnership in the Community

**State Rehabilitation Council** is a citizen advisory body appointed by the Governor. The Council is consumer-controlled in that a majority of its members are individuals with disabilities and not employed by the State VR Agency. Members represent agencies, organizations and other councils of and for individuals with disabilities in Rhode Island. The SRC in conjunction with the VR agency jointly conduct the comprehensive statewide needs assessment of individuals with disabilities in Rhode Island, develop and agree to the state's annual goals and priorities in carrying out the VR program, annually evaluate the state's performance relative to its goals, and conducts customer satisfaction surveys. Together the SRC and the state VR agency partner to assure that individuals with disabilities receive appropriate, timely and effective VR services.

**Governor's Advisory Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired** is an advisory council appointed by the Governor that advises the SBVI regarding the programs provided by that agency; works collaboratively with the State Rehabilitation Council and the Statewide Independent Living Council; and provides oversight responsibility to the Independent Living Program for the Elderly Blind.

**RI Council on Assistive Technology (RICAT)** is the advisory body to the RI Assistive Technology program - Assistive Technology Access Partnership which is funded through the AT Act. RICAT is actively involved in legislative and other initiatives that will increase access to assistive technology for Rhode Islanders.

**RI Statewide Independent Living Council (RISILC)** jointly develops and submits, in conjunction with the ORS, the State Plan for Independent Living Services and Centers for Independent Living. They also monitor, review and evaluate the implementation of the State Plan.

**State Committee of Blind Vendors** is composed of representatives elected from among all licensed blind vendors within the state. The Committee participates actively in carrying out all of the program management responsibilities.

## 2012 Employer Honor Roll

The 2012 Rhode Island Employer Honor Roll celebrated the following Rhode Island employers for their excellence in hiring and supporting employees with disabilities.

American Surplus Inc., East Providence

Bay Capital, Providence

Cox Communications, West Warwick

Dave's Marketplace, East Greenwich

Lima's Barbershop, West Warwick

M-F Athletic, Cranston

RI Nurses Institute Middle College - Charter School, Providence

The Salvation Army, Providence

Whitmarsh House, Providence



Back Row: Eric Falk - MF Athletic; Major Gretchen Schuse - Salvation Army; Robert Pilkington - RI Nurses Institute Middle College Charter School; Brother John McCale - Whitmarsh House  
Front Row: Jeremy Lima - Lima's Barbershop; Gregory Mulligan - Bay Capital; Renee Hughes - Dave's Marketplace East Greenwich; Linton Libby; Patricia Baccus - Cox Communication

In addition, Outstanding Achievement Awards were presented to:

### **Integration Award - Recipient: Whitmarsh House**

Successful job performance demands that employees are active, integrated members of the workplace. The Outstanding Achievement Award for Integration recognizes an employer's efforts to involve the employee in all aspects of the daily work environment, including training, communication and social opportunities.

### **Advancement Award - Recipient: Lima's Barbershop**

All successfully employed individuals have career aspirations. The Outstanding Achievement Award for Advancement recognizes an employer who offers the same opportunities for advancement to employees with disabilities as those who are not disabled.

### **Job Accommodation Award - Recipient: M-F Athletic**

Adjusting to a job's routines requires flexibility and a welcoming workplace. The Outstanding Achievement Award for Accommodation recognizes an employer whose exceptional job accommodation demonstrates creative and flexible ways to help the employee successfully carry out the responsibilities of the position.

### **Longevity Award - Recipient: Bay Capital**

When support, understanding, and a commitment to success are demonstrated by employers, individuals can connect to the workplace and flourish. This year's Outstanding Achievement Award for Longevity recognizes an employer who strengthened the employee's roots in the work community.

### **Champion Award - Recipient: Patricia Baccus, Cox Communication**

A leader who creates, promotes, and inspires employment for people with disabilities.

This new award recognizes an employer with a long history of employing people with disabilities AND promoting its benefits to others, including at least one of the following: advocacy, education, referral, promoting legislation, systems change, etc.



Brother John McHale - Whitmarsh House; Jeremy Lima - Lima's Barbershop; Patricia Baccus - Cox Communication; Eric Falk - M-F Athletic; Master of Ceremonies - Frank Coletta; SRC Vice-Chair - Jeff Machado; and Associate Director - Stephen Brunero

**Congratulations to all of the 2012 Employer Honor Roll award recipients.**



DHS does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, age, religion or sex in acceptance for or provision of services, employment or treatment in its educational and other programs and activities.

For further information about this policy, contact:  
the Community Relations Liaison Office, (401) 462-2130  
or TDD (hearing impaired) (401) 462-6239.



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[www.ors.ri.gov](http://www.ors.ri.gov)

*“Helping individuals with disabilities to  
choose, find and keep employment”*

Available in alternate formats by  
calling Sharon DiPinto at 401.421.7005 ext. 318.