

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES
REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20202-2800**

**INFORMATION MEMORANDUM
RSA-IM-05-04
DATE: November 22, 2004**

**ADDRESSEES: STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES (GENERAL)
STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES (BLIND)
STATE REHABILITATION COUNCILS
CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
REGIONAL REHABILITATION CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS
AMERICAN INDIAN VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAMS
CONSUMER ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS
RSA SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM**

SUBJECT: State Rehabilitation Council Training Programs

CONTENT: This provides preliminary information about a series of two-day training programs focusing on the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). In planning for these training efforts the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) worked closely with representatives of selected SRCs, State vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies and Regional Rehabilitation Continuing Education Programs (RRCEPs).

The 1992 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act (Act) introduced provisions to ensure that individuals with disabilities have a strong and substantive role in shaping the VR program to support their employment goals and aspirations. A key provision in this regard was the establishment of the State Rehabilitation Advisory Council through which individuals with disabilities and others interested in the VR program were provided a formal mechanism to influence, at the systemic and policy level, the direction of the VR program within their States. The 1998 Amendments to the Act strengthened the Council's functions by re-enforcing its partnership with the VR agency to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive appropriate, timely, and effective VR services. These amendments also changed the name of the Council to State Rehabilitation Council to emphasize the fact that the role of the SRC is more than advisory in nature.

The expanded role of the SRCs now encompasses collaborative activities with the State VR agencies such as:

- ❑ Conducting the comprehensive, statewide assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities;
- ❑ Developing, agreeing to and reviewing annually the State's goals and priorities for the VR program, including any revisions to the goals and priorities; and
- ❑ Evaluating the effectiveness of the VR program.

The training sessions are slated for the January-June 2005 timeframe. The training will afford participants the opportunity to learn of the effective practices and challenges faced by other SRCs in carrying out their statutory responsibilities. The target populations for the training are SRC executive committee members or other SRC representatives who can take back the information and experiences of the training to the other members of the SRCs and be available to follow through for a period of time in working with them. With respect to State VR agency representatives, the State director or designee and State agency staff assigned liaison responsibility for the SRC would be the most appropriate participants.

The overarching objective of the SRC training is to empower the SRC participants to advocate for improvements in the VR program in order to enhance opportunities for high quality employment for individuals with disabilities through:

- ❑ Increased knowledge of the VR program, particularly its legislative and regulatory bases;
- ❑ Enhanced familiarity with RSA policy priorities and principles for the VR program;
- ❑ Improved understanding of the legal responsibilities of the SRCs;
- ❑ Better understanding of system advocacy concepts and approaches;
- ❑ Focused sharing of successful operational experiences; and
- ❑ Greater awareness of Regional technical assistance and training resources.

Three RRCEPs, in collaboration with curriculum workgroups comprised of representatives of SRCs, State VR agencies, and RSA, have developed curriculum materials in accessible and flexible formats that can be used for the planned training programs in 2005 and also for follow-up SRC training needs, such as orientation of new members.

The RRCEP at the University of Missouri - Columbia has developed curriculum materials to meet the following objectives:

- Identification of the underpinnings of the VR program in terms of its history and philosophy;
- Examination of SRC statutory roles and responsibilities; and
- Discussion of the statutory principles and RSA policies related to the VR program.

The RRCEP at Western Washington University has designed materials to support interactive training experiences to address SRC related operational challenges in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities. To this end, the objectives of this portion of the training will focus on:

- Successful strategies in meeting mandated SRC functions; and
- Action planning to address operational and skill development for SRC members.

The RRCEP at Georgia State University has designed materials to support the building of effective partnerships between SRCs and State VR agencies in light of the following objectives:

- Affirmation of the SRC's role to ensure that the VR program is consumer oriented and customer driven;
- Reinforcement of the SRC/VR partnership to support the achievement of mutually agreed upon outcomes; and
- Expansion of the capacity of SRC members to individually and collectively execute their roles as partners with the State VR agencies to improve the VR program to better meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.

To ensure that each training session is implemented in a smooth fashion and addresses issues and concerns of the SRCs, each RSA Regional Office will establish a Regional workgroup to plan and oversee the implementation of the training. To this end, each RSA Regional Office is responsible for identifying the members of the Regional workgroup, convening the workgroup, and overseeing the development of an implementation plan to support the two-day training. Members of the Regional workgroup are to be representatives of the RSA Regional Office, SRCs, State VR agencies, and the RRCEP(s) with decisions regarding the implementation plan to reflect a partnership among these parties. Each RSA Regional Office has designated a staff member to coordinate activities to support the planning for and implementation of the training.

Attached is a listing of these RSA Regional Office staff with their contact information.

Key elements of the implementation plan can focus on considerations such as:

- Providing an early alert to the SRCs and State VR agencies about the planned training;
- Determining if the training will be Regional or Bi-regional in scope;
- Setting a date and selecting a site for the training;
- Identifying potential funding support for SRC participants;
- Ensuring the training curricula are customized to meet the needs and challenges of the SRCs;
- Soliciting input from SRCs on successful practices for modeling at the training;
- Securing presenters/trainers/facilitators, as appropriate; and,
- Ensuring that training support materials, e.g., audio/visual equipment, are available.

If you would like additional information regarding this training initiative, please feel free to contact the Regional Office staff person for your Region.

Joanne Wilson
Commissioner

Attachment

RSA REGIONAL OFFICE CONTACT PERSONS FOR SRC TRAINING PLAN

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<p align="center">Region V</p> <p>Janette Shell Rehabilitation Services Administration 111 North Canal Street, Suite 1048 Chicago, Illinois 60606-7204 (P) 312.886.8631 (F) 312.353.8623 (E) janette.shell@ed.gov</p>	<p align="center">Region VI</p> <p>Martha Garber Rehabilitation Services Administration Harwood Center 1999 Bryan Street, Room 2740 Dallas, Texas 75201-6817 (P) 214.880.4926 (F) 214.880.4931 (E) martha.garber@ed.gov</p>
<p align="center">Region VII</p> <p>Rod King Rehabilitation Services Administration 8930 Ward Parkway, Suite 2212 Kansas City, Missouri 64114 (P) 816. 268.0467 (F) 816. 268.0448 (E) rodney.king@ed.gov</p>	<p align="center">Region VIII</p> <p>Martha Garber Rehabilitation Services Administration Harwood Center 1999 Bryan Street, Room 2740 Dallas, Texas 75201-6817 (P) 214.880.4926 (F) 214.880.4931 (E) martha.garber@ed.gov</p>

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