

COMMISSION'S BRIEFING  
PACKAGE

DIVISION OF BLIND SERVICES  
MANAGEMENT REVIEW

PREPARED BY THE DOE  
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
MAY 7, 2012

Commission's Briefing Package  
Division of Blind Services  
Management Review

Briefing Package  
CONTENTS

- 1) DBS Management Review - High Level Issues
  
- 2) Climate Survey
  - a. Survey instrument used
  - b. Selected survey results (graphs)
  - c. Sample responses to climate survey
  - d. DVR climate survey - final report (excerpt)
  
- 3) Staff interviews (selected sample)
  
- 4) Contracting
  - a. Review results
  - b. DFS preliminary findings from recent contract audit
  - c. OIG 2008 audit report entitled "*Contracted and Purchased Client Services*"
  - d. Additional issues for OIG audit/ investigation
  
- 5) Personnel actions review

## DBS Management Review - High Level Issues

### What we did:

Developed and administered an on-line anonymous employee climate survey. The climate survey contained 40+ opinion statements (questions) regarding job satisfaction, communications, supervision, and management practices, including contracting practices. The survey resulted in an 83% (224/270) response rate, with roughly one-third of respondents providing supplemental written comments.

Approximately 45 current and former employees were interviewed either in person or telephonically (about half were HQ staff and half were field office staff). We also interviewed Florida Department of Financial Services (DFS) auditors who recently performed an audit of DBS contracts. We reviewed procedures and practices for DBS client services contracts. Finally, we reviewed DBS human resources records supporting personnel actions.

**Working Environment** – Roughly speaking, 40% of DBS staff interviewed support Division management, 40% do not (often passionately), and 20% are on the sidelines. Compared to results of a recent Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation climate survey, DBS climate survey results were much more negative. DBS climate survey comments expounded on issues such as:

- Too much micro-management from senior management
- Punitive, not positive atmosphere
- Many DBS staff fear making a decision/statement that is not favorably received – retaliation likely
- More training needed
- Fear trickles down to all employee levels
- Dissatisfaction over pay – DVR gave raises to counselors because the director was willing to fight for raises.
- DBS has become more accountable with more written policies/procedures.

### Communications

- Better communication needed from the top down.
- Executive management should communicate more with field supervisors and employees (not just managers).
- Continually changing policies and procedures confuses employees.

### Staff Turnover

- Employee turnover has been perceived as rampant.
- Jobs not filled but simply assumed by those employees remaining.
- Staff fear for their jobs daily and try to keep off the radar.

- Some view changes as necessary and positive.

#### Hiring Process

- Education and experience should be dominant factors in the hiring process.
- Not all vacancies are made public/advertised on People First.
- Employees hired/promoted to manage others need the correct skills to do the job.
- Concerns about staff pay equity.

**Client Services Contracts** – The intent of chapter 413, F.S. may be to provide the maximum amount of funding to the community rehabilitation providers (CRPs), however, the Division could be going too far in practice. CRP funding has increased and services provided by DBS employees have decreased.

DFS found that contract performance was not aligned with payments, financial remedies are assessed after the full contract payment (when it may be more difficult to collect), and monitoring is not adequate – vendor reports are just accepted and not verified. Overall, the DFS auditors commented that the division is too “cozy” with contractors.

- Lack of competition with the same 15-20 providers used each year.
- Fixed rate contracts with monthly payments. Liberal terms for payment. Contract terms not always enforced.
- Lack of effective negotiation of contracts. Lack of monitoring. Lack of close out reports.
- CRPs are favored when other alternatives may provide better client service; in effect, CPRs have a monopoly.

**Conclusion** – We identified a number of indicators that change needs to take place in DBS. Contract administration should be strengthened, communications improved, personnel management should be improved and made more transparent. There is a need to reach out more to help make staff feel that they are included. We have identified a number of issues from interviews with DBS current and former staff that are either under current investigation or are subject to future investigation.

Greg White  
May 4, 2012

## Division of Blind Services – Employee Climate Survey

Thank you for participating in the Division of Blind Services Employee Climate Survey conducted by the Department of Education's Office of Inspector General. The purpose of the survey is to provide feedback to Department of Education management regarding your workplace environment.

Responses are anonymous and computer addresses will not be stored by the survey administrator.

The survey is approximately 50 statements about your work environment and should take about 15 minutes to complete. The survey will be available until **March 8, 2012**.

Rate each statement using Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree or No Opinion.

If you have any questions about this survey or need assistance, please contact us by phone at (850) 245-0403 or by email at [oig@fldoe.org](mailto:oig@fldoe.org).

### Definitions:

- **DBS** stands for the Division of Blind Services.
- **Management** refers to the division director, deputy directors, bureau chiefs and district directors.
- **Office** refers to the office or district in which you work.
- **Supervisor** refers to the person who approves your timesheet.

\*All statements require a response. There is a "No Opinion" option for each.

### Job Satisfaction:

1. \*I am satisfied with my involvement in decisions that affect my work.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

2. \*Work is assigned fairly in my office.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

3. \*My workload allows me to do my job effectively.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

4. \*I receive a fair evaluation of my job performance.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

5. \*I have the information and training I need to effectively do my job.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

6. \*Overall, I have positive working relationships with employees in my office.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

7. \*I feel physically safe and secure at work.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

8. \*Overall, I am satisfied with DBS as a place to work.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

9. \*I am proud to say that I work for DBS.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

10. Please provide suggestions in the input box below that you think would improve your office or district.

**(Optional)**

**Communications:**

11. \*There is a way for me to discuss my concerns with my management.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

12. \*I am kept informed about matters that affect my job.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

13.\*My office staff communicates with each other as needed.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

14.\*Communication from management is clear.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

15.\*Employees are free to speak up and say what they think.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

16.\* I rarely receive conflicting instructions from different levels of management on how to do my job.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

17.\* My office has effective communications.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion



18. Please provide suggestions in the input box below you think would improve communications. **(Optional)**

**Supervision:**

19. \*My supervisor is responsive to my needs and concerns.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

20.\*My supervisor promotes a work environment that fosters productivity.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

21.\*My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

22.\*My supervisor frequently acts as a positive role model for employees to follow.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

23. \*My supervisor is supportive of staff and provides assistance as needed.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

24. \*My supervisor periodically provides constructive feedback on my job performance.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

25. \*If I have a conflict with my supervisor, I can take it to the next level without fear of retaliation.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

26. \*My supervisor is effective in his/her job.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

27. Please provide suggestions in the input box below that you think would improve supervision. **(Optional)**

**Management Practices:**

28. \*My management provides effective leadership.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

29. \*Ethical behavior is promoted by management.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

30. \*I understand the goals and objectives of my office.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

31. \*The policies and procedures provided to me are sufficient to help me do the best job I can.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

32. \*Contracting for services with outside entities is conducted in a cost effective manner.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

33.\*Contracts are adequately monitored to ensure deliverables are provided.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

34.\*Contractors provide high quality services to clients.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

35.\*My office's positions are generally filled in a timely manner.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

36.\*Positions are filled with qualified people.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

37.\*The hiring process for vacancies is conducted fairly.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

38.\*DBS employees who perform well are provided opportunities for advancement.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

39.\*I am not aware of discrimination (race, gender, or age) in my office.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

40.\*I am not subjected to inappropriate conversations that may cause me to feel uncomfortable.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

41.\*Management practices in my office promote organizational success.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- No Opinion

42. Please provide suggestions in the input box below that you think would improve management practices.

**(Optional)**

**General Information:**

43. If there are any other comments that you would like to share or issues that you would like to raise, please do so here: **(Optional)**

44. I have been employed at DBS for: **(Optional)**

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 2-5 years
- 5-10 years
- More than 10 years

45. I am a: **(Optional)**

- Staff Member
- Supervisor
- Manager
- Other

46. I am located in: **(Optional)**

- Tallahassee Headquarters
- District
- Other

**Your feedback is important. Thank you for participating!**

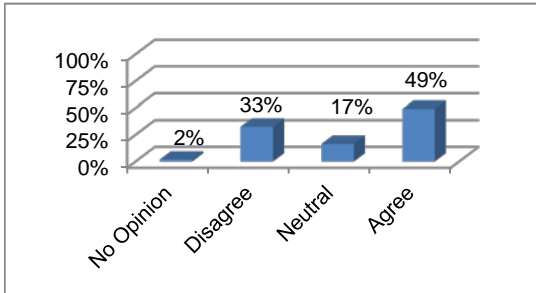
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# DBS Climate Survey - selected graph results

224 responses

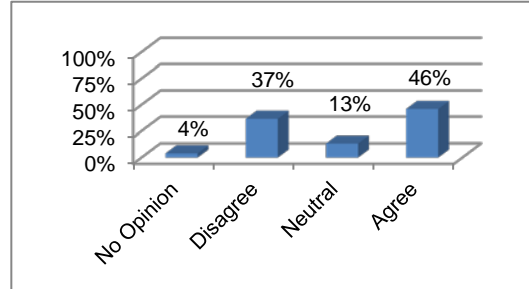
## Job Satisfaction

Statement 1: I am satisfied with my involvement in decisions that affect my work.



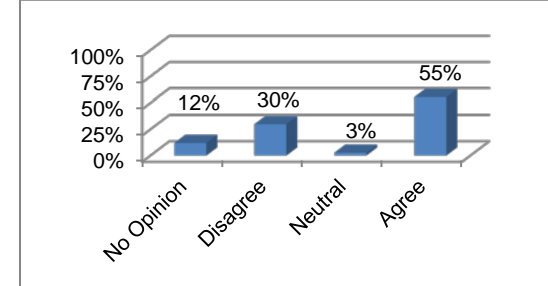
## Job Satisfaction

Statement 4: I receive a fair evaluation of my job performance.



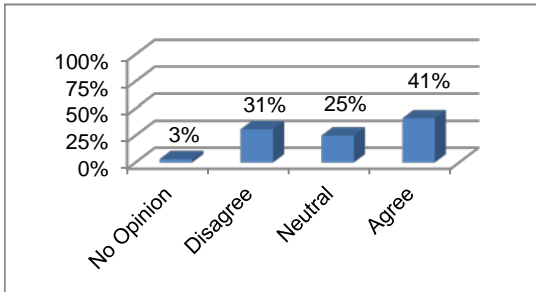
## Job Satisfaction

Statement 8: Overall, I am satisfied with DBS as a place to work.



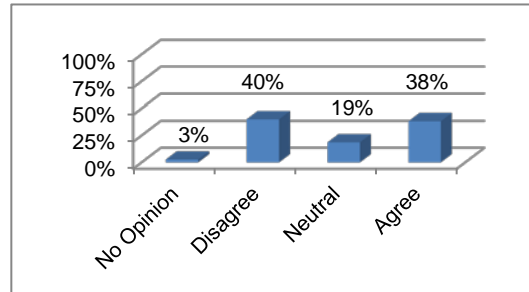
## Communications

Statement 14: Communication from management is clear.



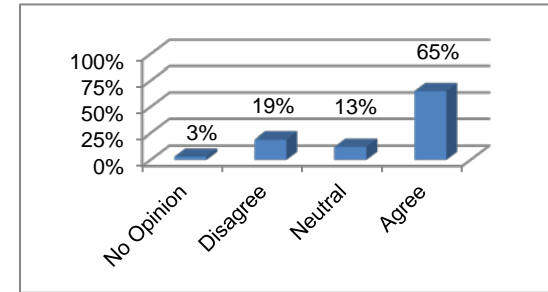
## Communications

Statement 15: Employees are free to speak up and say what they think.



## Supervision

Statement 19: My supervisor is responsive to my needs and concerns.



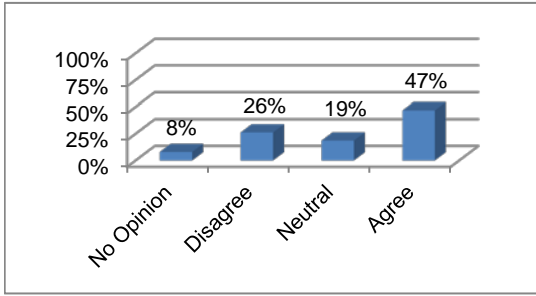
"Agree" and "Strongly Agree" responses were consolidated to "Agree" for reporting purposes. The same for "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree".

# DBS Climate Survey - selected graph results

224 responses

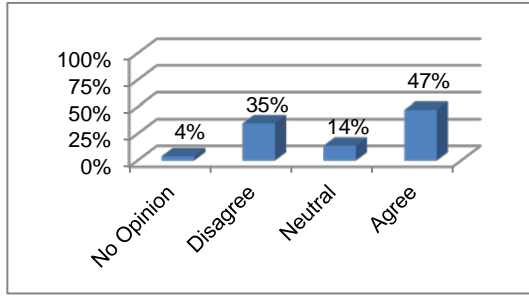
## Supervision

Statement 25: If I have a conflict with my supervisor, I can take it to the next level without fear of retaliation.



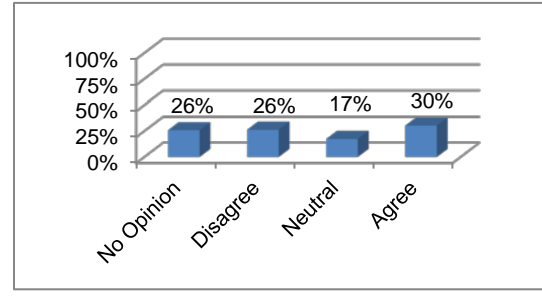
## Management Practices

Statement 28: My management provides effective leadership.



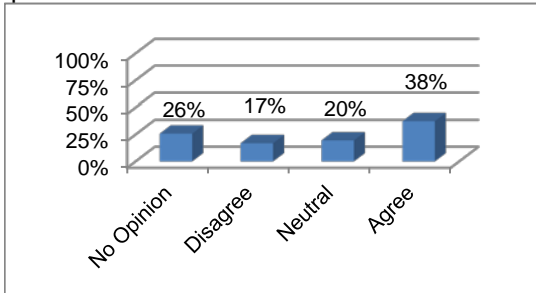
## Management Practices

Statement 32: Contracting for services with outside entities is conducted in a cost effective manner.



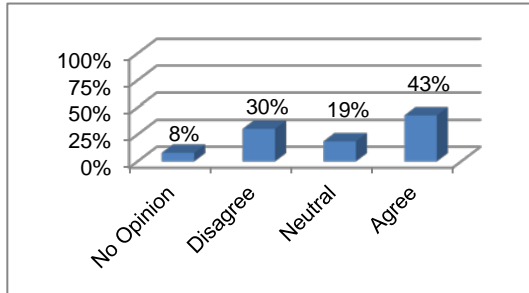
## Management Practices

Statement 33: Contracts are adequately monitored to ensure deliverables are provided.



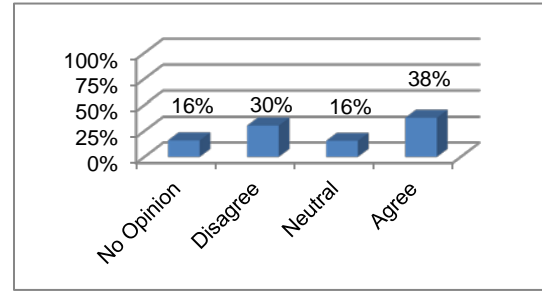
## Management Practices

Statement 36: Positions are filled with qualified people.



## Management Practices

Statement 37: The hiring process for vacancies is conducted fairly.



"Agree" and "Strongly Agree" responses were consolidated to "Agree" for reporting purposes. The same for "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree".



## Responses to DBS Employee Climate Survey

Question 43. If there are any other comments that you would like to share or issues that you would like to raise, please do so here:

Note: First 50 responses are included here (from total responses of 77)

1. State office verbalizes open door policy for communication; but sometimes I wonder about it in practice.
2. We have not had a raise in over 6 years, but Division of Voc. Rehab has and they are in the same DOE
3. Work hours are to be kept for that and not to have any additional work after hours or to take home without you being able to disagree with the request from your superior.
4. I feel when you do a good job and go over and above, that should count on your evaluations.
5. At the facility where I work, a person was promoted who did not have as much experience as others with similar skills. This person had not had real leadership experience as well. She was known through her family for years to the person who wished to hire her. The person doing the hiring also had told someone who should have been a candidate, that he wanted someone who would be around longer. This to me is age discrimination.
6. It seems like a few years back I heard that there will be less paperwork involved and more electronic options. The electronic options are there, but more paperwork is being generated and files are becoming larger and unmanageable.
7. I have spent many years with this agency and until the last couple of years was extremely proud of the work we did, the work I did, and always felt very gratified in my job. I felt I was a part of the agency and even when I disagreed with management's decisions, I could voice that, without fear. In the last few years I have feared that I would be fired every day I come to work. I meet and exceed every deadline given, my work quality is extremely good, I follow directions, and have always had a strong work ethic.

To have my job threatened because one person at a CRP thinks I'm too stern, or due to a personality clash is unfair, but has happened. I have had my supervisor call me into a meeting with other staff to recite a list of things those in the room have heard about me, an inquisition of sorts. It was the most humiliating experience of my life. During this 'meeting' I asked for facts, none could be provided. In the end it was determined that the accusations were unfounded because staff admitted they were just 'assuming' things with no real fact. The

supervisor should have done her homework before hand, but instead I was put on the chopping block. At the end of the meeting the supervisor stated that all was settled, told those that had brought this information to her that in the future they need to have facts not hearsay or rumor and wanted to 'hug' everyone.

Over the years, I have always excelled in my job, moved ahead, had outstanding evaluations, however in the last few years my professionalism has been questioned, my work, and more and I find it extremely offensive. I have done everything asked of me and yet it never seems to be enough for management. It is my feeling that once management decides a person is a 'problem' nothing will change that view. It also seems that a person is only considered a 'problem' when they question a process, when they question anything indicating it is not in line with agency policy, or regulations. The environment for many (probably more supervisor and management positions) is thick with fear.

We have seen more turn over in the last 2 years then we have seen in 10, 20 or more. There have been several re-orgs that move staff into positions they may not want but have no choice in as it's that or termination. It's been a very unhealthy working environment and a confusing one, as it does seem we are being dismantled and the CRP's are taking over our jobs, controlling our money and client's are no longer given a choice when it comes to services. They are told we contract with CRP's and if they want services they get them through the CRP or nothing. We don't put bids out for services, so no other provider is allowed to work with our client's, only our current CRP's. Money often seems to be given to a few certain CRP's while it continues to be cut from our client services budgets reducing what we are able to do for our clients.

It's just become a very frustrating, stressful, fearful place to work, which is very sad. Until these last few years, I loved my job and wouldn't hesitate to tell people how much I loved it, how I never wanted to leave it and really encourage folks to come to DBS. Unfortunately I can't say that any longer. I feel deflated, unnecessary, and unappreciated. I would love to feel excited and really good about DBS again!!

8. It feels like we are always working in fear of losing our jobs and not because we did something wrong.
9. In our workplace there is discrimination, favoritism, and harassment going on but no one wants to speak up because we all need our jobs. I have seen employees leave crying because they were treated so badly they felt forced to resign or forced to go to EAP...I wish some changes could be made to make this a positive workplace. I think sometimes power takes the place of what our mission really is here...which is the customer.
10. We are no longer a 'team'. Segregation (not in race, but in professional status) is the number one rule. If you are not 'a Senior Professional Team Member' you are

no-one that matters. Knowledge no longer matters, it's who you know and who's friend it is for promotional opportunities or hiring. I have worked at this agency over 15 years and have received many Letters of Accommodation and Awards for my work and abilities; but because I helped someone else who was not in my 'unit' but was a Blind Services employee here at headquarters, I was written up and told not to help anyone again unless the 'Senior Management Team' approved it.

Now I feel that if I make one of 'their kind' of mistakes I will be fired. I come to work each day not knowing if I'm next in line to be let go or who will it be today. When they forced a co-worker to resign, I was called into that office and was told to my face that I would never survive. A few months passed and I was called into the office again and was asked when I was going to retire? I am 58 years old and a widow and they want me to retire. They told me I could sell my crafts that I make in order to survive. I am unable to do so. I now know that it won't be long before they build a case on me in order to force me to resign as well. I have received all fours and fives on all my evaluations for years except for this last one where I received a 3.5; that was the lowest score I have ever received on any of my evaluations. We have lost many good employees because they have been forced to resign; then you actually hear them say well, I've fired 18 people this year and I don't think I'm finished yet. People ask why you're paranoid! I need my job no matter.

11. In hiring new Staff at any level, management or clerical, there is a constant pattern first, most of the new hires- are not qualified, get higher salaries, and staff that is internally qualified get demotions, or forced to downgrade their job descriptions, changing their job titles, in part due to their own buddy system.
12. I am willing to be contacted to verbally discuss my responses. [REDACTED].  
Big differences in local office team and management.
13. I think as part of the evaluations for supervisors and management, there should be a section that is rated by those they immediately supervise and/or manage. This would allow for a capturing of employee's opinions on the effectiveness of their leadership.
14. At one time I could see myself working for DBS 30 years and retiring, not anymore that has changed the last couple of years. I like my job, I love what I do; but the management has made my job very challenging.
15. The first and foremost responsibility of authorities is the well being welfare over those to whom you have authority. The State of Florida Department of Education has failed in that responsibility. If the State's idea is to drive away good employees, ruin morale, and downgrade the value of workers, then it has accomplished much. As part of the DOE, DBS is an inappropriate fit, and it's employees cannot be evaluated by a broken gauge of expectations and

standards of teachers.

The recent downgrading of employee evaluation levels by forcing them into a curve of mediocrity only adds an additional sword to the arsenal of non-motivational weaponry aimed at workers. To be told that the downgrade was a good and respectable grade is insulting. Nobody congratulates someone on their mediocre accomplishment of a solid C! To then be told we should avoid any negativity in the workplace, and constantly reinforce that we are sacrificing for the good of the many, and that money isn't everything, makes one wonder where we are really working.

The State DOE hires at below market salaries sending a poor message that public servants are less valuable. To offer hollow hopes of future opportunities, provide no raises for six years, no bonuses; not even a cost of living increase, raise the cost of employee benefit premiums, cut the pension in half, and force employees to contribute without even an opt out is shameful and dishonorable. Employees who stay have no morale and just go through the motions as the DOE doesn't reward good work.

Morale is non-existent. Long term employees are biding their time just waiting to retire. Newer employees are biding their time till a better job comes along. Even a dog is given a treat occasionally just for being good. The State DOE's behavior toward its employees only succeeds in nailing the coffin of disrespect and distrust that many feel for their employer. Respect given is respect earned. If the State DOE really values its employees --- Prove it! DOEDBS --- you have a failing grade. What a sad way to be.

16. My District Administrator is ethical, effective, empathetic and professional. My D A deserves high marks and high praise. My supervisor, on the other hand, plays favorites, is often heavy-handed and disrespectful to staff, and is neither effective, ethical or professional. My supervisor does not have the training, experience, judgment, ethics or temperament to be effective in this position.
17. I have been employed 35 years and some of my co-workers who have been employed for about 5 years, jobs were ungraded but not mine, I think that was discrimination.
18. I have ethical concerns about what I have been asked to do as it relates to evaluating staff.
19. Most of the inadequacies noted are directly related to the management style and practices of the director. Most employees fear for their jobs if they do not go along with what the director wants or what certain agents of the director want such as a few staff that are held very close to the director.

20. My Supervisor always promotes the best interest of the Division and our clients. She is always provides clear direction to staff and is always available to provide clarification of further details as needed. She is a strong role model for District employees.
21. We all know that we need raises, although we are very thankful for our jobs and insurance premiums that remain reasonable. However, we also know that there is no money for raises at this time. As soon as there is, that would be a huge morale booster. However, it would be nice to reward employees who do their jobs well in other ways. This is done in our office with positive reinforcement, but I wish there was a way to do this within the agency. Many feel that those who do not do their jobs well get the same congrats as those who do. That is very frustrating.
22. DBS needs to consider cost sharing with clients so they have enough money to compensate the employees appropriately. Employees have lost so much in changes to pension that without raises there is not a lot of incentive to stay around once the economy gets better for new employees.
23. I hope this is truly confidential, because at this time I have no confidence in DOE and its ability improve or identify the issues that have embraced this organization. There is a climate of distrust and confidence in our mission. Real or not I feel a toxic atmosphere, in that I sense my peers are more concern about their backs than executing a professional program of rehabilitation.
24. DVR counselors received a raise a year or two ago while DBS VR counselors did not. The jobs have the same duties and educational requirements. Several DBS state office people received large raises in 2011. Some individuals that do not meet minimum education requirements have been hired in above minimum of the range, while others with years of experience that meet educational requirements are started at minimum.
25. Unfortunately, in the past few years, an atmosphere of uncertainty about our jobs has arisen as a result of some of the changes that have been seen. Vast amounts of funding has gone to the Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) for service provision, in the form of contracts, that had been paid previously, on a cost for service basis, within which the client and VR counselor had some input. It is now mandated that services go through the CRP, at the expense of client choice. These include virtually all VR services with the exception of determining eligibility, creating Individual Plans for Employment and some counseling. It is my opinion that if RSA did not require that VR counselors do these tasks, they would also be given to the CRP and our jobs would be considered irrelevant. I would actually be more comfortable discussing this as opposed to writing about it, if you wish. My cell is [REDACTED]
26. The more I think about what I've already said it's not going to matter anyway!

27. I very happy to work for the Division of Blind Services
28. I have a concern with the mold which exists in our building, is there someone responsible for us being checked and treated for any related issues, or is this something that we as employees are responsible for?
29. My district office works well as a team and we work very hard to carry out the agency mission. I believe that our current leadership has made some decisions that have made our job a lot harder. It is unclear if these decisions were made on lack of knowledge of what the people lower than them do. For a few years now people from outside the agency were hired in the District Administrator position. Some have done a good job and some (mainly due to lack of knowledge or the rehab process and DBS) have struggled. Several would probably be much better in a different role in the agency. Also our state office has been growing steadily over the last few years. Yet the counselors have not had a raise or even a bonus in 5 years. Please make sure these are anonymous because it will not be good on anyone who said anything that is not so good.
30. The work climate in my office and throughout many offices in this agency is very poor. People are afraid to speak up and contribute for fear of losing their jobs. Many will not complete this survey, because they are afraid that it is not truly anonymous and that they will be punished if they say anything negative. All of this fear and negativity has taken place with our current director. She has fired good people just because they fought for what is right. Also, she eliminates people with direct blindness experience from taking supervisory positions in the field because she does not want such people looking at contracts and service provision. She does not want any contractors questioned about the quality of services they provide.
31. I believe the director was sent as the hatchet person. So now we will see, again, what you surveyors do.
32. More training in practical aspects of case management; such as effective time management, case recordings and documentation and effective decision making would be positive for our agency in providing better services to our clients in a more timely and successful manner.
33. It would be helpful if the supervisor in this office got a lot of training on management.
34. Having a great team to work with makes my job enjoyable and working toward a common goal helps motivate me to do my job well.
35. The Division is managed and run much better now than it was under the previous leadership, where personal agenda's were priority and key positions were filled

with staff who were not suited for the positions, which had a huge negative impact on how the Division did business. Accountability measures have been put in place, employees who do not meet the minimum standards are dealt with accordingly. Some sections have been restructured to promote more efficient and effective services are being provided.

36. I have worked in government services for many, many years and without a doubt this is the finest organization with which I have ever been associated. The old adage, good enough for government work is one that turns my stomach and is a standard in other states and probably other areas of this state, but it is certainly not a mantra in this Division. This Division is a shining star and is doing an incredible job for the visually impaired of Florida.
37. My immediate supervisor is strongly supportive of her staff, but does not get the same support from her supervisor. When doing surveys like this terms such as management should be defined. Who is management versus who is a supervisor.
38. It is a high time of change and staff fear for their jobs.
39. The morale has steadily declined over the last two years. There have been issues with ethics violations regarding how the students and staff have been treated.
40. Staff and upper management do not feel free to speak up when they have a differing opinion. This results in low morale and discourages thoughtful discussions on how to develop contracts with providers and provide oversight to ensure our clients are being served in the best way possible. This also results in an environment that is fraught with fear which discourages staff from taking ownership because a mistake can be detrimental to your job. The amount of turnover at the upper management level has been quite high and is often done as a knee jerk reaction after an incident. The type of quick and unexpected change causes too much instability in an already fragile environment. The actions appear emotionally and personally based rather than a result of a thoughtful decision. Opinions on individuals are based on personal feelings rather than that individual's value to the Division. The Division could flourish from strong leadership and someone that truly leads rather than someone who thinks she is leading because no one speaks up. We need a leader who will make decisions, not someone who often says I don't care how we do it and once a path is taken, then decides it should be done another way.
41. Manager spends too much time just chatting with people in their offices.
42. Sharing of best practices statewide, and success stories of clients and their employers.

43. The Director is not a good leader she set people up to fail.
44. I think that IG should look at hiring practicing and management styles from the state office which filters down to each of the offices in the field.
45. We all need our jobs. I hope that this survey sheds some light on the problems at hand.
46. Provide raises and promotions based on honest to goodness merit. Do not create positions and pay acquaintances and friends high salaries, and then say that dollars aren't there to pay actual working staff more money. A boss, a Director should make agency wide decisions, and allow the experts who are in position to do what they are there for. Learn your work environment and where staff work and just say good morning to them instead of only to management and those who are in offices. If you have to constantly go to a staff member to learn how to do your job, acknowledge them and if possible pay them for their actual worth.
47. The improvement made in this division the last three years is phenomenal!
48. I believe the Governor Scott is the worst we have had and he needs to resign. A good look needs to be taken into the use of personnel in DBS and questions asked about why we don't provide technical support for clients in the work place. Why is there not a position for a Rehab Engineer? Why are we allowing Private Facilities to provide so much service to clients when we have a facility that the state has paid for?
49. Policies from Tallahassee discourage any job performance that would remotely assume that the people whom they have hired are actually competent professionals who are interested in excellence. The whole approach seems to have been designed to corral a few bad apples while insisting that everyone else SHOULD be thrilled with just doing the bare minimum in their jobs to get by. Why not just fire the people who aren't doing what they are supposed to be doing and re-instating the idea that counselors are professionals and capable of writing a program plan?
50. When asked above about being proud to work for DBS, if you are asking am I proud of working with the blind community, my answer is a very proud YES. Am I proud to be a part of the positive encouragement given to the blind community that the only part of themselves that has changed is their vision but they still possess the abilities to be successful, they just have to learn through the Rehab Center, new methods to transfer those abilities to their current physical challenge. I believe all blind persons can be employed if they truly want to be employed. There are jobs to be created. There are employment needs in Florida yet to be discovered and filled and I believe if equipped, the Rehab Center can train the blind population to fill those jobs. What I am not proud of in working with DBS are the restrictions Tallahassee Management and our current



Bureau Chief puts on the Rehab Center through outdated equipment teaching materials, and encouragement to our exceptional staff who have ideas of how to bring the blind community into the future needs of Florida but current management lacks any comprehension or desire to hear these ideas so our staff have smothered their creativity in response to the current management's attitudes.

## Management Practices

Responses to Question 42. Please provide suggestions in the input box below that you think would improve management practices.

1. Recognize that the agency's biggest asset is employees. Establish an inclusive workplace that energizes the people who fuel our agency's success. It is essential to recognize that the relationship between people and leaders is based upon mutual benefit. It is not paternalistic, but instead is based on individual engagement and contribution.
2. Be Fair.
3. Make sure that a position is offered to all qualified personnel within the facility. Perhaps be sure that the position is also advertised outside of the facility to hopefully prevent hiring based on the one deciding on hiring having known the person and their family. Also avoiding hiring only because the person is younger and should therefore be around longer than other more qualified staff.
4. Sometimes it seems the hiring process takes long, but that may be because the qualifications are not met.
5. Change for change's sake causes low morale and anxiety. We are put on an important project for a week or 2, then priorities change and it is dropped, and another is dropped in our laps. All the while regular routine duties are neglected.
6. Accept people for who they are; tolerate their individualism. Supervisors could not perform to the best of their abilities if DAs have the monopoly of every decision and allow Supervisors to only sign where indicated.
7. There has been excessive turnover in DBS over the last couple of years. Many staff fear for their jobs daily. I have been told on several occasions by my superior that I need to keep off the radar, that any of us could be gone in a second depending on the mood of management. Over the last few years more and more money has gone into contracts with CRP's and more and more of the job duties DBS staff did are going to the CRP. We can no longer provide the training devices, low vision evaluations and more to our client's because the money we once had is going to the CRP's.

DBS cannot do anything, (create a form, develop a business process, etc) without involving the CRP's in what we are doing. It's as if we work for the CRP not for DBS. The unwritten understanding in the agency is that the only way to keep your job is to make sure your CRP likes you as management has given every impression that their support is with the CRP, not DBS staff. Management needs to be much more supportive of DBS staff and help DBS grow and develop, not continue to dismantle the agency, or at least that is how it feels.

8. It feels that contract providers are running DBS at times. It also seems like we don't value our employees and/or hire people that are familiar with the business of rehab.
9. Positions are filled without our knowledge and just between Management and the person being hired. We see new people and don't even know their names...friends are being hired from outside...a lot of favoritism going on that is not very fair.
10. I think that mid management has its hands tied by statewide policies, such as hiring freezes that won't permit replacement of employees who leave or not permitting to pay a reasonable wage, so to attract appropriate workers. How can we expect to hire qualified people, when anyone pays better than us?
11. Management practices shouldn't promote an office environment, nor reflect an image that if you do not belong to their group, very clickish, you are not going anywhere?
12. Sensitivity training.
13. DA does not know everything, especially when he only been on the job less than 2 years.
14. Do not be dismissive of employees input or concerns.
15. With such low salaries for state employees, especially for those of us in human services, our job performance and professionalism are better than could be, or should be, expected. The clients we serve, and those of us who serve them, are not valued enough by those who govern us.
16. Hire competent management; supervisors should be firm, but yet flexible, fair and understanding. Must be good communicators.
17. New director
18. The State needs to consider raises for the employees.
19. It may be time for senior management to move on and be replaced with individuals who can restore confidence in the agency mission. Senior management can focus more on administrative, planning, motivational and political issues of the organization. Let trained staff be responsible for the programmatic functions of the agency.
20. This section is difficult to respond to because I need to consider the specific entity with which my office contracts, which does a good job, as well as another

entity in my district, which I know does a poor job. The contract monitoring for deliverables does not take into consideration how many clients may not have received services even though the deliverables may technically have been met. Additionally, there has been a huge shift in money from DBS to contracting entities, as well as a shift in responsibility from DBS to those entities. This has caused a significant change in work flow and responsibilities for some DBS employees. And, in some cases, contracting entities do not appear to have geared up for those new responsibilities, but rather have seen them as simply new cash flow streams, without providing sufficient staffing to do the work involved.

21. Director Joyce Hildreth has always been extremely courteous and helpful to me. I find her to be very knowledgeable and compassionate about her job and the DBS mission. She has taken the time to ensure I have the knowledge to succeed in the organization. Our Deputy Director is knowledgeable about contracts and different programs.

Unfortunately, she is very critical and on a number of occasions has openly criticized me and other employees in meetings and on conference calls. She has made negative comments re. the Director and other personnel that have made me feel uncomfortable. She is not receptive to change or ideas from others. I would encourage her to be a better listener and not make faces, rolling of eyes, and waving hands when she is not in agreement. I would like to see her trust the employees she has working for her. My immediate supervisor is knowledgeable on the contracts side. She is a very positive, supportive, appreciative person. I would only recommend she be more receptive to change and not be stuck on business as usual. Finally, the Bureau Chief of Client Services manager should share her management style with the team. She is an active listener and a pleasure to work with.

22. I have not experienced anything in my current office. But for several years I was forced to work in an extremely hostile work environment. Even though it was reported little to no action was taken to stop it. Also in the process of being promoted. My former DA was allowed to say lies and slanderous things against me with no repercussions.
23. Whenever individuals in the agency speak up about poor performance from contractors, they are severely reprimanded and often they are threatened that they will lose their job. This has personally happened to me on more than one occasion.
24. Good God man we only fire or take resignations here. Positions are frozen and never coming back. We will be down to half of the employees here by the end of the year.

25. Hire qualified people. There are a lot of hard working people in the ranks that no one ever hears about who do a lot of work for little pay, no glory for them either.
26. Very well organized with effective results.
27. The only time I have ever felt I was subjected to an inappropriate conversation was with someone outside of the Division of Blind Services who gave the appearance of pulling rank and micro-managing where he really had no authority.
28. If staff are asked to complete a task, which is then approved by the supervisor, management needs to discuss changes instead of making them without consulting the people who did the work. We are made to feel that our work has little or no merit. Management needs to communicate clearly with staff and not make changes arbitrarily. Changes need to be well thought out, discussed with concerned employees before being put into practice.
29. People do not know what is going on or to expect. Probably no one higher does either so why burden staff with supposition.
30. Hire competent management. Take courses in leadership management. Take lessons in communication. Respect staff. Be consistent
31. An environment where staff can openly express differing opinions and not fear loss of job.
32. It has taken up to two months to get approval to go ahead and input purchase orders for goods and services that we need. A more timely response would help greatly in meeting our needs.
33. Better leadership.
34. The CRP does not always provided services in a timely manner or cost effective.
35. Hiring should be done on ability, skills and not on favoritism. Such as hiring from A CRP just because.
36. Let employees do their jobs and do not be so critical. We are all experiencing tough times and should be lifting each other up and not throwing some people down.
37. Director has freely admitted in front of staff that she holds grudges and acts on them. Personnel management speaks about firing staff with her door open. Personnel Management tells staff that she has fired eighteen people this year and doesn't mind terminating more. Statement made early December of 2011. I well understand the role of the state office or central office, but based on actions and words, the goals and objectives of current upper management confuses and

distorts this role as well as the spirit of positive and effective leadership.

For the most part policies and procedures are up to date and sensible given the agency's mandate; however, some policies are ambiguous at best and harmful to the agency and client at worst. Because such a large amount of funds are allocated to outside contracts by way of CRPs, there are fewer funds to follow through with other needed services. This is also hurtful because these contracts cover a bulk number instead of individuals. Contracts are loosely monitored but not the actual CRPs. and if staff complains about CRPs or otherwise find them in wrong doing, CRP director calls DB Director and corrective actions are brought against staff. This could be and has been anything from a taking away of duties, to demotion, to termination. Investigate demotions and terminations of pass two years.

Some contractors are outstanding, but others are not. This is why the blanket contract to CRPs in every district without much recourse is a serious problem. When its 6 months after a person is hired and other staff is still doing their job that they were supposedly hired for, this is a concern, most especially when new staff was hired at an exceedingly high pay grade. Check the last ten new hires in the state office, in particular under the directors office.

Memos and bulletins go out, but upper management knows who the new hire is before the closing date for submission of applications. Also office staff who would be a great filler of said position is completely ignored while the new hire makes anywhere from \$10,000 to \$15,000 more than staff who fills that same or similar position. Not true unless upper management sees you as one of theirs. Sorry, but this is how things are in the state office.

It is clear that minorities do not generally receive raises or get hired in high paying positions or management, rather or not he or she manages staff unofficially. That I can remember, The only time I was subjected to conversation that made me feel uncomfortable was when a member of management, a bureau Chief stated that he didnt like particular client and so wanted him out of the BEP Program.

Upper management practices do not promote, perpetuate, or maintain good organizational success because it is extremely divisive. Staff are asked not to communicate with colleagues of other sections unless work directly demands it, and when staff who everyone knows does a great job at what they are hired for receives an average evaluation and others most especially management receives high marks, morale is understandably low.

38. I am not aware of any inappropriate hiring but one should really look at the turnover of positions and constant moving around of positions and ask what is going on. As far as chances for promotion within I don't think that is promoted at

all. I definitely feel I was cheated out of a promotion and the private facilities gained while services to clients in the employment sector have suffered greatly.

39. Yes, positions are filled with qualified people who are then immediately discouraged from seeking to do the excellent work of which they are capable by taking away their independent status and having someone looking over their shoulders every second. If DBS is so concerned about improving their RSA reviews, why not tie independent status into things like how many times deadlines for eligibility decisions or plans have been missed? Wouldn't how many times a plan has been returned to the counselor because of errors be a better way of approaching the issue of the supervisor approval issue than a blanket no one can make decisions about a plan, no matter how good a particular counselors' plans actually are?

The way it is now, good counselors don't even have a means by which they could be rewarded for good work by re-gaining independent status. With regards to the question related to cost effectiveness earlier in this survey it is not only extremely time consuming for the counselor to have to wait for supervisory approval on every plan, it is also hard on the clients to have to meet again with the counselor to sign off on plans that could have been done in one session. I often wonder how it must look to our clients to have to get supervisory approval for decisions that he/she and his/her counselor have made.

40. When giving performance appraisals supervisors are limited on how high a grade they give staff. This is wrong. We just had our performance appraisals and we were told Supervisors were told by our DBS Director to limit giving staff a 4 on their job responsibility as this could involve money given the staff person. Some of us were given a total that was under a 4 for that reason even though we exceed our standards. On paper, you won't see the reason we were only given 3's is because the supervisor was hindered in giving staff 4's but it makes us appear as average. This is not always the case. I expect my performance appraisal to reflect my efforts. I expect the best of myself as some others do of themselves at the Center and it is a slap in the face to be required to accept less because it could involve money. Staff moral plummeted and some refused to sign their performance appraisals.
41. Honesty about goals for the office; a more straightforward manner; less secrecy
42. Replace Joyce Hildreth as the director of DBS!! We need a change and an individual that truly cares about blind Floridians and their well being!!
43. I have been in some conversations with management that make me uncomfortable. They typically involve reviewing data for reports DBS supplies to Legislature, State, and Federal government. Not often, but occasionally, our management will gloss over some inaccuracies in reporting because it's the most expedient or easiest thing to do rather than do the hard work it takes to ensure

integrity in reporting. Management seems concerned that correcting an issue in reporting in the current year will be significantly different than the previous year's submission and draw attention to the agency. I prefer to employ sound and honest management practices, own up to mistakes and be able to explain the differences if necessary. As for contracting, I believe we need to be more diligent in monitoring and managing our contractors. We could be more prudent and responsible in how we measure our contractors' performance and how we reward them.

44. My direct supervisor and Bureau Chief both exhibit a serious lack of integrity, and extremely poor management practices. They are often hostile, and publically demean and belittle employees. Discrimination is rampant, and the handicapped and visually impaired are flagrantly discriminated against in two ways. (1) Equipment needed for communication by the visually impaired (and provided by a previous administration) has been confiscated as unnecessary toys. (2) The incompetence and inefficiency of the head of production is supported by the fact that audio recordings are more than a year behind, sporadic at best, yet he is praised and rewarded by the Bureau Chief as a brilliant shining star. What this means is that patrons of the library do not receive audio recordings of serial magazines, which is also discriminatory.
45. Incentives for job placement for our clients are provided to CRP's instead of DBS employees. A \$100.00 bonus would be a great incentive for Counselor's to place their client's in job....instead DBS will pay a CRP \$4000.00 per job placement.
46. We need a manager who knows how to manage
47. Change in management from the top down. Anything has to be better than what we have now.
48. Management needs to be open, honest and reflect the mission of DBS to be a strong leader. Imposing fear on staff does not a good Manager Make. 2. The Entire Management Team should be accessible, and staff should not fear retaliation for any problem, opinion, or issues brought to their attention. 3. Staff needs to be told the true Goals and Objectives of their agency. 4. Management must model the behavior expected of staff. 5. Policies and procedures are clear as written, but Management needs to use them as a guide, as they are written and not a weapon for intimidation. 6. All vacancies should be made public, advertised through People First, and all current staff given the opportunity to apply. 7. Bureau Chiefs that handpick individuals outside of the agency give the appearance of misconduct. Who are these people? How did they come to be employed in a State Agency without the position being advertised? Why is this permitted to happen over and over again. The Director is allowing this to happen and is giving staff the appearance of approval for this type of action. This is not in the States policies and procedures. If staff must adhere to these, shouldn't Management also? 8. Management practices do not promote organizational



success, they shed no light on the true mission and success that could be.

49. Personally I feel that anyone who is a DA must have knowledge of the clients who are served by the agency, must have a direct idea of what the agency stands for as well as an active job history of vocational rehabilitation.

50. If the HR person does not like you - you will not have an opportunity for advancement nor for raises.

Florida Department of Education

# Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Climate Survey: Final Report

February 18, 2011



2010



# 2010 Employee Climate Survey Results

## Final Report

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Abbreviations .....	4
Executive Summary.....	5
Comparison of Current Climate Items with Previous Climate Items .....	6
Quadrant Analysis.....	8
Factor Analysis .....	9
General Findings and Recommendations .....	10
Interpretation of Statistical Comparisons.....	11
Demographics .....	12
“Average Satisfaction” Score and “Percent Agree” Across Select VR Sub-Units .....	18
Overall Satisfaction: Level of Agreement.....	21
Interpretation of Charts.....	21
Entire VR .....	22
DVR Headquarters .....	24
Bureau of Administrative Services.....	26
Bureau of Field Services.....	28
Bureau of Partnerships & Communications.....	30
Office of the Director .....	32

Bureau of Rehabilitation and Reemployment Services (BRRS) - All.....	34
BRRS - District 2.....	36
BRRS - District 4.....	38
BRRS - District 6.....	40
Bureau of Field Services.....	42
Field Services (HQ and Area Offices).....	42
Field Services (All Areas) .....	44
Area 1.....	46
Units 01A/ 01B/ 01C/ 01D/ 02A.....	48
Units 03A/ 04A/ 5A/ 05B/ 05C.....	49
Area 2.....	50
Units 07A/ 07S/ 08A/ 08B/ 08C/ 08D/ 08F/ 08G .....	52
Units 08E/ 09A/ 09S/ 10A/ 10B/ 11A/ 11B .....	53
Area 3.....	54
Units 12A/ 12B/ 12C/ 12E/ 12G/ 13A/ 13B.....	56
Units 12D/ 12F/ 17A/ 19A/ 20A.....	57
Area 4.....	58
Units 14A/ 14B/ 14C/ 14D/ 18A/ 18B .....	60
Units 15A/ 15B/ 15C/ 15D/ 15E/ 16A/ 16B.....	61
Area 5.....	62
Units 21A/ 21B/ 21C/ 24B/ 24D .....	64
Units 22A/ 22B/ 22C/ 22D/ 24A/ 24C .....	65
Area 6.....	66
Units 23A/ 23B/ 23C/ 23E/ 23F/ 23H/ 23M .....	68
Units 23D/ 23G/ 23J/ 23K/ 23L/ 23N .....	69
Content Analysis .....	70
Notes Page.....	78

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Bureau of Administrative Services	BAS
Bureau of Compliance and Oversight	BCO
Bureau of Field Services	BFS
Bureau of Partnerships and Communications	BPC
Bureau of Rehabilitation and Reemployment Services	BRRS
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation	DVR
Headquarters	HQ
Office of the Director	OD

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During November and December of 2010, the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) conducted a division-wide employee survey of factors that affect employee satisfaction and work climate. DVR used online survey software designed to ensure confidentiality of employee responses. The VR Employee newsletter and emails were used to notify DVR employees of survey information and distribute a secure link to the survey. The survey was available to all DVR employees, and a response rate of 67.4% was achieved.

The survey consisted of 35 climate items, which respondents rated on scales of agreement and importance. Respondents had the opportunity to provide written feedback regarding climate items. The survey also included 2 open-ended questions requesting feedback on DVR climate factors that most satisfied, and most dissatisfied, respondents.

A total of 86.12% of DVR employees indicated that they strongly agree or somewhat agree with the statement “Overall, I am satisfied with DVR as a place to work.” Preliminary analysis indicated the highest percentages of agreement (strongly agree plus somewhat agree) include the following climate items. Table 1 in this report includes the results of all items.

- I am held accountable for the quality of my work. (97.84%)
- I can identify what I must do to be successful at my job. (96.81%)
- I know what it takes for me to meet the expectations of my customers. (96.81%)
- I have the education and training necessary to effectively do my job. (96.28%)

Additional analysis indicated that the following items have the greatest potential to improve overall employee satisfaction. Additional information is available on Table 2 of this report.

- Managers, supervisors, and other leaders encourage innovative or new approaches to do things at work.
- Work in my immediate unit is organized to promote cooperation.
- My opinions seem to count when I provide them at work.
- My supervisor promotes a work environment that fosters trustworthy relationships.

The climate survey team is conducting further analyses that will provide better insight into DVR employee satisfaction and assist managers to make informed decisions on actions to take for further improvements. If you have any questions regarding the climate survey, please feel free to contact a member of the Continuous Improvement Unit.

Steve Collins	850.245.3429	<a href="mailto:steven.collins@vr.fldoe.org">steven.collins@vr.fldoe.org</a>
Libby Moody	850.245.3281	<a href="mailto:libby.moody@vr.fldoe.org">libby.moody@vr.fldoe.org</a>
Joshua Durden	850.245.3331	<a href="mailto:joshua.durden@vr.fldoe.org">joshua.durden@vr.fldoe.org</a>
Russell Hellein	850.245.3300	<a href="mailto:russell.hellein@vr.fldoe.org">russell.hellein@vr.fldoe.org</a>
Carmen Dupoint	850.245.3299	<a href="mailto:carmen.dupoint@vr.fldoe.org">carmen.dupoint@vr.fldoe.org</a>

## COMPARISON OF CURRENT CLIMATE ITEMS WITH PREVIOUS CLIMATE ITEMS

Table 1 below shows the results for all survey items in comparison with climate surveys conducted since 2003. The far right column indicates percentage point changes from 2007 to the current survey. It should be noted that 22 of 27 survey items (81.5%) show improvement from the 2007 survey. Also of note is that 4 of the 5 items that did not show improvement had negligible drops in performance from the 2007 survey. More detailed analysis of all survey items and factors is currently underway.

**Table 1: Comparison of Current Climate Items with Previous Climate Items**

Item	Statement	2003	2005	2007	2010	Change between 2007/2010
1	DVR Headquarters leadership has set high performance expectations.		76.30%	84.46%	91.16%	6.70%
2	DVR's strategic plan goals and initiatives have been communicated to me.	66.80%	80.20%	84.46%	88.02%	3.56%
3	I understand how my individual performance contributes to DVR's success.	73.90%	82.00%	90.11%	95.15%	5.04%
4	DVR's organizational values are promoted by Headquarters Leadership.		71.70%	82.57%	80.46%	-2.11%
5	Overall, decisions by DVR Headquarters Leadership are based on that which most likely advances our mission and goals.		62.70%	76.30%	83.92%	7.62%
6	My supervisor provides clear and consistent expectations regarding my work.	74.80%	79.90%	84.46%	83.92%	-0.54%
7	I am able to get the information, questions answered, decisions, etc. necessary to effectively do my job.		75.00%	81.32%	82.45%	1.13%
8	DVR communications, such as the DVR Employee Newsletter and VR-Inet, enables me to stay informed of strategies and events within DVR.	59.30%	77.20%	83.99%	90.12%	6.13%
9	My supervisor promotes a work environment that fosters productivity.		69.70%	75.67%	82.63%	6.96%
10	My supervisor promotes a work environment that fosters trustworthy relationships.		69.70%	75.67%	77.99%	2.32%
11	Managers, supervisors, and other leaders encourage innovative or new approaches to do things at work.	49.60%	55.50%	67.50%	69.61%	2.11%
12	I am able to use my skills and initiative to perform my work.			90.11%	89.22%	-0.89%
13	I know what it takes for me to meet the expectations of my customers.	89.20%	96.10%	97.02%	96.81%	-0.21%
14	In my immediate work unit, we regularly use data and information to improve our work unit's performance.				83.46%	NA
15	I have the equipment and resources necessary to perform quality work.	62.50%	61.40%	74.88%	79.06%	4.18%
16	I can identify what I must do to be successful at my job.	88.60%	91.50%	94.03%	96.81%	2.78%
17	I am held accountable for the quality of my work.				97.84%	NA
18	I am comfortable being held accountable for the quality of my work.	84.40%	96.50%	93.09%	95.99%	2.90%
19	In my immediate work unit, employees who perform well have opportunities for recognition for their accomplishments.		18.00%	58.08%	65.28%	7.20%
20	In my immediate work unit, employees who perform well have opportunities for increased pay.		18.00%	25.75%	14.04%	-11.71%
21	New employees are given a helpful orientation to DVR.				69.50%	NA
22	I have the education and training necessary to effectively do my job.	73.10%	92.10%	93.25%	96.28%	3.03%
23	Someone at work encourages my development.	68.40%	67.80%	73.94%	77.09%	3.15%
24	There is a clear system to take advantage of opportunities for career advancement.				60.06%	NA
25	Work in my immediate unit is organized to promote cooperation.				78.16%	NA
26	My workload enables me to balance my work and personal life.				77.69%	NA
27	Employees are involved in decisions which may affect how their work is performed.				64.74%	NA
28	My opinions seem to count when I provide them at work.	68.30%	68.00%	70.96%	72.07%	1.11%
29	VR provides employees who perform well opportunities for advancement.		18.00%	36.73%	52.44%	15.71%
30	I feel that I am part of a team at work.		75.20%	78.34%	82.20%	3.86%
31	My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about my success.	66.40%	72.20%	80.38%	81.89%	1.51%
32	I feel physically safe and secure at work.				83.78%	NA
33	Ethical behavior is promoted by Headquarters Leadership.		71.70%	82.57%	88.80%	6.23%
34	The feedback I received from my most recent performance review was useful (directed towards helping me improve and/or advance).	62.30%	68.80%	75.67%	76.34%	0.67%
35	Overall, I am satisfied with DVR as a place to work.	66.30%	66.50%	77.39%	86.12%	8.73%

Comparison of Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Employee Satisfaction to Other Public Agencies		
Organization	Overall Satisfaction Rate	Survey Year
State of Vermont	95%	2008
Florida Department of Transportation	93%	2010
Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation	86%	2010
Georgia Perimeter College	78%	2009
Federal Government (overall)	72%	2010
State of Georgia	71%	2009
Florida Department of Health	68%	2008

### Items with Greatest Potential for Improving Overall Satisfaction

Item responses were analyzed using a quadrant analysis approach. This approach is a standard best practice for analyzing climate data. Table 2 below ranks the items that have the greatest potential to improve overall employee satisfaction. For example, Item 11 (“Managers, supervisors, and other leaders encourage innovative or new approaches to do things at work.”) suggests that the DVR leadership team should continue to deploy innovative and new approaches for doing work. This may be addressed by expansion of performance improvement projects such as Rapid Process Improvement events. It should be noted that this is a preliminary finding and that additional analyses will be necessary prior to taking action on the results.

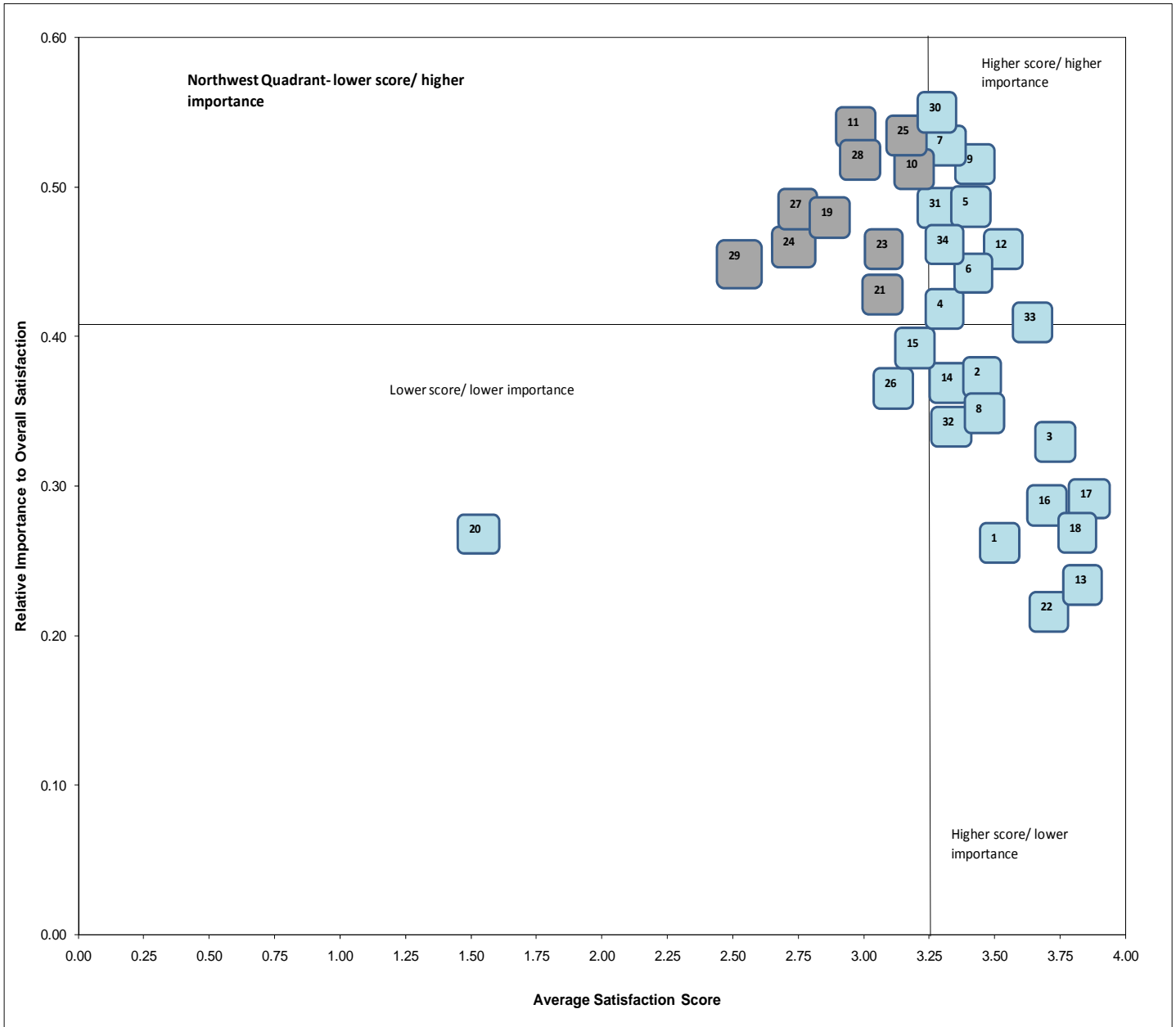
### Comparison of Current Climate Items with Previous Climate Items Items with the Greatest Opportunity for Impact

Item	Statement	2003	2005	2007	2010	Change between 2007/2010
11	Managers, supervisors, and other leaders encourage innovative or new approaches to do things at work.	49.60%	55.50%	67.50%	69.61%	2.11%
25	Work in my immediate unit is organized to promote cooperation.				78.16%	NA
28	My opinions seem to count when I provide them at work.	68.30%	68.00%	70.96%	72.07%	1.11%
10	My supervisor promotes a work environment that fosters trustworthy relationships.		69.70%	75.67%	77.99%	2.32%
19	In my immediate work unit, employees who perform well have opportunities for recognition for their accomplishments.		18.00%	58.08%	65.28%	7.20%
27	Employees are involved in decisions which may affect how their work is performed.				64.74%	NA
24	There is a clear system to take advantage of opportunities for career advancement.				60.06%	NA
23	Someone at work encourages my development.	68.40%	67.80%	73.94%	77.09%	3.15%
29	VR provides employees who perform well opportunities for advancement.		18.00%	36.73%	52.44%	15.71%
21	New employees are given a helpful orientation to DVR.				69.50%	NA



## QUADRANT ANALYSIS

**Quadrant Chart by Item Number-** Items that fall in the Northwest Quadrant are most important to overall satisfaction, but have the lowest scores.



The further to the left (“West”) boxes are, the less satisfied respondents were with that item. The higher boxes go in the chart (“North”), the more important that item is to overall satisfaction. Boxes in the left upper corner (“Northwest”) have the most potential to improve overall satisfaction, because they have relatively greater impact on it and people are relatively less satisfied with that item (making improving it easier).

## FACTOR ANALYSIS

A factor analysis was run to better understand what influences satisfaction at VR. Factor Analysis generates factors – sets of related items that explain an individual’s response to the survey questions. Variables were listed on the factors in their relative order of importance. Two factors were particularly important. By far the most powerful factor was associated exclusively with Supervisors’ impact on their immediate work environment. It was **the** key factor explaining overall satisfaction and most of the elements of the quadrant analysis. This suggests that efforts to improve satisfaction in VR (either directly or indirectly through changes in the quadrant analysis items) must have a significant impact on the immediate work environment to be successful. A second factor was heavily associated with leadership driving a positive view of the agency. This suggests that efforts to improve satisfaction should be geared in part to improving the image of the agency in employees’ eyes.

Factor	#	Survey Item
<b>Supervisor Impact on Immediate Work Environment</b>	<b>*10</b>	<b>My supervisor promotes a work environment that fosters trustworthy relationships.</b>
	9	My supervisor promotes a work environment that fosters productivity.
	6	My supervisor provides clear and consistent expectations regarding my work.
	31	My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about my success.
	30	I feel that I am part of a team at work.
	<b>*28</b>	<b>My opinions seem to count when I provide them at work.</b>
	<b>*25</b>	<b>Work in my immediate unit is organized to promote cooperation</b>
	<b>*23</b>	<b>Someone at work encourages my development.</b>
	7	I am able to get the information, questions answered, decisions, etc. necessary to effectively do my job.
	<b>*11</b>	<b>Managers, supervisors, and other leaders encourage innovative or new approaches.</b>
	34	The feedback I received from my most recent performance review was useful (directed towards helping me improve and/or advance).
	<b>*19</b>	<b>In my immediate work unit, employees who perform well have opportunities for recognition for their accomplishments.</b>
	<b>*27</b>	<b>Employees are involved in decisions which may affect how their work is performed.</b>
	35	Overall, I am satisfied with DVR as a place to work.
12	I am able to use my skills and initiative to perform my work.	
14	In my immediate work unit, we regularly use data and information to improve our work unit’s performance.	
<b>Leader’s Impact on Employee’s View of VR</b>	1	DVR Headquarters leadership has set high performance expectations.
	3	I understand how my individual performance contributes to DVR’s success.
	4	DVR’s organizational values are promoted by Headquarters Leadership.
	33	Ethical behavior is promoted by Headquarters Leadership.
	5	Overall, decisions by DVR Headquarters Leadership are based on that which most likely advances our mission and goals.
	2	DVR’s strategic plan goals and initiatives have been communicated to me.

**\*Items denoted in bold have the greatest opportunity for impact**

**GENERAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

<b>Finding</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
Significant differences in education, age, and length of employment.	Focus on training, career development, and succession planning.
HQ significantly more satisfied than Field.	Focus on open communication and behavioral demonstration of values.
Supervisors have a major impact on work unit climate.	Focus on behaviors that build trust. Review content analysis for ideas. Engage employees in identifying solutions. Allow for autonomy, clear expectations, and adequate information to do the job.
Comments indicate some offices lack adequate basic work equipment, poor layouts, inadequate privacy, etc.	Review physical office environment and equipment needs; then align plans and budgets to meet needs.

## DBS Management Review Interviews

***We have included interviewee names; however, we ask that you keep names private due to the sensitive nature of this review and concerns of retaliation.***

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Twelve interview write-ups were judgmentally selected for your review. The sample consists of two former employees and ten current employees – five state office and five district office.

We feel the sampled interviews are representative of our results and show the polarity of interview responses. The interviews address topics such as:

- Working environment,
- Turnover concerns,
- Contracts and monitoring,
- Relationships with the Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP),
- Hiring process, and
- Communication.

Approximately 35 additional write-ups are available, should you wish to see them.

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

Person(s) Interviewed/Title: [REDACTED]  
Date: 3/6/12

Interviewer: JM  
Notes prepared by: KK

- 1) DBS position/ role?

Senior Management Analyst II with the Bureau of Client Services.

Job duties: submit federal reports (quarterly and annually); budget allocations to Districts for program activities; and quality assurance activities.

- 2) How long have you worked at DBS?

Since September 2010, 1.5 years. Came from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). Was an internal auditor with DVR.

- 3) How long have you worked in your current position? Who is your supervisor?

1.5 years. Supervisor is [REDACTED] (Bureau Chief for Client Services).

- 4) How would you describe the working environment within DBS/ your office?

Within his Bureau: Positive. Running as well as it can. Bureau Chief does a very good job, trying to keep up the best they can based on inherited activities.

Within Division: Lot of micro-managing. Division Director makes all decisions. Staff decisions can be overturned. Could be fear in making decisions (retaliation), especially when dealing with the CRP's. Division Director has a tight relationship with the CRP's – too tight. (He has heard this from others). Thinks one could make the argument that there is preferential treatment.

High turnover at high levels of management. Questioned if that was normal/reasonable. Thinks turnover is due to staff opposing the Division Director. Let go if they are seen as an "impediment" to what the Division Director wants done. He questioned who enabled turnover. Said Linda Champion and Sheila White sign off on personnel actions, so should they also be held responsible. He is not sure about Sheila White's relationship in the Division.

No specific names regarding retaliation.

- 5) Can you name any positive role models or areas that have improved within the Division?

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

- Bureau of Client Services
- Timely submittal of federal reports
- Allocations to Districts / Budget allocation process
- Better job oversight in District offices
- Better job handling client appeals (not handled in Districts and moved up to State office)

6) What is your impression of the staff turnover that has occurred over recent years?

Too high given the size of the Division. Higher than at DVR. Some people forced out/to resign.

7) Do you feel DBS contracts are properly negotiated and managed without preferential treatment?

Doesn't have direct involvement in this area. Thinks contracts are a sore point with the Division and Division Director.

Possibility of State not getting what it is paying for. Lack of monitoring and oversight. Don't look too deep at CRP's. Don't want to apply sanctions. Gave an example of concerns with the number of clients served. Believes CRP's are paid the same if they serve 1 client vs 100. Staff in contract monitoring unit doesn't feel comfortable about staff turnover. Review docs/CRP invoices, but don't question. Just process it.

8) Do you feel the needs of DBS clients are being met effectively?

Could compare and contrast the money given to Districts vs. CRP's. Hard to document qualitative aspects of reallocated money to CRP's from Districts. Would want to look at quality and number served. Jim said someone else mentioned that more funds to contracts could mean less funds for direct services by the districts. David agreed with this statement.

9) Are DBS contract managers and staff allowed/ authorized to effectively manage contracts with CRPs?

Not in accordance with DFS rules.

10) Do you feel that DBS funding is being put to its best use?

Issues with contracted services. Not sure the Division is getting the best bang for

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

its buck. Not verifying numbers (served). Only desk reviews, not onsite visits. Afraid to ruffle the feathers of CRP's because it will get back to the Division Director.

11) Is the DBS hiring process fair?

Not exactly. People hired that don't have minimum credentials (college degree) because they are a friend of someone. Internal staff does not think they have a fair chance for advancement.

12) Do you have any sense of the presence of favoritism in DBS hiring practices?

Not getting best/brightest people for positions. Questioned sign-offs by Linda Champion saying things don't happen in a vacuum.

When asked how to find favoritism, David suggested we look at salary enhancements (more than one) and turnover over the last two years.

13) Do you feel DBS employees are free to express themselves without concern?

No.

14) How would you describe communication from and with executive management?

Operating in silos. Some staff are favorites of the Division Director and feed her information.

Would like more teamwork.

Not most positive environment compared to other work experience with DOE.

Fear of retaliation if list of interviewees gets back to Division Director. No doubt of retaliation of interviewees by executive management if the list gets out. Requested we not disclose names.

15) Are written policies and procedures adequate to guide staff? And, are they followed and enforced?

Client Services making an effort to improve policies and procedures. Not sure about contracts and other areas.

There was a period of 10 years where no one did almost anything. Policies and

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

procedures are a work in progress....not where they need to be.

Not sure DBS follows DFS contracting rules.

16) If you could, what would you change at DBS?

Change leadership and reduce turnover of management ranks. Turnover contributing to communication and organizational issues.

Lots of drama for the size of the Division.

17) Are there any issues you would like to bring up that we have not discussed?

David mentioned that staff from the Governor's Office came over to meet with the contracting section. Rumor mill is flying between the OIG project and Governor's Office visit.

Concerns with staff that have received raises, staff credentials (college degree?), and how some positions are not advertised – just pop up.

Concerns with hiring process enablers – paperwork signed off by Linda Champion and Sheila White.



DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

Person(s) Interviewed/Title: [REDACTED]  
Date: 3/9/12

Interviewer: JM  
Notes prepared by: KK

1) DBS position/ role?

Contracts Supervisor, over 3 contract managers and 1 administrative staff.

2) How long have you worked at DBS?

Since June 2011, approx 9 months. Came from DOE contract administration (there from 2006 to 6/11).

3) How long have you worked in your current position? Who is your supervisor?

Same, approx 9 months. Reports to Ellen McCarron.

4) How would you describe the working environment within DBS/ your office?

Very different. Micro-managed a lot.

5) Can you name any positive role models or areas that have improved within the Division?

Contracts and monitoring is doing well. Three really experienced staff and one that is getting there. Staff doesn't always use [REDACTED]'s knowledge and expertise as they should in other areas.

6) What is your impression of the staff turnover that has occurred over recent years?

Very unusual so much turnover. Not used to it. Worries about it.

Broke her foot/leg and has been working from home. Doesn't want to lose job. On probation for one year as a new employee.

7) Do you feel DBS contracts are properly negotiated and managed without preferential treatment?

Different. Most are exempt (from the traditional procurement process). FAASB (Florida Association of Agencies Serving the Blind) has a lot of control on upper

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

management. FAASB represents the interests of the CRP's.

Negotiations – There are criteria. Joyce makes the decisions.

Doing a lot of price analysis.

8) Do you feel the needs of DBS clients are being met effectively?

She is learning more about actual services supplied to clients, from reporting. Some reporting makes you wonder if the CRP's are doing everything to serve clients. Example, time spent with a client and number of clients served.

There are remedy tables on some contracts, but not all. Not the same terms on different types of contracts.

QPIS and MIS reporting are getting better.

Have redone the monitoring procedures manual.

9) Are DBS contract managers and staff allowed/ authorized to effectively manage contracts with CRPs?

In the past, contractors (CRP's) contacted Joyce if they weren't happy. Joyce says less of that is happening now. Districts have more contact with CRP's and feel comfortable working together.

Said that some issues arose when DBS moved from AWARE to AWARE 5.11. Unreal the number of clients that should have been closed in 90 days, that weren't. Old cases that should have been closed (from 06/07). Doesn't affect payments to CRP's.

Concerns with invoices that bill for clients that are documented as absent for the day billed.

Auditor note: [REDACTED] did not seem to have confidence in the accuracy of the invoices.

10) Do you feel that DBS funding is being put to its best use?

As far as she knows.

11) Is the DBS hiring process fair?

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

Not sure. One contract manager without experience was hired for more money than one's with experience. Same contract manager told [REDACTED] he could have had her job.

Auditor Note: Believe [REDACTED] was referring to [REDACTED]. – KEK 3/9/12

- 12) Do you have any sense of the presence of favoritism in DBS hiring practices?

Appears that way. See example above.

- 13) Do you feel DBS employees are free to express themselves without concern?

Doesn't feel free to say all her concerns. Doesn't want to be reprimanded or lose her job.

- 14) How would you describe communication from and with executive management?

Has gotten better lately. Appears trying to get better – in last few weeks. Good to know what's going on and what you need to do next.

- 15) Are written policies and procedures adequate to guide staff? And, are they followed and enforced?

Thinks so.

Worked hard on her performance evaluations. Asked to change one performance evaluation. Evaluation was on in December, but asked to change it in January. Asked to consider other things that happened before she took her position. Made her feel uncomfortable.

- 16) If you could, what would you change at DBS?

No discrimination. Work as a team.

Was told to watch certain employees – told by HR person and Director.

- 17) Are there any issues you would like to bring up that we have not discussed?

Different work environment. Partiality. Didn't expect environment to be the way it is. Others agree.

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

Gave an example of the CRP's unique relationship with DBS. Said [REDACTED] was wrung out by the CRP's about contracts/financial consequences.

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

Person(s) Interviewed/Title: [REDACTED] Interviewer: J. Maxwell Date: 3/19/2012  
Notes prepared by: J. Maxwell

1) DBS position/ role?

Official title is program administrator. Before this, she was a program consultant. Before this, she was a DBS district administrator for eleven years - Saint Petersburg district.

2) How long have you worked at DBS?

32 years

3) How long have you worked in your current position? Who is your supervisor?

Three years. Report to [REDACTED]

4) How would you describe the working environment within DBS/ your office?

Tense. Stressful. Very little support from upper management, if any. Fear. Turnover significant-staff are wondering who is next.

She has heard people say that they should be happy that they do not work in the State Office. She used to love her job. But during the last two-three years, big changes have made it difficult. She does not know who to trust. Best to stay off of the radar and keep your mouth shut.

5) Can you name any positive role models or areas that have improved within the Division?

Quality assurance has been given more attention recently. This is the section that [REDACTED] is in charge of. She said that she was never trained for this position, that she learned on her own but gets little support for her initiatives.

6) What is your impression of the staff turnover that has occurred over recent years?

Concerned. Don't recall this level of TO before in such a short term. Staff that are left do not understand why the TO has occurred. If this was a private business, the boss would be in trouble. Staff has been forced to resign or be terminated. Staff has been forced to move, reorganizations have taken place, terminations, position

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

descriptions have been changed. Too much has happened too quickly. Uncooperative staff is "marked" not wanted and need to get rid of.

- 7) Do you feel DBS contracts are properly negotiated and managed without preferential treatment?

Not at all. Employees of the CRP's are not involved in a healthy partnership with DBS staff. The DBS staff appear to need the permission of CRPs to do just about anything. Workgroups that are set up must include representatives from CRPs. Often, DBS employees must sit back and simply say OK. If something is not written into code or statute, it is "fine."

Much money is being sent to CRPs for new programs leaving less money available for clients (direct services). Much money is given to the Tampa Lighthouse (job placement). The Statler Institute for Food Service received much funding but resulted in very few placements (1 or 2 still working).

Instead of looking for other vendors, money is always directed to Lighthouses, whether skilled or not. The Lighthouses have become the "experts" on everything.

- 8) Do you feel the needs of DBS clients are being met effectively?

In her current position, she is far removed from DBS clients. But she's concerned that clients are not being offered appropriate choices for services. Clients are asked to accept services from the lighthouses without being given any other choices. Money sent to CRPs reduces money that can be spent on clients through direct services.

- 9) Are DBS contract managers and staff allowed/ authorized to effectively manage contracts with CRPs?

No. Some CRPs have all over a hundred clients. Monitoring performed by the State Office is 5 cases a month only. Only look at certain aspects of the process. Example-service hours make sense? -Yes or no. The monitoring process currently used is not effective.

- 10) Do you feel that DBS funding is being put to its best use?

No. More and more money is being sent to CRP contracts. Less money is being given to the district service budget. Travel funding for workgroups has increased. CRPs provide job placement training but there are other potential providers which are not utilized. Example - DVR.

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

11) Is the DBS hiring process fair?

Not sure. Orlando district administrator retired. A CRP employee was placed there as a supervisor and later made DA. She felt that he does not have the qualifications. The name is [REDACTED].

Team performing interviews for DAs is questionable. Only one of the recently hired DAs has stayed on (hired from outside of DBS with people who don't have rehabilitation backgrounds). Seems administration is getting back to people with appropriate experience recently.

12) Do you have any sense of the presence of favoritism in DBS hiring practices?

Yes. Program Manager [REDACTED] - not qualify for a position that supervises all district administrators. This does not seem appropriate.

13) Do you feel DBS employees are free to express themselves without concern?

No. DBS employees are now gone due to speaking up. Does not feel she can voice thoughts/ opinions which out it being held against her. Fear of retaliation.

14) How would you describe communication from and with senior management?

Non-existent. Told "here is what I need you to do". Phone calls and emails can go for long times without being answered or not answered at all. Not a two way communication that is useful.

15) Are written policies and procedures adequate to guide staff? And, are they followed and enforced?

To a point. Updated to a degree. However, not enough training given to staff. Need more support, training. Especially need training for the districts in the area of personnel issues and processes.

16) If you could, what would you change at DBS?

The working environment. Voicing thoughts and being recognized for contributions. Job not in peril if you do not agree with the executive director. Change how we work with clients. The current order of importance by the executive director is first the CRPs, then certain staff at the State Office, then clients and finally DBS staff.

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

It would be a good idea to have other vendors provide services and not limit all contracting with the existing CRP's. Best if you work in an environment where you do not have fear when you come to work. Too many reorganizations. DBS counselors need to be respected for what they can contribute. They are currently not utilizing their skills. Instead they're pushing paper. They should be involved more with clients.

17) Are there any issues you would like to bring up that we have not discussed?

Do not get support from the executive director. Employees are required to change their views or get out. Too many changes. No one can breathe. If people cannot adjust to the executive director's methods, they're considered a liability.

Mentioned an episode involving a meeting with the client services Bureau chief. She was put through a list of questions from employees who "did not like her". It turns out that some of the employees had never worked for her. The process was a hoax. It appears to have been orchestrated to get a termination. No proof to the allegations. ██████████ agreed at the end, but said that she was directed to do this (likely directed by her boss). This was very humiliating for ██████.

Many employees have been mistreated (ex. ██████████). More money to CRPs when it could be used for staff raises or direct services to clients.



DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

Person(s) Interviewed/Title: [REDACTED]  
Date: 3/9/12

Interviewer: JM  
Notes prepared by: KK

1) DBS position/ role?

Contract manager for 24-26 contracts in the South Florida region (south of highway 60).

2) How long have you worked at DBS?

Since 1985, 27 years.

3) How long have you worked in your current position? Who is your supervisor?

1.5 years. Reports to [REDACTED].

4) How would you describe the working environment within DBS/ your office?

Hostile, uncomfortable, afraid to express yourself. Various people feel picked on. Seen a lot of turnover.

5) Can you name any positive role models or areas that have improved within the Division?

Role models – no.  
Contracts section has attempted to make improvements in the structure of contracts.

6) What is your impression of the staff turnover that has occurred over recent years?

Division has had a lot of turnover. People leaving frustrated and in disgust. Leads to hostile working environment. Staff replaced with people with little or no experience with blind services. Experience in the field is not validated. Need a mix of new and experienced staff. Recruitment is a challenge.

7) Do you feel DBS contracts are properly negotiated and managed without preferential treatment?

Not negotiated. Based on number served, historical. Districts have little or no

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

involvement in contracting/amount.

One deliverable - # served. Dollar amount based on figure done by an outside group.

- 8) Do you feel the needs of DBS clients are being met effectively?

Doesn't know. Has yet to see any kind of satisfaction survey results.

Based on units of service, would say no. Should focus on units of service per client vs. number of clients served.

- 9) Are DBS contract managers and staff allowed/ authorized to effectively manage contracts with CRPs?

Neutral. He's more aggressive and not concerned about negative feedback.

Us vs. them mentality. Districts encouraged not to interfere with CRP's – happening more recently. There is one point of entry, the Division Director. CRP's call Division Director, not contract managers or District Administrators if they have a problem. It has evolved to this over a period of time.

- 10) Do you feel that DBS funding is being put to its best use?

No, in his personal opinion. Gave Palm Beach as an example. Palm Beach CRP went bankrupt and they did not have another provider in that area. The District office took over the independent living services. Were able to do that due to good staff and networking. District office was able to provide services better and for less.

Services should be a combination of CRP and district services.

- 11) Is the DBS hiring process fair?

Doesn't know. Doesn't know where they recruit from. A lot of people hired without blind experience.

- 12) Do you have any sense of the presence of favoritism in DBS hiring practices?

Yes, couple of instances.

- 13) Do you feel DBS employees are free to express themselves without concern?

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

No. Really uncomfortable feeling.

- 14) How would you describe communication from and with executive management?

Tell them what they want to hear.

Hard to throw out new ideas or be philosophical.

Try not to engage in any kind of confrontation.

- 15) Are written policies and procedures adequate to guide staff? And, are they followed and enforced?

Weak, very general. With general it is hard to measure outcome. Independent language should cite a specific goal.

- 16) If you could, what would you change at DBS?

Easy fix – new leadership.

Attitude issue with the staff. Hard to change.

- 17) Are there any issues you would like to bring up that we have not discussed?

Perception of staff. A coworker has been unfairly harassed by other staff. Uncomfortable with it. Cliques, groups. A lot of good people - don't like to see people picked on.

Focus group example: a CRP staff said "what is she doing here" to Joyce Hildreth in a focus group meeting. Joyce told the DBS staff member (the "she") to leave.

Management doesn't stand up to CRP's for the staff.

He has been watching staff members being moved around based on (rumored) comments from CRP's.

Seen results of what happens when people pursue thoughts contrary to management.

Little interaction from the Districts. They won't express themselves. Should want to hear from the Districts to know when something is coming.

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

Not a lot of initiative or creative thought because everything is micro-managed. Said his supervisor was "neutered".

Haven't done any kind of monitoring in 2 years. Previous supervisor ( [REDACTED] ) was fired when he tried to monitor. Dialogue to do it, but nothing happens.

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

Person(s) Interviewed/Title: [REDACTED] Interviewer: JM  
Date: 3/5/12 Notes prepared by: KK

1) DBS position/ role?

MIS Manager. Manages IT computer support staff and DBS applications.

2) How long have you worked at DBS?

2 years in April.

3) How long have you worked in your current position?

2 years in April. Reports to Director, [REDACTED].

4) How would you describe the working environment within DBS/ your office?  
(Examples, reasons, further information....)

Overall, enjoys it. Especially working with customers.

Described the management team as working with a volcano. Some staff talk to Joyce a lot and some do not. Information/views get distorted and you don't always get to defend yourself. Doesn't feel good. There are different "camps" in the office. Joyce tends to believe the information from the last person she talked to. Hearsay – sometimes not objective.

Gave an example of working on federal reports. Some staff overreact to little issues and blame MIS. [REDACTED] feels MIS corrects their issues; however, incorrect data from business areas is what causes the issues, not MIS. [REDACTED] looks at improving the process rather than all the fixes.

5) Can you name any positive role models within the Division?

No role models named, but he feels that everything has improved. They are doing a lot of good things, but doesn't always feel like it. Feels like there is a time bomb sitting out there. Feels like he can do 10 good things, but 1 instance of a bad thing and he could be gone. Decisions to terminate an employee are not always objective. He referred to [REDACTED]. Feels that [REDACTED] helped turn things around and his departure was unjustified. Some staff are very sensitive and have a hard time being challenged. [REDACTED] termination may be questionable too.

\*Feels that Joyce ties him to [REDACTED] and that could be seen as a strike

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

against him.

- 6) What is your impression of the staff turnover that has occurred over recent years?

Some good, more good than bad. A lot of good turnover at the District Administrator level. Digging out from 20 years of bad management.

- 7) Do you feel DBS contracts are properly negotiated and managed (no preferential treatment)?

Not close enough to this area to have an opinion about it.

- 8) Do you feel the needs of DBS clients are being met effectively?

Not close enough to this area to have an opinion about it.

- 9) Are DBS contract managers and staff allowed/ authorized to effectively manage contracts with CRPs?

Not close enough to this area to have an opinion about it.

- 10) Do you have a sense that DBS funding is being put to its best use?

Not always. Gave an example regarding the AWARE system and Alliance (contracted support). Feels additional IT services from Alliance (requested by DBS staff) are not worth the expense.

Been called an "obstructionist" and told he doesn't get to make that decision.

Said Joyce thinks he puts his hand in the business side of things too much. Joyce said MIS should be a servant to operations/ client services.

- 11) Is the DBS hiring process fair?

Doesn't know. Some people (not him at this time) don't think it is open enough.

Happy with his two employee appointments.

- 12) Do you have any sense of favoritism in hiring practices?

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

Said it is normal – used to people getting people they know.

- 13) Do you feel DBS employees are free to express themselves without fear?

No (emphatic). Verbally promotes openness, but actions don't show that.

He has learned to pick his battles. Sit back and watch bad decisions being made.

- 14) How would you describe communication from and with executive management?  
Effective?

Troubling. Good in some cases. For example, good when all senior managers are in a room together, but when they break up in "camps" it stirs up drama. He is busy, doesn't see too much of it, but gets wind of it. Communications are not clear/fair. He is concerned that he is not involved in some conversations that involve him.

Jim asked [REDACTED] if he would give the names of the "in-camp". [REDACTED] named [REDACTED].  
Doesn't know what kind of advice [REDACTED] gives Joyce, but she is a confidant.

- 15) Are written policies and procedures adequate to guide staff? And, are they followed and enforced?

Thinks so; For the most part

- 16) If you could, what would you change at DBS?

Couple managers in over their heads, not strong enough to lead and not great decision makers.

Staff issues should be dealt with at that level and not by running to the Director.

Would like to be judged based on work performance rather than hearsay.

Have to get rid of the drama mode. Get executive management to work together all the time. Get rid of "camps".

- 17) Are there any issues you would like to bring up that we have not touched upon?

He is not the only one that feels this way. Not the only one that deserves to be here and shouldn't have to feel this way. On pins and needles. Feels stronger

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

leaders are put in “other camp”. Joyce does not seek drama, but drawn into it by certain staff.

Not making sound decisions. Example, management wanted to be able to run a report of how many authorizations are placed after the fact. Would be a \$12,000 system change through the software provider. Feels you still need to do spot checks, don't need the system report. Already know where problems are. Doesn't need system change. Recommended process change – create an emergency authorization process that would allow a one day turnaround (**potential best practice to consider**).

Also expressed concern with [REDACTED] going to Joyce over issues she has with him ([REDACTED]). They work together a lot. She doesn't like controversy. Would rather she come to him with her problems about him.



DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

Person(s) Interviewed/Title: [REDACTED]  
Date: 3/22/12

Interviewer: KK  
Notes prepared by: KK

1) DBS position/ role?

Rehabilitation supervisor, District 6 - Orlando

2) How long have you worked at DBS?

18-19 years

3) How long have you worked in your current position? Who is your supervisor?

5.5-6 years total. Took a year off to work as a counselor to help her district. Reports to [REDACTED].

4) How would you describe the working environment within DBS/ your office?

In her office – fine. Calm, pleasant environment. Recently moved offices so all staff are on the same floor.

Overall – A lot of stress. Caseloads large. Huge influx of newly blind in the area.

5) Can you name any positive role models or areas that have improved within the Division?

A lot has improved. For example, the case management system. Now they have quarterly reviews with counselors to go over how things are going.

[REDACTED] has made a huge difference in the office, for the good.

6) What is your impression of the staff turnover that has occurred over recent years?

Stresses her terrifically. Lose continuity with turnover. Terrible turnover in districts.

Need good people to come and stay. No senior counselors at this time. Most staff are kind of new.

7) Do you feel DBS contracts are properly negotiated and managed without preferential treatment?

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

Thinks so. A lot of tension with facilities. Not due to negotiations. A lot of tension. (LCF and Lake County)

8) Do you feel the needs of DBS clients are being met effectively?

As much as they are capable of. Experience a gap in service due to turnover – vacant caseloads. Affects clients served. Affects speed of service.

9) Are DBS contract managers and staff allowed/ authorized to effectively manage contracts with CRPs?

Yes. [REDACTED] helps and is supportive.

10) Do you feel that DBS funding is being put to its best use?

Yes, at the district they do their best.

We discussed the pilot job placement program with LCF. Lighthouse received \$4,000 for a placement. Have 40 people in the program. Have placed 9, 6 of which have been in a LCF facility. A little uncomfortable with the numbers. Wants to involve other businesses. Stress over authorizations. Money given for training, money given for placements, then put back in for training. Counselors have their own goals for placements. If the goals are not reached they will receive unsatisfactory evaluations. Lighthouse ties up placements. Lighthouse decides when someone is ready for a placement. District has no control over their numbers and working on this pilot program causes them to lose time for their own job placements (which have to be in by 3/30).

11) Is the DBS hiring process fair?

Yes, in her office. Pick someone with the appropriate skills and education.

12) Do you have any sense of the presence of favoritism in DBS hiring practices?

No.

13) Do you feel DBS employees are free to express themselves without concern?

Personally, she is free to speak. Doesn't know if all her staff would say the same, because they are new.

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

She and [REDACTED] have team meetings. Staff are encouraged to be open.

- 14) How would you describe communication from and with senior management?

Doesn't have much contact. Gets along fine when she sees them. Communication is through [REDACTED].

- 15) Are written policies and procedures adequate to guide staff? And, are they followed and enforced?

[REDACTED] has been working hard on policies. Has cleared up gray areas in policies/expanded on information.

Policies are the best they've been in a long time.

- 16) If you could, what would you change at DBS?

Give staff more positive feedback. There is a focus on what people are doing wrong – auditing perspective.

Feels that she has lost a lot of people because they don't feel like they were appreciated.

- 17) Are there any issues you would like to bring up that we have not discussed?

Worried about the LCF situation. It is a big program, lots of clients involved, and has grown dramatically. Grown so fast. Need to work to make it a team effort. Need teamwork.

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

Person Interviewed/Title: [REDACTED], former Deputy Director, DBS

Date: March 9, 2012 Interviewer: Dean Goodson

1) **Former DBS position/role?**

Deputy Director, DBS.

2) **How long did you work at DBS?**

Under two years, August 2009 to April 2011.

3) **How long did you work in your current position? Who was your supervisor?**

One year and Joyce Hildreth, DBS Director was his supervisor.

4) **When were you terminated or did you leave DBS?**

[REDACTED] stated that he was given the option to resign in lieu termination. He said that Hildreth gave him this option in the presence of [REDACTED] in the Personnel office.

5) **Are written policies and procedures adequate to guide staff? And, are they followed and enforced?**

[REDACTED] explained that policies in about half of the areas are very good, but in other areas, policies are lacking, vague, or do not exist. He said this was in areas of strategic planning, projects with management, and priority setting by management. [REDACTED] said the management information systems and contract management were examples of this; and personnel and clients services had good policies and procedures.

6) **How would you describe the working environment within DBS/ your office?**

[REDACTED] said in DBS, the intent was there, but including himself, other employees were fearful of losing their positions. He said employees were afraid of expressing their thoughts or ideas.

7) **Can you name any positive role models or areas that have improved within the Division?**

[REDACTED] said the overall view of DBS by their stakeholder groups improved because of more communication and more listening by DBS which created a better relationships. He said he especially saw this with Business Enterprise and the management information systems.

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

8) **What is your impression of the staff turnover that has occurred over recent years?**

██████████ said he had a “mixed impression.” He said the old leadership was not strong with holding employees accountable. The new leadership, however, holds employees accountable, and the solution is letting employees go when they find them not accountable, resulting in several employees losing their jobs.

██████████ said conflicts were dealt with through personnel actions such as terminations rather than through more constructive approaches to solving an issue or problem.

9) **Do you feel DBS contracts are properly negotiated and managed without preferential treatment?**

██████████ said there are “gaps” in the DBS contracts. Some are managed consistently while other are not. He said there needs to be more competitive bidding especially with client services, aids, or technology. There needs to be more scrutiny with the administration of the contracts.

10) **Do you feel the needs of DBS clients are being met effectively?**

██████████ said overall the needs were being met because the bulk of funding was dedicated to vocational rehabilitation.

11) **Are DBS contract managers and staff allowed/ authorized to effectively manage contracts with Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs)?**

██████████ explained there was a lot of micromanaging of the contract decisions by Hildreth, and contract managers tried to manage them, but were timid to exercise the terms and conditions of the contracts for fear of repercussions. They did not want to go against what Hildreth wanted, and what was written in the contract was not always enforced.

12) **Do you have a sense that DBS funding is being put to its best use (e.g., increased dollars in CRP contracts)?**

██████████ said that the authorization process of the vocational rehabilitation program, where a fourth to a third of the funding goes, should be reviewed to determine if it is a sound process. He said the process should be internal to DBS without going through upper management review or anyone outside of DBS.

13) **Is the DBS hiring process fair?**

██████████ said “yes overall” at the staff level. But, at the management level, hiring became whatever route was expeditious instead of taking the time to acquire the best candidate for the position.

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

14) **Do you have any sense of the presence of favoritism in DBS hiring practices?**

██████████ responded that he did not have a sense of favoritism, but it was more of filling a position too quickly with the management level positions. There were no value or consistency with placing someone in those positions. The attitude was "we'll just get another one," and not necessarily a qualified person.

15) **Do you feel DBS employees are free to express themselves without concern?**

██████████ said the intent was genuinely there, but in practice, it was not that way.

16) **How would you describe communication from and with executive management?**

██████████ said communication was inconsistent. He said there would be "a load for awhile then there would be none for awhile."

17) **If you could, what would you change at DBS?**

██████████ said top priorities are not clear or concise to employees, there are too many snap decisions from management causing employees not to understand what is important. He said if there was better direction from the top, the turnover at DBS would stop.

18) **Are there any issues you would like to bring up that we have not touched upon?**

██████████ said just the way things change so quickly at DBS. He said two and a half weeks before he was told to resign, Hildreth told him "we make a great team together."

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

Person Interviewed/Title: [REDACTED], former Rehabilitation Engineer and Technology Consultant, DBS

Date: March 13, 2012 Interviewer: Dean Goodson

1) **Former DBS position/ role?**

Several positions: Rehabilitation Engineer and Technology Consultant, Program Manager of Client Services, Bureau Chief of Client Services, and Bureau Chief of Business Enterprises.

2) **How long did you work at DBS?**

16 years.

3) **How long did you work in your current position? Who was your supervisor?**

March 2009 to November 30, 2011.

4) **When were you terminated or did you leave DBS?**

[REDACTED] stated he was told he had to move to Daytona, FL or be terminated. He said he elected to resign in lieu of termination because he did not want to make the move. [REDACTED] said he learned that after he resigned, the position he was to take in Daytona was eliminated.

5) **Are written policies and procedures adequate to guide staff? And, are they followed and enforced?**

[REDACTED] said he believed they are when they are followed. However, DBS staff did not follow the policies in order "to keep the Director from coming down on them." He gave examples of two of the Lighthouses for the Blind where the administrators reported to the DBS Director, Joyce Hildreth, that these CRPs were not servicing the clients properly and not documenting the services correctly. [REDACTED] said Hildreth got upset with the administrators and told them they should be "working with them" rather than providing the right services or documentation.

6) **How would you describe the working environment within DBS/ your office?**

[REDACTED] said the environment was hostile and employees called Hildreth "Hitler" because she ruled by intimidation. He said she would select an employee time after time and give them a hard time.

7) **Can you name any positive role models or areas that have improved within**

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

**the Division?**

█████ said the relationship with the Community Rehabilitation Providers. But, he said it was a “reverse type of relationship” because DBS worked for the CPRs instead of the CPRs working for DBS.

**8) What is your impression of the staff turnover that has occurred over recent years?**

█████ said this was the highest turnover DBS ever had. He said several employees left just to get away from DBS while several others were wrongfully terminated.

**9) Do you feel DBS contracts are properly negotiated and managed without preferential treatment?**

█████ said not with the CRP contracts. He said funding was taken from direct services and placed in CRP contracts especially with training, which meant clients had no other choice for training except through the CRPs. He said as more money is transferred to the CRPs, there is less money dedicated for other client direct services. He added that the CRPs have now received the contracts for job placement and they do not have the proper training that the DBS counselors have.

**10) Do you feel the needs of DBS clients are being met effectively?**

█████ said “no” based upon his previous answer and that clients cannot receive the tools and devices they need from direct services because funding is going to the CRPs.

**11) Are DBS contract managers and staff allowed/ authorized to effectively manage contracts with Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs)?**

█████ said “no.” He gave the example of CRPs not wanting ██████ as a contract manager because he spoke out against CRPs receiving funds when they did not meet their numbers and obligations to clients. Instead, ██████ was transferred out of his position to the Talking Book Library.

**12) Do you have a sense that DBS funding is being put to its best use (e.g., increased dollars in CRP contracts)?**

█████ responded “no.” He gave the example that two years ago, DBS received stimulus funds, which was used for a grant to recruit blind students at colleges for a job opportunity, when in fact DBS already had knowledge of all of these students. He said they wasted these funds anyway for the grant. He added that DBS spent money for CRPs to update their equipment technology when they were supposed to already have this equipment to perform under their contracts. Elliott said this money should have gone to client direct services.



DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

13) **Is the DBS hiring process fair?**

█████ said "no," that employees who were more than qualified were not promoted or selected for better positions because Hildreth or some other upper level manager did not like them.

14) **Do you have any sense of the presence of favoritism in DBS hiring practices?**

█████ said "yes," that there were individuals selected for supervisory positions that lacked experience or were not qualified; but because they were liked by Hildreth or by someone in upper management, they were hired.

15) **Do you feel DBS employees are free to express themselves without concern?**

█████ said "no, definitely not," that staff members are afraid to express their opinions especially about the wrongful practices associated with the CRP contracts. He added that probably around 80 percent of the DBS staff are afraid to come to work.

16) **How would you describe communication from and with executive management?**

█████ explained that it was mostly monologues by Hildreth rather than dialogues with DBS staff members. He said employees and upper management are afraid of losing their jobs if they cross Hildreth in any way.

17) **If you could, what would you change at DBS?**

█████ said he would change "the atmosphere" with the way employees are treated, and change the way business is conducted with the CRP contracts by changing the funding formulas and procedures.

18) **Are there any issues you would like to bring up that we have not touched upon?**

█████ recommended that someone needs to take a close look at all the DBS contracts because their number continues to increase when utilizing other competitive client services would be cheaper and beneficial to their customers. He further stated that the way ██████████, DBS Personnel Liaison, conducts her business is "not on the up and up." He described White as "Hildreth's henchman."

## OIG 11/12-20 M: DBS Management Review

Person(s) Interviewed/Title: [REDACTED]

Interviewer: Jim Maxwell

Date: 3/2/12 Notes prepared by: Kelly Kilker

1) DBS position/ role?

Bureau Chief of the Bureau of Business Enterprise

2) How long have you worked at DBS?

7 years

3) How long have you worked in your current position?

1.5 years. Supervisor is Joyce Hildreth (Division Director).

4) Are written policies and procedures adequate to guide staff in core functions? And, are they following and enforced?

Yes and yes.

5) How would you describe the working environment within DBS/ your office? (Examples, reasons, further information....)

Extremely good. Climate has changed. Believes there has been an upgrade of professionalism and accountability has changed. Joyce Hildreth wanted a year to evaluate staff. She said everyone would be held accountable for their position description (which [REDACTED] said was needed). Many people left due to being held accountable. [REDACTED] said that before Joyce: 1) Providers had no respect for DBS; 2) He only had respect for the Ft. Lauderdale district office; and 3) they had to have work groups to address the "wishy washy" contracts. [REDACTED] believes there is a greater respect for DBS now.

6) Can you name any positive role models or areas that have improved within the Division?

[REDACTED] named Joyce first. He also proceeded to list several of the District Administrators (DA) and other staff: Ivy Romero (Ft Lauderdale DA); Tony Pileggi (Pensacola DA); Michelle Levy (Miami DA); Brian Michaels (Orlando DA); Jeffrey Whitehead (Tampa DA); and Jim Woolyhand (Daytona Beach DA). [REDACTED] said that he has respect for the DA's that he knows. He said he doesn't know if Ana St. Fort

## OIG 11/12-20 M: DBS Management Review

(Tallahassee DA) is fit for the job. The districts have received new supervisors and DA's. A lot have been brought from the outside.

The relationship between districts and the providers has improved.

Policies and procedures are followed more consistently regarding any issue – the previous Director used to operate based on mood/feelings.

7) What is your impression of the staff turnover that has occurred over recent years?

Accountability thing – some couldn't adjust to the changes.

█ discussed the Bureau of Administrative Services. Lots of change. Probably warranted. █ left and █ took the position. █ couldn't explain things (e.g. the budget). She is no longer in the position. █ took over. He couldn't explain the budget either. Now █ is in the position. █ believes she is a good fit.

█ also discussed the Deputy Director position. █ was nice but didn't do anything. █ took over the position. █ was a good guy, but busy - trying to make up for the lack of work from his predecessor. Too much. █ was below █ and they clashed. █ was shocked when █ was let go. It was sudden. Staff were interviewed and several felt threatened by █. Ellen took over the position. █ likes █ in some ways. Said she is smart, but gets confused. Doesn't think she was the right fit for the position. Not good people skills. Doesn't handle certain things well.

8) Do you feel DBS contracts are properly negotiated and managed (no preferential treatment)?

█ has been away from contracts for the last 18 months. Contracts are far better than before Joyce came. Steve Ritacco would do what he wanted to do with contracts. Now, things have been put in place to make contracting fairly uniformed. Amounts contracted based on historical data/trends.

Does not know of recent overpayments.

Could have been tougher on some of the smaller/struggling providers, but didn't want to lose provider (some providers depend on DBS funds to stay in business).

Does not know or does not feel that there has been preferential treatment. Larger providers receive more funds because they see more clients. Money is tied to people served.

OIG 11/12-20 M: DBS Management Review

\* [REDACTED] pulled [REDACTED] aside one day to ask him about the contracts. [REDACTED] said the Department of Financial Services wanted to know why DBS contracts have a remedy asking a provider to pay back funds. Contracts used to have a remedy that the last payment would be withheld or reduced. [REDACTED] is not sure about new language.

**Follow up:** Audit staff will review contracts to see if remedies language has changed.

9) Do you feel the needs of DBS clients are being met effectively?

Yes, but doesn't work closely with Client Services. Would think yes since personnel are better.

[REDACTED] referenced Florida Statute that calls for services to be contracted as much as possible. Believe [REDACTED] was referring to: §413.014, F.S., which directs DBS to "as rapidly as feasible, increase the amount of such services provided by community rehabilitation programs."

District's role has diminished, and they are not happy. Resentment. Less people in districts. Many district staff have been hired by the providers. DBS expects more from the providers and less from DBS staff.

Jim asked what [REDACTED] thought about a comment made that more contracted money meant less for direct services. [REDACTED] initially had no comment, but referred to resentment from district offices.

10) Are DBS contract managers and staff allowed/ authorized to effectively manage contracts with CRPs?

No idea at this point/no opinion.

11) Do you have a sense that DBS funding is being put to its best use (e.g., increased dollars in CRP contracts)?

Yes, in his area (Bureau of Business Enterprise).

12) Is the DBS hiring process fair?

Yes, as far as he knows.

13) Do you have any sense of favoritism in hiring practices?

OIG 11/12-20 M: DBS Management Review

No, no evidence.

- 14) Do you feel DBS employees are free to express themselves without fear?

Yes.

- 15) How would you describe communication from and with executive management?  
Effective?

Yes. Meetings and emails all the time.

- 16) Are there any issues you would like to bring up that we have not touched upon?

Overall, Joyce has done an excellent job.

█ pointed to hiring concerns from Craig Kiser. He said Craig believed that a blind person can do any job a sighted person can do. Craig placed a lot of blind individuals into jobs they weren't necessarily qualified for (e.g. management experience/skills).

- 17) If you could, what would you change at DBS?

Discussed concerns/contention with DBS Fiscal staff on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor (█ and █). DBS used to waste money, but they are more fiscally responsible now and trying to do all the right things. Discussed concerns with communications issues between fiscal staff and other DBS staff. Gave an example of fiscal staff contacting Joyce and a meeting being held when the problem could have been resolved by a phone call.

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

Person(s) Interviewed/Title: [REDACTED] Interviewer: GW Date: 3-12-2012 Notes prepared by: GW

1) DBS position/ role?

District 3 administrator

2) How long have you worked at DBS?

Since October 2011.

3) How long have you worked in your current position? Who is your supervisor?

Since January 2012.

4) How would you describe the working environment within DBS/ your office?

Supportive. As a new employee, I think I can go to my supervisor for answers and get good information. Very professional. Well managed.

5) Can you name any positive role models or areas that have improved within the Division?

[REDACTED]. She started as a counselor and moved up. Good model for me.

6) What is your impression of the staff turnover that has occurred over recent years?

Has been turnover in the Jacksonville office. Reasons vary and are the same as other places I have been: Low pay, personal reasons, and leadership challenges.

7) Do you feel DBS contracts are properly negotiated and managed without preferential treatment?

Yes, I review contracts monthly. Use a checklist. Don't see preferential treatment, the numbers are either there or they're not.

8) Do you feel the needs of DBS clients are being met effectively?

Yes. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place.

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

- 9) Are DBS contract managers and staff allowed/ authorized to effectively manage contracts with CRPs?

Out of my purview. I know who to contact in Tallahassee. I have a positive relationship with my CRPs. Open and honest relationship.

- 10) Do you feel that DBS funding is being put to its best use?

Overall, yes. Funding is there for the VR program. Some other programs could use additional funding: blind babies, older blind, and Adult Program.

- 11) Is the DBS hiring process fair?

I believe so. Sometimes the decision to hire takes too long. Lot of hands involved.

- 12) Do you have any sense of the presence of favoritism in DBS hiring practices?

No.

- 13) Do you feel DBS employees are free to express themselves without concern?

Yes. The way things are expressed needs to be constructive, professional. Don't have problems going to my supervisor. She is timely in responding.

- 14) How would you describe communication from and with senior management?

Haven't had much communication. Just e-mail. I believe in the chain of command. My experience has been super.

- 15) Are written policies and procedures adequate to guide staff? And, are they followed and enforced?

Adequacy depends on which policy and procedure. Some policies are a little too free and favor the client too much. Most are good with good balance between DBS and the client. I'm still too new to the job to really respond.

- 16) If you could, what would you change at DBS?

New counselor training would be helpful at the beginning of employment. We have continuing training but training specific to new counselors would be helpful.

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

17) Are there any issues you would like to bring up that we have not discussed?

No.
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DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

Person(s) Interviewed/Title: Ana Saint-Fort Interviewer: GW Date: 3-12-12 Notes prepared by: GW

1) DBS position/ role?

District two administrator.

2) How long have you worked at DBS?

18 years.

3) How long have you worked in your current position? Who is your supervisor?

6 years. [REDACTED]

4) How would you describe the working environment within DBS/ your office?

Average.

5) Can you name any positive role models or areas that have improved within the Division?

Within the last two years communication has improved. [REDACTED] is a good role model.

6) What is your impression of the staff turnover that has occurred over recent years?

In the field, a lot of the turnover has to do with low salaries.

7) Do you feel DBS contracts are properly negotiated and managed without preferential treatment?

Need to look at how they are managed. I think it should be on a fee for service basis. Should depend on the number of clients served not lump sum. Can't comment on preferential treatment (not in a position to know). More competition could be brought into the process if it were open to TBI (teachers of visually impaired) individuals.

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

8) Do you feel the needs of DBS clients are being met effectively?

Overall, the Division is striving for that. There are pros and cons with individual CRPs – depends on the needs of the individual client.

9) Are DBS contract managers and staff allowed/ authorized to effectively manage contracts with CRPs?

District administrators used to have a more management/monitoring role with respect to the CRPs. Now that is more centralized. I do look at invoices submitted for payment.

10) Do you feel that DBS funding is being put to its best use?

Yes. We try to be good stewards – money goes to helping clients.

11) Is the DBS hiring process fair?

Yes, at the district level. Follow the People First protocol. Can't answer at the senior management level.

12) Do you have any sense of the presence of favoritism in DBS hiring practices?

Not at the district.

13) Do you feel DBS employees are free to express themselves without concern?

Think we are. The Division has been working on improving communications. I feel free to bring issues up the chain to [REDACTED].

14) How would you describe communication from and with senior management?

On a scale of 1(poor) to 5(great), I would say a 4. Pretty good. The Division has been striving to improve communications.

15) Are written policies and procedures adequate to guide staff? And, are they followed and enforced?

Policies and procedures are adequate at the field level and are enforced. A protocol is in place for changes and exceptions.

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

16) If you could, what would you change at DBS?

Increasing the amount and quality of communications. Would like for senior and middle management to meet face to face to talk about trends and best practices.

17) Are there any issues you would like to bring up that we have not discussed?

Pay is a big issue in order to retain staff.

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

Person(s) Interviewed/Title: [REDACTED] Interviewer: GW Date: 3/13/12 Notes prepared by: GW

1) DBS position/ role?

District 7 administrator. Tampa

2) How long have you worked at DBS?

Over 2.5 years.

3) How long have you worked in your current position? Who is your supervisor?

Since July 2011. [REDACTED].

4) How would you describe the working environment within DBS/ your office?

DBS seems to be more structured then when I started in the St. Pete office. More down to business. More structured. More reports. More workload. Morale has suffered due to more workload and no raises. We had to close the St. Pete office and moved the Lakeland office. Had lots of turnover and a rough transition period following some personnel/management problems. Things have improved. New policies implemented. Procedures streamlined. Working with CRPs to improve relations damaged by the previous district administration.

5) Can you name any positive role models or areas that have improved within the Division?

[REDACTED] and the BEP program has improved. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] are all good role models. The fiscal unit is good.

6) What is your impression of the staff turnover that has occurred over recent years?

Seems like a lot of staff turnover in the district. Takes a lot of time and paperwork. Turnover at state office has caused problems with changing roles and keeping up with the changes.

7) Do you feel DBS contracts are properly negotiated and managed without preferential treatment?

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

I am on the contract team. Contracts are not bid perhaps because providers are limited. Other agencies I've been with bid more.

- 8) Do you feel the needs of DBS clients are being met effectively?

In most cases they are. The level of documentation is high. Maybe if we reduced the amount of documentation we could give better service. Some Lighthouses are better than others – working on that.

- 9) Are DBS contract managers and staff allowed/ authorized to effectively manage contracts with CRPs?

I work with [REDACTED]. He seems to be effective. Does a good job. If we have a question, we get an answer.

- 10) Do you feel that DBS funding is being put to its best use?

Question the way allocations to districts are made. I don't know how the dollars per client compares to other states. Funding should be allocated per client not a lump sum to the CRP. I worked in DVR and they pay for services rendered.

- 11) Is the DBS hiring process fair?

Yes for the district. Can't speak for the state office.

- 12) Do you have any sense of the presence of favoritism in DBS hiring practices?

No for the district. Can't speak for the state office.

- 13) Do you feel DBS employees are free to express themselves without concern?

I haven't had any problems but others have said they don't feel they can speak up.

- 14) How would you describe communication from and with senior management?

There are various levels of communication. Communication was good when I started in 2009. In March 2010 communication seemed to slack off and that continued to the fall of 2011. Now things have picked up and communications have improved.

DBS Management Review  
OIG 11/12-20 M

- 15) Are written policies and procedures adequate to guide staff? And, are they followed and enforced?

Think they are adequate. Have gotten more. Need to absorb what we have – it has been a bit overwhelming.

- 16) If you could, what would you change at DBS?

DVR received across the board raises about two years ago. We need to do the same. Put a hold on new policies for a while until what we have is solidly in place. Reduced staff turnover would be good.

- 17) Are there any issues you would like to bring up that we have not discussed?

I'm new to the position. Trying to get the district back to where it was before the problems started. I feel I have the support to make needed changes.

**Department of Education  
Office of Inspector General  
DBS Management Review**

**Contracting**  
*Interim Results*

**Client Services Contract Procurement/ Contract Provisions**

- Using statutory exemption to contract without competitive bidding (6. Health services. 7. Services provided to persons with mental or physical disabilities by not-for-profit corporations)
- Using same 15-20 providers each year
- Fixed rate contracts with monthly fixed payment amount
- Primary deliverable/ payment trigger – Documented services to a minimum number of eligible individuals
- Contract award amounts – based largely on the actual deliverables of the prior year

**Contract Remedies** - loosely written and not always enforced  
Remedies (penalty or sanction for contract non-performance)

- Language has been softened over last 3 years
  - o Final numbers served reduced from 100% to 80%. Remedy payment changed from being taken out during contract term to being billed.
- Per contract (Attachment A):
  - o No initial check until 6<sup>th</sup> month. 40% of deliverable (invoiced services)
  - o Only at 10<sup>th</sup> month is a potential monetary remedy addressed (Contractors can serve only **52%** of original requirement without penalty)
  - o Contract completion - 80%-100% clients served is expectation (but no remedy in contracts)

Examples of non-enforcement of contract remedies:

- Tampa Lighthouse (contract 11-522 for \$336,000) did not meet deliverables. No remedy applied. Handwritten note on final payment documentation reads “Per DBS director, contractor was advised they must meet deliverable by May invoice period.”
- Lighthouse of Central Florida (contract 10-976 for \$700,000) applied remedy by reducing the last invoice. However, a payment was made from the G&D fund to reimburse the provider in the exact amount of the remedy.

**Contract Monitoring**

- No monitoring reports issued in last 2 years (no formal monitoring).
- DFS - The monitoring process should include reconciling provider-generated reports to source documentation such as case management notes, sign-in sheets and client files.

### **Contract Close-out (final assessment of contract)**

- No written procedures addressing close-out process. After 2008 IG audit, a form and process were in place (undone?).
- No close-out reports prepared for 2009-10
- Errors noted on 2010-11 close-out reports reviewed
- No reviewer approval on 2010-11 close-out reports

### **Responses from prior DBS employees on contracting**

Agree following have merit:

- Need for competitive bidding for client services contracts, aids and technology.
- Use of limited number of providers for most client services limits client choice/ customer satisfaction.
- DBS staff should have more say about the purchasing of client services.
- More client services are being shifted from DBS to Lighthouses due to current management strategy.
- The executive director is said to be more involved with negotiations of the contracts than the actual contract managers.
- The DBS case management system can be more effectively utilized to monitor services provided to clients.

### **Review steps**

- 1) Reviewed procedures on contract administration/ contract monitoring
- 2) Analyzed trends in dollar amount and number of contracts awarded
- 3) Looked at changes in contract language and remedies for VR contracts over the last 3 years.
- 4) Inspected contract closeout documentation for the last 2 years for Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Babies contracts for a sample of 6 CRPs
  - reviewed clients served vs. planned
  - noted how numbers of clients served impacted subsequent years award amounts
  - determined that contract remedies were imposed and collected (as applicable)
- 5) Obtained financial information on trends in Division disbursement for contracting versus authorizations.
- 6) Met with DFS staff on recent audit that included DBS contract agreements



## Department of Financial Services (Preliminary findings)

Our review of twenty-five contracts and grant agreements disclosed that the Department had scope of work and/or deliverable issues for nineteen of these contracts.

Specifically, we noted the following:

- One grant agreement did not contain a scope of work that clearly established the tasks the recipient was required to perform. The Department provided an explanation that the scope of work was provided for by statute. However, the grant agreement did not include this statutory reference.

Contract #	Service Provider	Contract Amount
372-96820-1S001	Tallahassee Community College	\$ 316,675

- Three service contracts provide for twelve monthly payments; however, there is not a required level of performance until the end of the sixth month. We recommend that the Department align the performance with each of the monthly payments.

Contract #	Service Provider	Contract Amount
12-506	Conklin Centers for the Blind	\$ 110,331
12-533	Florida Centers for the Blind	\$ 158,332
12-526	Visually Impaired Persons of Southwest FL	\$ 233,100

- Fifteen grant agreements did not provide for a specific level of service or criteria to determine successful completion criteria for deliverables. For example,
  - The agreement with the University of Central Florida provided for a consultant to fill the position of Chancellor of public schools for a seven month period. In turn, the University subcontracted with the consultant. A general position description was included as an attachment to the grant agreement. Payments were made to the university quarterly in advance with no requirements in the grant agreement to provide for a minimum level of service.
  - The two agreements for the Failure Free Reading Program (Washington County School District and Putnam County School District) did not specify the minimum number of students to be served.
  - Four agreements did require documentation to be submitted with the invoice to demonstrate performance. However, there were no minimum performance levels the provider was required to meet when submitting monthly payments.

Contract #	Service Provider	Contract Amount
380-2442A-2CCC1	Levy County School District	\$ 89,337
206-2442A-20001	Investing In Our Youth	\$ 172,998
376-96100-2SB01	FAMU	\$ 114,701
130-97260-2SL01	Miami-Dade County District Schools	\$ 175,750
481-60010-1SC01	University of Central Florida	\$ 130,000
500-93720-2S001	Palm Beach County School District	\$ 300,000
670-96433-2S001	Washington County School District	\$ 375,000
670-92400-2D001	Washington County School District	\$ 578,156
480-2262A-2CA01	Orange County District Schools	\$ 635,751
757-4052A-2PFJ1	Centro Campesino Farmworker, Inc	\$ 94,222
522-95010-2S001	St. Petersburg College	\$ 132,995
530-92860-1SA01	Polk County School District	\$ 65,770
37D99650-2QG01	Volunteer USA Foundation	\$ 200,000
206-93650-1Q001	Investing In Our Youth	\$ 156,402
540-96443-2S001	Putnam County School District	\$ 375,000

## **Financial Consequences**

Effective July 1, 2010, Section 287.058(1)(h), Florida Statutes, requires services contracts to contain provisions for financial consequences an agency must apply if a provider fails to perform in accordance with a contract.

- The financial consequences for three service agreements allow the vendor to receive full payment for the contract. If it is determined that financial consequences should be assessed, the Department will bill the vendor after the contract is completed. Although this may meet the statutory requirement, the billing of a contractor for financial consequences after the final payment is made does not provide a viable solution to encourage contract compliance. In addition, it is possible the Department may have difficulty in collecting the amount owed.

Contract #	Service Provider	Contract Amount
12-506	Conklin Centers for the Blind	\$ 110,331
12-533	Florida Centers for the Blind	\$ 158,332
12-526	Visually Impaired Persons of Southwest FL	\$ 233,100

## **Other**

The Department was unable to provide a written grant agreement for a recipient of State Funds. Instead, we were provided the award notification, the recipient's budget of expenditures and the Request for Award was reviewed. To date, the Department has disbursed \$120,000.00 for this grant award.

Contract #	Service Provider	Contract Amount
670-96441-2S001	Washington County School District	\$ 300,000

### **Contract/Grant Management**

Contract/Grant managers must enforce performance of the contract terms and conditions; review and document all deliverables for which payment is requested by vendors; and provide written certification of the Department's receipt of goods and services and ensure all payment requests are certified.

- Section 215.971(2), Florida Statute requires services to be accepted in writing before payment. The grant managers were not certifying receipt of deliverables for thirteen grant agreements as the payment terms allow the recipients to receive payments in advance. Regardless of the timing of payments, we are recommending that the Department maintain signed certification statements in the management files to support payments on a post audit basis.

Contract #	Service Provider	Contract Amount
380-2442A-2CCC1	Levy County School District	\$ 89,337
372-96820-1S001	Tallahassee Community College	\$ 316,675
376-96100-2SB01	FAMU	\$ 114,701
130-97260-2SL01	Miami-Dade County District Schools	\$ 175,750
500-93720-2S001	Palm Beach County School District	\$ 300,000
670-96443-2S001	Washington County School District	\$ 375,000
670-92400-2D001	Washington County School District	\$ 578,156
480-2262A-2CA01	Orange County District Schools	\$ 635,751
522-95010-2S001	St. Petersburg College	\$ 132,995
530-92860-1SA01	Polk County School District	\$ 65,770
37D99650-2QG01	Volunteer USA Foundation	\$ 200,000
540-96443-2S001	Putnam County School District	\$ 375,000
670-96441-2S001	Washington County School District	\$ 300,000

- The required certification statement for one grant agreement is being signed by an employee who is not the designated grant manager.

Contract #	Service Provider	Contract Amount
481-60010-1SC01	University of Central Florida	\$ 130,000

- Deliverables for four agreements were approved based on reconciling the invoices with data input by the vendor/recipient on the department's reporting database. The monitoring process should include reconciling provider-generated reports to source documentation such as case management notes, sign-in sheets and client files.

Contract #	Service Provider	Contract Amount
12-506	Conklin Centers for the Blind	\$ 110,331
12-533	Florida Centers for the Blind	\$ 158,332
12-526	Visually Impaired Persons of Southwest FL	\$ 233,100
757-4052A-2PFJ1	Centro Campesino Farmworker Center, Inc	\$ 94,222

- It was noted that monitoring has not been performed for one agreement. Although by statute FILC is independent of the agency, they are still responsible for the proper expenditure of funds and use of resources. We recommend the Department incorporate a monitoring process to include the review of receipts.

Contract #	Service Provider	Contract Amount
11-133	Florida Independent Living Council	\$ 395,820

- Section 287.057(14), Florida Statute, states that the contract manager procedures must include monitoring and documenting contract performance, reviewing and documenting all deliverables for which payment is requested by vendors. The designated contract managers for two contracts have no contact with the vendor as their only responsibility is to process the invoices for payment. The services are validated and approved by other Department staff members. A similar situation arises with a third contract; however, the contract manager does have contact with the contractor on issues involving payment of the invoice, but relies on verbal conversations with another Department staff member for validation of service. In these instances, these contract managers are certifying receipt of goods and services with no direct knowledge of the performance of the contractors.

- | Contract # | Service Provider     | Contract Amount |
|------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| A43012     | Creative Consulting  | \$ 163,459      |
| 12-007     | Charles T. Whitelock | \$ 160,000      |
| A4455E     | Technicsource, Inc   | \$ 154,252      |

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL**

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**INTERNAL AUDIT**

**Division of Blind Services**

**Contracted and Purchased Client Services**

**Final Report**

**Audit Number  
07/08-01A**

**June 19, 2008**

## **Executive Summary**

The Division of Blind Services (DBS) provides services to assist individuals, whose primary disability is visual, in achieving maximum levels of employment, independence, and integration into the community. These services are provided either directly through DBS district field offices or indirectly through contracts with community rehabilitation providers. During fiscal year (FY) 2006-07, federal and state funding totaling \$11.8 million was spent to purchase products and services for clients, while \$11.1 million was paid for client services provided through contract providers. Products and services purchased for clients includes, but is not limited to, computer equipment, software, low vision aids and devices, physical and mental restoration, and training.

### Summary of Findings

This audit focused on evaluating the system of internal controls over DBS's procurement and management processes. This report has findings in each principal activity related to contract administration including procurement, award agreements, performance, payments processing, and monitoring. Other findings address the need to improve written procedures to give DBS employees better guidance when performing key activities, and issues regarding non-client purchases made using the Accessible Web-based Activity and Reporting Environment (AWARE) case management system.

Recommendations in the report are intended to assist management in establishing a more effective control environment that will better ensure procurement and management processes are performed effectively and in accordance with controlling laws, rules, policies, and good business practices.

## **Background**

This audit was identified in the Office of Inspector General's (OIG) annual risk assessment and included in the approved annual audit plan. It was performed in support of the Department's goal of quality efficient services with the purpose of promoting the strategic imperative of aligning financial resources with performance.

The purpose of the Division of Blind Services (DBS) is to work jointly with individuals, whose primary disability is visual, toward achieving maximum levels of employment, independence, and integration into the community. During FY 2006-07, DBS served over 51,000 visually impaired individuals. The program serves individuals either directly through its district field offices or indirectly through contracts with community rehabilitation providers.

DBS programs and services are funded primarily from Federal grants. These funds, along with State general revenue monies, totaled \$48.6 million in FY 2006-07; nearly one-half (47 percent) of this amount is spent on client services. In FY 2006-07, \$11.8 million was spent to purchase products and services for clients, while \$11.1 million was paid for client services provided through contracts with community rehabilitation providers. Products and services purchased for clients includes, but is not limited to, computer equipment, software, low vision aids and devices, physical and mental restoration, and training.

The majority of contracts are with community based rehabilitation providers for services that include Independent Living, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services, VR Transition Services, Blind Babies, and Supported Employment Services. Contracts provide for training and counseling in various categories that include assistive technology, communication skills, orientation and mobility, adjustment to blindness, and home management skills.

DBS has made advances in the administration of contracted and purchased client services with the October 2006 introduction of AWARE (Accessible Web-based Activity and Reporting Environment), a web-based case management system. The system covers the life cycle of a DBS client from referral and application through eligibility, plan achievement, and case closure. Designed to mirror the case management process, the system utilizes web technology to automate essential functions and provides the ability to produce extensive reporting that can aid in management decision-making.

## **Audit Objectives and Scope**

This audit focused on evaluating DBS's procurement and management processes. The objectives were to ensure that: 1) client services contracts and purchase authorizations are awarded and executed in accordance with controlling laws, rules, policies, and good business practices; 2) clients receive services required by contract and purchase authorization terms; 3) payments are made in accordance with contract and purchase authorization terms; and 4) delivery of services and purchased items is properly administered and monitored. The scope of the audit included contracts and purchase authorizations active between July 2006 and December 2007, but included records outside that period that affected the review period's transactions.

## **Methodology**

To achieve the objectives, the audit team: 1) researched and reviewed applicable statutes, rules, and procedures; 2) interviewed appropriate staff; and 3) reviewed selected contract and authorization documentation active during the audit period. Fourteen contracts and 69 purchase authorizations were reviewed based on a judgmental selection. Extended review of support for additional authorizations was performed based on procurement and payment processing issues noted during the field work phase.

## **Standards**

This audit was conducted in accordance with the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*, published by the Institute of Internal Auditors.

## **Audit Results**

The findings below present the results of the audit as determined by: review of applicable statutes, procedures and processes; interviews of auditee staff; and performance of tests and other audit procedures. Each finding is organized into five segments, as explained below:

- **Condition** – The factual evidence found in the course of the examination.
- **Criteria** – The standards, measures, or expectations used in making an evaluation and/or verification.
- **Cause** – The reason for the difference between the expected and actual conditions.
- **Effect** – The risk or exposure the Department may encounter because the condition is not consistent with the criteria (the impact of the finding).



- **Recommendation** – Suggested course of action.
- **Management's Response** – Auditee opinion and statements regarding concurrence or non-concurrence with the finding and corrective action planned by management.

## **Internal Controls**

Improvements are needed in DBS contract and purchasing management. Internal controls in some areas are weak or absent. This has allowed contracting and purchasing actions that may have resulted in the Department purchasing unneeded equipment, and paying more than fair market value for products and services. Audit findings presented below discuss specific deficiencies noted by the audit.

### **Contract Procurement**

DBS contracts were procured on a non-competitive basis pursuant to specific exceptions provided in statute. During the 2006-07 contract period, 58 contracts were active with approximately 20 different community rehabilitation providers. Two other contracts were issued to provide services for clients at the Orientation and Adjustment Center in Daytona Beach. Our audit noted areas where improvements can be made in DBS contract procurement processes.

### **Finding 1 – Price analyses were not completed for contracts.**

**Condition:** DBS has not performed and documented price analyses to ensure that prices paid to contractors are fair and reasonable. This is especially important for DBS contracts because they are not competitively solicited, a process that helps ensure price reasonableness.

We performed a unit price comparison of selected community rehabilitation provider contracts by dividing the minimum number of clients to be served per contract into the annual contract price. There are significant variances among contractors in the computed cost per client served for three of the five contract types - Independent Living, VR Services, and Supported Employment Services contracts. Contract cost per client ranged from: \$891 to \$1,626 (82 percent variance) for Independent Living contracts; \$1,974 to \$3,739 (89 percent variance) for VR Services contracts; and \$4,500 to \$30,938 (588 percent variance) for Supported Employment Services contracts. The contracts compared involved delivery of the same types of services.

Variances in the unit price comparison could not be explained by DBS management who commented that past contract prices were established based on demographics of the service areas, specific circumstances of the individual contract providers, and impacts of past negotiations with providers.

**Criteria:** Section 216.3475, Florida Statutes (F.S.), requires that a person or entity awarded funding on a non-competitive basis cannot be paid more than the competitive market rate. Price and cost analyses are used to determine whether rates paid are fair and at or below market value.

Section 287.057(5)(f)(7), F.S., provides an exemption to normal competitive solicitation requirements, but requires agencies acquiring services to consider reasonableness of prices charged by contractors.

**Cause:** For two contract types, Blind Babies and VR Transition Services, a price analysis by a former DBS employee was said to have been performed; however, there was no documentation to evidence this. Analyses on other contract types also have not been completed. The need for price and cost analyses had not been prioritized.

**Effect:** Without price analyses, DBS has no assurance that prices paid to contractors are fair and reasonable.

**Recommendation:** Price analyses should be prepared for all contracts procured on a non-competitive basis. This will help ensure that prices are fair and reasonable. Such analyses should be documented and retained in contract files.

**Management Response:** Management is in agreement with the recommendation to develop a price analysis prior to procuring all contracts. The Division of Blind Services will begin such an analysis using a workgroup comprised of community rehabilitation service providers and DBS personnel. The analyses will be documented and maintained in the contract files. Milestone: Begin workgroup during July 2008 and complete analyses by September 15, 2008.

**Finding 2 – State purchasing laws were not followed.**

**Condition:** A contract awarded during FY 2006-07 in the amount of \$151,348 for nursing support at a DBS residential facility expired on September 30, 2007, without issuance of another contract. Services provided by the contractor were continued after the September 30 expiration by using AWARE authorizations to pay vendor invoices. This practice was continuing at the conclusion of our audit field work.

The Administrator of the residential facility was instructed to select clients in residence whose individual plans for employment included physical and mental restoration services. The amounts of periodic vendor invoices were then apportioned equally to each of these clients through AWARE authorizations.

**Criteria:** When the purchase price of contractual services exceeds \$25,000, purchases are subject to competitive procurement practices per Section 287.057, F.S. Procurement of such services should be evidenced by a written agreement embodying all provisions and conditions of the procurement in accordance with Section 287.058(1), F.S.

**Cause:** Planning was not adequate to ensure a new contract was awarded before the original contract expired. The decision was made to pay for contractor costs by spreading costs over selected clients through the use of AWARE authorizations.

**Effect:** State procurement laws have not been observed. No contract exists to control the provision of services and the payment of fees. Use of AWARE authorizations for payment of contractual services costs in this manner is improper.

**Recommendation:** A contract for the nursing services should be obtained as soon as possible in accordance with the established procurement process. DBS management should ensure future compliance with purchasing procedures and laws.

**Management Response:** The intent of using AWARE authorizations was to capture costs at the participant level for all service costs. There is an exemption to competitive procurement practices for health services in Section 287.057(5)(f)6, F.S. The DBS will comply with the recommendation and is in the process of procuring a contract for nursing services effective

July 1, 2008. Management will ensure that future services are procured with an executed contract versus using AWARE authorizations.

### **Contract Agreements**

As a basis for their contract agreements, DBS utilized a standardized contracting format established by the Department of Education (DOE) to ensure contract activities are executed in accordance with Florida Statutes. Language specific to each DBS contract type was included to adapt the agreements to their intended purpose. Certain revisions are needed to improve DBS contracts.

### **Finding 3 – Contract agreements need revisions.**

**Condition:** We noted the following from our review of selected community rehabilitation provider contracts:

- Contracts do not reflect use of the AWARE case management system. Introduction of this system changed important aspects of the contract administration process that impacted client progress reporting, deliverable reporting, and contract invoice processing.
- Sanctions were not included in contract agreements. Where practical, contract agreements should contain monetary sanctions for non-performance by the contractor.
- Contract performance standards had not been incorporated into most contracts. Only Blind Babies contracts included an attachment (Standards and Indicators) that addresses the core contractor activities of intake, evaluation, assessment, service delivery, reporting, and personnel development.

**Criteria:** Contract provisions and requirements should accurately reflect use of the AWARE case management system including performance duties, deliverable reporting methods, and contract invoice processing.

The Department of Financial Services' State Expenditures Guide, requires that contractual services contract agreements contain sanctions for contract provider

non-performance.

Contracts should provide sufficient guidance to contract providers on what the Division expects of them (i.e., performance standards).

**Cause:** DBS staff did not update language in the standard contract templates with details regarding use of the AWARE system. Staff did not include provisions for sanctions in the contract templates. Contract performance standards were not completed in time to include them in contracts when they were originally issued.

**Effect:** Use of the AWARE system changed aspects of contract administration, making the unrevised contract language obsolete as it does not accurately reflect reporting and invoicing activities required of contract providers. For example, deliverable reporting on client progress is no longer based on hardcopy reports, but on electronic storage of case notes in the AWARE system.

The absence of penalties and sanctions in contracts reduces the Division's options when performance is below the expected level or service quality is poor. Without sanctions, there may be no mechanism in place to remedy the conditions noted.

Use of the performance standards can guide contract providers and serve as criteria for Division staff in evaluating contract compliance and measuring performance. Contract monitoring procedures can include steps to verify that services are provided in accordance with the standards.

- Recommendation:**
- a) Future contracts should require use of the AWARE case management system.
  - b) DBS management should ensure that contract agreements include specific sanctions for non-performance of tasks required of contractors. Sanctions should include specific steps for prorating contractor payments if minimum contract measures are not met.
  - c) Performance standards should be incorporated into all contract types as soon as practical to provide guidance to providers and ensure greater accountability over contractor performance.

**Management Response:** The Blind Babies contracts (these contracts are effective July 1 through June 30) included language that mandated the use of AWARE for

entering client case notes and actual services provided to clients based on their Individualized Plan. The service providers understood that actual services and case notes were to be entered on all contracts. This contract cycle, October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009, all other DBS contracts (Vocational Rehabilitation, Transition Services, Independent Living and Supported Employment) will be revised to require use of the AWARE Case Management System. Performance standards have been developed for all contract types and will be incorporated into the contracts in the next contracting cycle. These standards were developed by assigned workgroups composed of DBS and Service Provider employees using an outside facilitator. Milestone: Include Standards and Indicators Attachment in all contracts that do not have them (Vocational Rehabilitation, VR-Transition Services and Independent Living) by October 1, 2008. Begin a workgroup for Supported Employment contracts during July 2008 and complete a Standards and Indicators Attachment by September 15, 2008.

There is no provision in the Florida Statutes to include contract language that imposes remedies (sanctions or penalties) or rewards. The DBS has cancelled several contracts over the last three years because of non-performance of the contractor. However, the DBS will craft language that identifies remedies, rewards and monitoring procedures and ensure the DOE Contracting Office approves the new contract language prior to including it in the current contracts. Milestone: Begin workgroup during July 2008 and complete new contract language by December 31, 2008.

**Finding 4 – Contract requirements for client referrals need revision.**

**Condition:** Community rehabilitation provider contracts (except for Supported Employment Services contracts) include a restrictive clause regarding client referrals by DBS. The contracts contain deliverable language that, in most instances, identifies the minimum number of clients to be served. Contracts state that deliverables are predicated on DBS referral of clients to the contract provider for various services. Contract language further states that contract providers “will not be held

accountable” if the number of service referrals made by DBS does not meet or exceed the number of eligible individuals indicated in the contract.

We determined that for most contract types, this condition is not realistic. For example, during the 2006-07 contract term, DBS client referrals to providers of Independent Living services averaged only 16 percent of total referrals; this is far below the minimum number of client referrals stated in the Independent Living contract. Most referrals for Independent Living services came from eye care providers, family members, friends, and through self-referrals. We further determined that DBS referrals to contract providers are not being tracked for contract reporting purposes.

**Criteria:** Contract agreements should contain reasonable terms and conditions to govern the Division’s relationship with contract providers.

**Cause:** We were informed that the language was included in contracts when the Division first began including minimum numbers of clients to be served as it was difficult to predict the level of client referrals.

**Effect:** Depending on the contract, the requirement represents an unreasonable expectation on the Division’s part. The language may weaken or prohibit DBS from taking actions in response to underperforming contract providers (e.g., cancelling contracts, recovering contract funding, negotiating for lower contract prices).

**Recommendation:** The referenced language should be revised or deleted from DBS contracts where the provision is not reasonably attainable. Provisions should be made to begin effectively tracking client referrals in the AWARE system if DBS management determines this to be beneficial.

**Management Response:** The referral process will be further developed in concert with the Community Rehabilitation Providers. A likely solution will involve a measure that reflects the Community Rehabilitation Providers requirement to obtain referrals from their outreach activities and a DBS requirement to have a referral measure. Milestone: Begin workgroup during July 2008 and complete new contract language by September 1, 2008.

### **Contract Performance**

Evaluating contract performance, at a minimum, involves determining whether providers have met or will meet the contract terms. In the absence of such an evaluation by DBS staff, we compared contract performance deliverables for selected contracts to actual contract results provided to us from DBS staff members. Our review noted findings relating to contract performance and the means used to report contract results.

### **Finding 5 – Contract closeout was not performed.**

**Condition:** A formal contract closeout process was not employed by DBS to evaluate the performance of contractors and whether the Division obtained the services paid for.

**Criteria:** A process should be in place to establish that specific contract performance requirements and deliverables have been met. Since most DBS contracts require that a designated minimum number of clients be served, a comparison of actual clients served to the contracted minimum should be performed and evaluated.

**Cause:** Closeout evaluation of contracts was given limited prioritization.

**Effect:** Contractor performance cannot be objectively evaluated in the absence of a process established to determine whether contractors performed their duties and provided deliverables per the contract terms. If contractors are not held accountable for their performance, there may be limited motivation for them to provide the required or higher levels of services.

**Recommendation:** A documented closeout process should be routinely performed for all contracts to determine whether the Division received services it paid for. Results should be: reported to executive management; used for negotiations on future contracts; and, if applicable, used to assess liquidated damages/sanctions for non-performance/non-compliance.

**Management Response:** The Division of Blind Services management will develop a checklist document to assist in the closeout process of the contracting cycle and include it in the DBS contract monitoring procedures manual. Milestone: Develop a contract closeout checklist and revise the DBS contract



monitoring procedures manual to include a contract closeout checklist during July 2008.

**Finding 6 – Many contracts resulted in fewer clients served than required.**

**Condition:** We evaluated the actual results of selected 2006-07 community rehabilitation provider contracts and found that most did not serve the minimum number of clients required by the contracts. Based on our review of four to six contracts per contract type and contract results provided by DBS staff, we determined that contract providers in three of the five contract types under performed significantly:

***Blind Babies*** – Three of the four contracts served more clients than planned. Overall (combined) performance was 20 percent above the minimum number of clients to be served.

***Independent Living contracts*** – Each of the five contracts served fewer clients than planned. Overall performance was 28 percent under the minimum number of clients to be served.

***Vocational Rehabilitation Services*** – Four of the six contracts served fewer new clients than planned. Overall performance was 34 percent under the minimum number of new clients to be served.

***Supported Employment Services*** – Two of the five contracts resulted in fewer job placements than planned. Overall performance was 3 percent under the minimum number of job placements planned.

***VR Transition Services*** – Each of the five contracts served fewer new students than planned. Overall performance was 57 percent under the minimum number of new students to be served.

**Criteria:** Contract providers should serve at least the minimum number of clients projected in the contracts. If fewer clients are served, DBS should determine and document the cause(s) for the inadequate performance and take corrective action.

**Cause:** Causes for contract under performance were not determined because a proper closeout analysis was not performed (see Finding 5). Contract performance could be impacted by inaccurate reporting of results. Certain results were self reported

by contract providers. Other results were based on data queries of the AWARE case management system, performed by DBS technical staff.

**Effect:** Though most contract providers under performed, fixed contract prices were paid to providers as required in the contracts. Assuming the results reported are accurate, the Division is not receiving the services paid for.

**Recommendation:** DBS management should further analyze contractor performance for the 2006-07 contract period to determine why some contractor performance was unsatisfactory. Management should direct that more timely and effective contract oversight be exercised to help ensure contract providers serve clients in accordance with the contracts. Future contracts should provide monetary sanctions for non-performance by contractors. A consideration for use of a contract type other than fixed price may be prudent.

**Management Response:**

The AWARE Case Management System was implemented on October 6, 2006. There were response time problems and issues involving the data entry of Actual Services by service providers. This resulted in inaccurate and incomplete reporting of results. The design and response issues were resolved during June 2008 when a new data entry module was implemented. DBS management will ensure that an analysis of the 2006-2007 contract period is conducted to determine the trends in performance for all contracts. New reports have been designed to identify contract measures and results to assist in the contract analysis. Milestone: New reports and analyses will be completed during July 2008.

**Finding 7 – Reporting of actual contract results is not accurate.**

**Condition:** Contract results obtained based on a query of data recorded in the AWARE system were reviewed and found to be inaccurate. We compared AWARE generated results for three of the five contract types to results that were self reported by contract providers and found significant variances among the contracts reviewed. On an aggregate basis, AWARE generated results for the selected contracts fell under the self reported results in each case (28 percent

under for Blind Babies contracts, 23 percent under for Independent Living contracts, and 19 percent under for Supported Employment Services contracts).

**Criteria:** The AWARE case management system is established, in part, as a repository of information on services provided to clients and progress observed. The system should be adequately maintained to reflect this information and report aggregate results in accordance with deliverables established in contract agreements.

**Cause:** In reviewing the data with DBS staff, we noted instances where contract providers failed to input actual services to the AWARE system, thus making reported results inaccurate. Additionally, we found flaws in the reporting methodology used to report actual contract results in the AWARE system. We were informed by DBS staff that efforts to automate AWARE reporting of contract results were still in a testing phase and that information reported was only as accurate as the information input by contractor staff.

**Effect:** Evaluation of contract performance is hindered without accurate information on actual results achieved by contract providers. DBS plans to eventually begin using AWARE generated information for all contract performance reporting (including federal reporting). This heightens the need for accurate reporting by the system.

**Recommendation:** DBS management should provide guidance in the form of written procedures and training to contract provider staff to ensure that contract results are accurately input to the AWARE system. DBS review and validation of reported results may be needed. Corrections should be made to the AWARE reporting methodologies to ensure accurate reporting of contract results.

**Management Response:** DBS will continue to provide training and follow-up technical assistance to ensure that provider staff has the tools and knowledge to accurately input data into the AWARE system. Procedures for entering Actual Services were developed by the AWARE vendor, Alliance Enterprises, Inc., and were provided during training prior to implementation of the AWARE system. New reports have been designed to identify contract measures and results to assist in contract analyses. Milestone: New reports will be

completed during July 2008 and service providers that require additional training will be identified and scheduled for training during July 2008.

### **Contract Payment Processing**

The AWARE system is used to process payments for community rehabilitation provider contracts. An electronic invoice is prepared based on services entered to the system by contract providers. Our review noted findings regarding support for contract payments, expenditures to contractors for non-client costs, and overpayments for client services.

### **Finding 8 – Contract payment processing can be improved.**

**Condition:** Our review of 28 contract payments noted the following exceptions related to invoice approvals, invoice documentation, and recording of client case notes:

- Invoices for 7 of 28 (25 percent) payments were not approved by designated contract managers.
- Summary invoices for 8 of 21 (38 percent) AWARE generated payments did not agree with the detailed support.
- Invoices for 5 of 17 (29 percent) AWARE generated payments showed prior month's service dates indicating that actual services were not being input to AWARE on a timely basis by contract provider staff members.
- Invoices for 4 of 21 (19 percent) AWARE generated payments did not have invoice support as provider staff members failed to input any detail of actual services provided.
- In 5 of 9 invoices (56 percent) where AWARE was reviewed for the preparation of client case notes, insufficient case note entries were found.

**Criteria:** Contract managers designated in each contract should approve payments to contract providers. Invoice documentation should be sufficient to support all payments. Community rehabilitation providers are required to input services they provide to clients into the AWARE system in an adequate and timely manner. DBS management informed us that contracts require case notes for clients receiving services be input a minimum of one time per month.

**Cause:** DBS staff at the Division Office approved invoices in place of designated contract managers. Contract provider staff members did not input detail for actual services

provided to clients in an accurate and timely manner. Provider staff members also did not sufficiently record AWARE case notes describing client progress as required.

**Effect:** Invoices not reviewed and approved by assigned contract managers may be inaccurate. Services provided to clients will be inaccurately reported unless properly input to the AWARE system by contract provider staff members. DBS staff cannot effectively monitor client progress unless case notes are input to the AWARE system in an accurate and timely manner.

**Recommendation:** DBS management should ensure that contract payments are processed properly. Efforts should be made to determine why AWARE generated payments did not agree with the detailed support. Contract managers should not approve contract provider invoices for payment unless they have timely and complete support. Operating procedures should be prepared to direct both DBS and contract provider staff on how contract payment processing should occur. Additionally, written procedures should be prepared to provide guidance in the preparation of AWARE case notes.

**Management Response:** DBS management will ensure that contract payments are processed properly. Additionally, DBS will provide guidance to assist DBS contract manager staff as well as contract provider staff in processing payments and invoices timely and accurately. DBS will also provide written guidance on preparing AWARE case notes and develop an invoice activity report that will identify the number of days that have elapsed between the DRAFT and SUBMIT cycle, between the SUBMIT and APPROVE cycle and between the APPROVE and RELEASE for PAYMENT cycle. This report will assist all involved parties to track invoice cycle time and adjust as needed. Milestone: Training, new reports and written procedures will be completed by September 15, 2008.

**Finding 9 – Supplemental payments were made to contract providers.**

**Condition:** AWARE authorizations were used to make supplemental payments to 12 contract providers when a contract amendment should have been used. Amounts disbursed in these cases totaled \$149,513 as of November 2007. Payments were processed to look as though rehabilitation technology services were being provided to clients, when they were actually payments to contracted providers.

**Criteria:** Payments to providers should be made in accordance with contract payment terms. Use of a contract amendment would be needed to alter provisions of the contract.

**Cause:** The payments at issue were processed to compensate providers for extra time and costs they were said to have incurred based on problems encountered with the AWARE case management system. The decision was made to use authorizations to facilitate the payments in place of amendments to the contracts.

**Effect:** Payments were for costs directly related to the provision of contracted services, but were not authorized by the contract agreement and caused the contract award amount to be exceeded. The established contracting process was circumvented, thereby bypassing the controls over the process. The method used to process payments to contact providers was inappropriate as additional services were not received by clients.

**Recommendation:** When necessary, contract amendments should be used to authorize expenditure of contract funds in excess of the established contract amount. AWARE authorizations should only be used when payments benefit specific clients.

**Management Response:** DBS has prepared contract amendments on current contracts to include all contracted services. Milestone: Contract amendments will be effective during June 2008.

**Finding 10 – Overpayments for client services occurred.**

**Condition:** Training services provided to clients by a community rehabilitation provider were billed based on an hourly fee rather than the established contract rate. The

services, however, should have been fully provided for under an existing contract established with another provider. As a result, the Division unnecessarily made payments totaling \$26,909 for services that should have been provided at no additional cost by the provider under contract.

This condition was not identified from planned audit tests of purchase authorizations, but was noted when performing audit procedures in other areas. While this could have been an isolated occurrence, overpayments on other client services may have occurred and gone undetected by our audit testing.

**Criteria:** Client services contracts identify counties in which specific services are to be provided. Contract providers should provide services in accordance with contract requirements.

**Cause:** The DBS rehabilitation supervisor who approved payments for services said she was unaware that a contract was in place and should have been used.

**Effect:** The payments charged to DBS on a fee for service basis represent overpayments as the costs should have been included under the existing contract.

**Recommendation:** DBS should ensure that contractors provide services in accordance with agreement terms. Because this practice may be occurring in other districts, management should communicate these requirements to all DBS staff responsible for approving such payments.

**Management Response:** DBS will be reviewing the alignment of our current boundaries and determine the most practical solution that will ensure that contractors are adequately serving their designated districts. Milestone: A review of current contract boundaries will be completed during July 2008.

### **Contract Monitoring**

Contract monitoring should be adequate to ensure required levels of services were received for contract awards. As no formal monitoring was performed for DBS contracts, we focused our emphasis on evaluating contract monitoring policies and procedures that were being implemented. Our audit noted issues regarding the sufficiency of the monitoring process.

**Finding 11 – Contract monitoring needs improvement.**

**Condition:** The Division has developed contract monitoring policies and procedures and monitoring instruments to use in contract monitoring reviews, and District Administrators (DA) have received training on contract monitoring activities. Although DBS policy directs DAs to monitor contracts in accordance with established procedures, DAs had not begun formal monitoring activities. We were informed that they routinely performed informal monitoring tasks such as maintaining regular contact and holding meetings with providers when necessary, documenting communications relating to contracts, and approving monthly invoices. They had not, however, performed on-site visits to contract provider facilities involving use of established monitoring checklists, interview questionnaires, and other monitoring tools.

A two-person team in the Division Office's Bureau of Operations and Compliance comprise a unit called the Compliance Review Section. This unit had recently performed several compliance reviews of contract providers. Selected DAs were participating in these reviews to obtain on-the-job instruction on how to perform formal monitoring activities.

**Criteria:** District administrators are designated as contract managers for community rehabilitation provider contracts. DBS's policy entitled "Contract Monitoring and Compliance Procedures" directs DAs to monitor provider contracts in accordance with the DBS Contract Monitoring and Compliance Procedures Manual.

Section 287.057(15), F.S., makes contract managers responsible for enforcing performance of the contract terms and conditions and ensuring that contractual services have been rendered in accordance with the contract terms prior to processing of invoices for payment.

**Cause:** The Bureau Chief for Client Services and Support felt that DA relations with contract providers could be negatively impacted if they are required to perform duties as recorded in the procedures guide. He prefers that Division Office staff in the Compliance Review Section perform formal monitoring.

**Effect:** Timely and effective monitoring of contract performance cannot be attained without the participation of DAs. The Compliance Review Section was essentially



established to oversee monitoring of contract providers by the DAs, as well as conduct its own independent compliance reviews of contracted services.

The need for timely and effective monitoring of contracts is considered critical given the nature of the contracts, the fact that services were being self-reported by contract providers, and the basic deficiencies reported by recent DBS compliance reviews (e.g., low service provision and closure rates, insufficient client progress reporting, inadequate file documentation, and issues regarding staff certification).

**Recommendation:** DBS management should ensure that contracts are monitored in accordance with established procedures.

**Management Response:** DBS management will ensure that contracts are monitored in accordance with established procedures by the district administrators that are designated as contract managers. Milestone: The district administrators that are designated as contract managers will comply with the DBS “Contract Monitoring and Compliance Procedures” effective immediately.

### **Operating Procedures**

Effectively written operating procedures have many benefits that include clearly delineated processes, greater consistency in operations, and establishment of internal controls over business activities. Existing procedures are not adequately detailed to provide employees clear and detailed guidance concerning core activities performed. This lack of procedural controls is a cause for many of the findings in this report.

### **Finding 12 – Procedures should be improved.**

**Condition:** Procedure manuals for Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Blind Babies primarily are comprised of policy statements rather than operational procedures with sufficient detail to guide employees. Additionally, the Blind Babies manual made reference to a previously used case management system. Written standardized operating procedures had not been prepared for core activities performed by DBS employees. Examples include:

- Provision of client products and services via the AWARE system (e.g., procedures on determining, authorizing, and documenting maintenance,

training, rehabilitation technology services, physical and mental restoration, and other products and services).

- Provisions for obtaining and documenting quotes for the purchase of client products and services.
- The administration and provision of services by contracted service providers.

**Criteria:** Written procedures are an essential component of the Department's internal control structure that helps ensure management directives are carried out. They should be prepared to address all essential functions and regularly updated.

**Cause:** Procedure manuals had not been updated to reflect use of the AWARE case management system, and had not been written with sufficient detail to serve as operating procedures to guide and direct DBS staff members in the districts.

**Effect:** Adequately detailed written procedures will: help ensure office activities are performed in accordance with statutes, rules, and management's directives; provide a basis for evaluating staff performance; and serve as a training tool for new staff. Absent written operating procedures, management lacks assurance that its directives will be performed.

**Recommendation:** Management should analyze all core activities performed by DBS staff members in district offices and prepare detailed standardized operating procedures that will guide employees on all activities important to the Division's mission.

**Management Response:** DBS management will work to develop standardized operating procedures manuals to supplement the policies and procedures currently developed and adopted. Milestone: Standardized operating procedure manuals will be prepared and promulgated by December 31, 2008.

**Finding 13 – Access rights to approve purchase authorizations need to be addressed.**

**Condition:** AWARE purchase authorizations were approved by DBS employees who were not authorized to do so. Additionally, individual approval limits for authorizations were

too high to provide reasonable management control of the process. Our review of AWARE authorizations noted the following:

- DBS employees in positions not authorized to approve authorizations were doing so. For example, 387 authorizations had been approved by administrative secretaries in two districts. Other positions approving authorizations included rehabilitation technicians, rehabilitation specialists, and a word processing systems operator.
- Division Office staff members providing technical support for the AWARE system were given authorization to approve authorizations.
- Approval limits were set at \$50,000 per authorization for district employees and \$1,000,000 per authorization for selected employees at the Division Office, including the technical support positions noted above.

**Criteria:** AWARE authorizations should be approved by employees in specified positions, principally the District Administrator and Rehabilitation Supervisor positions. Other employees at the Division Office are authorized to approve authorizations in a backup capacity. The AWARE system is programmed to allow approval of individual authorizations up to a limit designated in the system. We noted that the average authorization amount approved was under \$500 and only one authorization exceeded \$50,000 during the 2006-07 fiscal year. Limiting approval authority for expenditures is an important control that strengthens management's oversight of purchases.

**Cause:** DBS staff indicated that individuals who should not have had system rights to approve authorizations had apparently been "overlooked" when system security was tightened in January 2007. Several staff members at the Division Office, including three technical support staff, were given system rights to approve authorizations in a backup capacity. The approval limits were set high to streamline the authorization process.

**Effect:** Management controls are weakened or eliminated when approval authority is set too high or not limited to the appropriate employees. This can result in increased risk that inappropriate transactions occur. Technical support staff members who

have programming access to the AWARE system architecture should not have the capability to approve authorizations.

- Recommendation:**
- a) DBS management should adopt written procedures to ensure only authorized staff are given AWARE system access to approve authorizations.
  - b) Approval access should be limited to employees who have a working knowledge of the specific transactions being approved. Approval of authorizations by the Division Office in a backup capacity should be limited. AWARE technical support employees should not be given the ability to approve authorizations.
  - c) Transaction approval limits should be re-evaluated and set to lower levels.

**Management Response:**

DBS management re-evaluated transaction approval limits and lower levels have been established for all approvers. Approval rights have been delineated to designated personnel in the AWARE system. Also management has identified a primary person to serve as backup in the event of a necessary emergency approval. Milestone: Completed during May 2008.

**Non-Client Purchases Using AWARE Authorizations**

The AWARE authorization system was designed to provide products and services for individual clients either through direct payments to the clients or through payments to vendors who provide products and services to clients. However, AWARE also was used to facilitate payments for products and services not directly identifiable to specific clients. The following finding includes examples of such payments and demonstrates the lack of operating procedures to guide and direct DBS staff on the types of purchases to be made using the AWARE system.

**Finding 14 – Purchasing practices need to be improved.**

**Condition:** AWARE authorizations were used as an expedient way to purchase products and services, some of which should have been procured using direct orders or formal contracts. We noted the following questionable uses of AWARE authorizations:

- Fixed monthly payments (totaling \$90,667 from December 2006 through December 2007) were made to a community rehabilitation provider for follow up services to clients whose DBS cases had been closed. Payments had previously been funded using the DBS Grants and Donations fund. Procurement of services was not awarded using a formal contract.
- Fixed monthly payments (totaling \$80,000 from January through August 2007) were made to two vendors for delivery of peer support services. Cooperative agreement formats were used in place of contracts. The cooperative agreements did not incorporate the provisions of formal contracts (e.g., designation of a contract manager, sufficient descriptions of performance duties, deliverable reporting, payment terms, requirements for staff qualifications, incorporation of standard terms and conditions, etc.) One of the vendors received a \$20,000 payment described as “seed” money, which was not in accordance with the cooperative agreement provisions.
- One vendor was paid for presenters who provided DBS staff training at several events from December 2006 through June 2007. None of the seven individual payments was greater than \$25,000, the threshold for competitive bidding requirements, but the seven payments totaled \$95,069, well above the threshold for competitive bidding. Price quotations were not obtained for these services.
- Advance payments of \$70,000 were made to a state university for hosting a sports camp for Vocational Rehabilitation clients. DBS staff reportedly chose the provider after reviewing several other potential providers, however, no written documentation of this or of any quotes obtained was prepared. A non-standard contract was used, which was signed by a DBS program consultant who did not have signatory authority. Services by the university were begun before the contract was executed.
- Equipment described as demonstration units for community rehabilitation centers around the state was purchased using authorizations. The cost of most of the individual equipment items was greater than \$1,000, but these

items were not accounted for as tangible personal property (i.e., tagged, assigned to a property custodian, and tracked as a part of the official property inventory).

- AWARE authorizations were issued after receipt of product or service invoices, and not as pre-authorizations of purchases.

**Criteria:**

- When the purchase price of commodities or contractual services exceeds \$25,000, purchases are subject to competitive procurement practices.
- Purchases considered exceptional (e.g., single source) or exempt (e.g., services to persons with disabilities) must have those conditions documented and be made in accordance with provisions of Section 287.057, F.S. Procurement of contractual services greater than \$25,000 is to be evidenced by a written agreement embodying all provisions and conditions of the procurement of such services (Section 287.058(1), F.S.).
- Use of cooperative agreements for the procurement of contractual services is not addressed in DBS policies.
- Florida Statutes prohibit advance payments to vendors except in certain circumstances, none of which apply in the instances noted.
- Section 287.057(10), F.S., provides that an agency shall not divide the procurement of commodities or contractual services so as to avoid requirements for competitive sealed bidding.
- Contracts that bind the Division can only be signed by the Commissioner of Education.
- Section 287.058(2), F.S., provides that contractual agreements over \$25,000 in value must be executed before services are rendered.
- The Division is required to identify, manage, and control state-owned tangible personal property in accordance with applicable laws (Section 273.02, F.S.), and rules (Chapter 69I-72, Florida Administrative Code).

**Cause:**

AWARE authorizations were used to expedite payments for various products and services. DBS policies and procedures are not in place to provide guidance to

staff on the types of purchases that are allowed using the AWARE system.

DBS does not have a policy to direct staff on the use of cooperative agreements. They appear to have been used in the instances noted to facilitate payments to vendors in place of issuing formal, more restrictive contracts.

Regarding the expenditures for staff training, we were informed that a former division director instructed that specific persons be used as training consultants. No attempts were made to determine whether other vendors were available or whether fair prices were being charged.

The non-standard contract for hosting of the sports camp for Vocational Rehabilitation clients was signed by a DBS program consultant who was not aware that he was not authorized to do so. Activities related to the camp were begun before a contract was prepared and signed.

DBS staff members were unaware that equipment purchased for demonstration (not for individual client use) should have been accounted for as tangible personal property.

**Effect:** Contractual services may not be acquired based on a system of full and fair open competition, which helps ensure the Division pays a fair and reasonable price for services obtained. The appearance and opportunity for favoritism is increased, and public confidence that contracts are awarded equitably and economically is compromised.

Without a contract containing appropriate provisions and conditions as required by law, the Division may not be able to maintain adequate control over the services provided, the payment process, the monitoring process, etc.

Unauthorized advances to providers may result in the Division paying for services not received.

The contract for hosting of the sports camp for Vocational Rehabilitation clients included an assertion that the person who signed on behalf of DBS had full signatory authority; the employee, however, did not have this authority. Allowing a contractor to provide services before a written agreement is executed creates risks to the Division.

Control of tangible personal property is weakened when it is not recorded in the State property system. Equipment can be lost or stolen without detection.

Use of AWARE authorizations as noted above circumvents the usual procurement methods and the controls designed in these methods.

- Recommendation:**
- a) AWARE authorizations should only be used for case management when there is a specific individual who will be served or benefited. The DOE Purchasing Administrator should be contacted for advice on procurement of client products and services.
  - b) Policies and procedures should be prepared to guide DBS staff on the types of purchases to be made using the AWARE system. To maintain an effective level of internal control, AWARE authorizations should be used only in a case management capacity when there is a specific client that will be served or benefited.
  - c) DOE guidelines should be followed regarding appropriate procurement methods to use. Direct orders or contracts should be used when appropriate.
  - d) DBS should develop policy regarding use of cooperative agreements in procuring client services.
  - e) Advance payments to vendors should not be made unless authorized and in accordance with Florida Statutes.
  - f) Contracts should only be signed by the Commissioner of Education or a person who has been formally delegated to sign for the Commissioner.
  - g) State-owned tangible personal property should be accounted for in accordance with applicable laws and rules.

**Management Response:**

DBS management concurs with all recommendations for improving purchasing practices. DBS is in the process of preparing policies and procedures that will address the following: AWARE authorizations utilization, appropriate purchases using the AWARE system, how and



when to use cooperative agreements, and authorizations for advance payments. Milestone: DBS policies and procedures on purchasing will be prepared and promulgated by June 2008.

### **Purchase Authorization Payments**

The AWARE authorization process provides the means for purchasing and requesting payments for client products and services. The system was designed to process purchases for individual clients in a case management setting. In a review of selected payments, we noted findings regarding the timing and support for authorizations issued. We noted two other findings related to payments for client services.

### **Finding 15 – Payment processing for purchase authorizations should be improved.**

**Condition:** We reviewed 69 selected purchases made using AWARE authorizations. These payments were for such products and services as equipment, cash assistance (maintenance), school tuition, low vision aids, and medical procedures. We noted the following irregularities:

- Authorizations for 23 purchases were issued after products or services had been received.
- Nine of 10 purchases involving payment of maintenance assistance to clients did not have adequate support for amounts paid or sufficiently documented justification by DBS staff.

**Criteria:** Authorizations are essentially purchase orders issued for the acquisition of products or services and if accepted, serve as a legal commitment to which both parties must adhere. As such, these instruments should be issued and accepted before they are authorized to provide products or services.

Maintenance payments to clients should have adequate support for amounts paid. Justification for payments should be sufficiently documented.

**Cause:** Written operating procedures have not been prepared to ensure activities are performed in accordance with statutes, rules, and management's directives. DBS staff did not always issue authorizations in advance of products or services.

Support documents or AWARE case notes were not always prepared to support and justify amounts paid to clients as direct maintenance.

**Effect:** Authorizations issued before products or services are provided bind the vendor or contractor to the terms established and approved by DBS staff, and circumvent the controls inherent in the approval process. Payments to clients that are not adequately supported and justified may represent improper payments, payments for an incorrect amount, or payments for an unauthorized purpose.

**Recommendation:** DBS management should ensure (preferably via written operating procedures) that purchasing tasks are performed properly. Authorizations should be issued before products or services are initiated. All purchases should be documented with adequate support and justification for amounts paid.

**Management Response:** DBS management will develop standardized operating procedures that will address the recommendations listed. Milestone: Standardized operating procedure manuals will be prepared and submitted to the OIG for review by June 30, 2008.

**Finding 16 – Payments of cash advances to clients by contract providers occurred.**

**Condition:** Contract providers made cash advances (maintenance) directly to clients, and then billed DBS for reimbursement. We identified approximately \$56,000 in such payments for the twelve months ended September 30, 2007, to reimburse three contract providers. Additional amounts may have been paid by other contract providers. We were informed by DBS management that this practice has been halted.

**Criteria:** The established process for issuing maintenance payments involves DBS disbursements based on an approved authorization which results in the issuance of a state warrant payable to the client. The client is to sign a receipt evidencing acceptance of the warrant when received. Allowing contract providers to make such payments circumvents the controls inherent in the established process.

**Cause:** Written operating procedures are not in place that direct how such payments are to be performed. District administrators contacted explained that this practice was

being allowed as state warrants took longer to process.

**Effect:** This practice has inherent risks involving the handling and transfer of cash that could result in misappropriation of funds. Maintenance request forms were not being prepared by clients as they would have been if processed by DBS staff.

**Recommendation:** Written procedures should be prepared to direct DBS staff on how maintenance is to be processed.

**Management Response:** DBS will develop standardized operational procedures to guide staff on how maintenance is to be processed. Milestone: Standardized operating procedure manuals will be prepared and submitted to the OIG for review by June 30, 2008.

**Finding 17 – Equipment purchases were made in advance of needs.**

**Condition:** Computer equipment purchases were made without an identified need. One district purchased four laptop computers using names of clients that were never intended to receive the equipment. This was done in order to have a backup supply of computers. The equipment was eventually distributed, though six months passed before one laptop was documented to have been assigned to a client.

**Criteria:** The Vocational Rehabilitation Program Procedures Manual states that tools, equipment, initial stocks, and supplies may be purchased for an eligible individual when they are necessary to achieve an employment outcome.

The Bureau Chief for Client Services and Support indicated that such items are not to be purchased in advance for a future use, but for a particular client at the time of need.

**Cause:** The district administrator responsible for purchase of the equipment did so based on issues regarding compatibility of adaptive software with a newly released computer operating system.

**Effect:** When equipment is purchased using a different client's name, client files do not accurately reflect products and services provided to them. Using client's names as such equates to falsifying Division records. Stockpiling of equipment for future

use puts the equipment at risk for being lost or stolen, and spends State funds before necessary.

**Recommendation:** DBS management should adopt policies and procedures that ensure purchases of equipment are made only for eligible clients whose case files support the need for such equipment.

**Management Response:** DBS management will adopt policies and procedures that ensure purchase of equipment are made for eligible cases only. Milestone: Standardized operating procedure manuals will be prepared and submitted to the OIG for review by June 30, 2008.

### **Closing Comments**

The Office of Inspector General would like to recognize and acknowledge Division staff for their assistance during the course of this audit. The assistance provided by staff of both the DBS and DOE is appreciated. Audit field work was facilitated by the cooperation of all personnel involved.

**Department of Education  
Office of Inspector General  
DBS Management Review**

**Issues resulting from interviews** (primarily with former DBS employees)

- 1) **Allowing contract service provider to use DBS facilities in Daytona Beach at no cost** - A client service provider, Center for the Visually Impaired, occupies two buildings on the rehabilitation center campus, Buildings 1185 and 1187 located on Dunn Avenue. Campbell said the provider is essentially occupying one or both buildings “for free” meaning they are not paying rent or utilities.
- 2) **Expensive equipment abandoned at Rehabilitation Center in Daytona Beach** – Former DBS employee saw much waste associated with the construction of the new facilities at the center. An example of waste that cited was the purchase of a \$28,000 generator that is sitting at the center and is not being used. Employee indicated he received instructions from the DBS Executive Director to leave the equipment alone (hidden) for 5 years upon which time it can be surplused (written off).
- 3) **\$30,000 “loan” from DBS Foundation** - Per the Chairman for the DBS Foundation, when Joyce Hildreth became the Exec. Director of DBS in 2009, she met with the DBS Foundation requesting \$30,000 which was needed to “make payroll”. Accounting of the \$30,000 from the foundation was requested from Joyce since then, but she has never given a response. The check was number 1026 and dated 3/5/2009.
- 4) **Transfer of Legislative funding for Blind Babies to pay for two new contracts that will serve adult clients** - Approximately \$29,601 of general revenue funds slated for the blind babies program is going to fund two new contract providers who have requested contracts with DBS for serving older blind clients. The DBS received funds in new general revenue funding from the legislature (\$540,891) specifically for blind babies and it is inappropriate for this to occur. The funding transferred to the new contract providers was taken from case service dollars reserved to purchase medical procedures and supplies for blind babies.
- 5) **Gifts and Donations policy have been altered from prior OIG audit** - The prior audit called for the process of determining what was funded out of the gifts and donations fund to be independent. The DBS Foundation was to be an integral part of the grant process. This has been “undone” by the DBS executive director as she has taken it internally with DBS employees and herself making the determinations.

- 6) **DBS contract planning/ development meeting attended by CRP staff members** - During recent contract development negotiations, leaders from contract providers and a representative of the Florida Association of Agencies Serving the Blind (a lobby group for contract providers) openly participated in the process. Employee felt that it was odd to allow such representatives to attend. She said this is an example of how certain contract providers control aspects of the Division.
- 7) **Repaid CRP for collected contract penalties (from G&D trust fund)** – Remedies were applied to a 2010-11 VR contract. The provider objected to paying the remedies. The remedies were collected, however, the executive director reimbursed the provider with a check written on the DBS Gifts and Donations fund for \$22,186. Such a disbursement appears a questionable use of the funds.
- 8) **DBS Credentials Committee** - DBS committee that hears requests for waivers of certification requirements for people providing direct services to clients. Having such a committee (especially one that is staffed with 2 CRP leaders) is in essence allowing the CRPs to hire anyone they want. He said that this is how DCF got in so much trouble.
- 9) **Land swaps** - Former DBS Maintenance Superintendent, stated that the DBS Director should not be directly involved in “land deals” with rehabilitation center property. He explained that she was involved with trading a large area of the Daytona Beach Rehabilitation Center land for a much smaller portion of Daytona State College land. He said that the State College needed space for a parking garage.

**Review Phase:** Fieldwork

**Purpose:** Summarize review of Personnel Actions

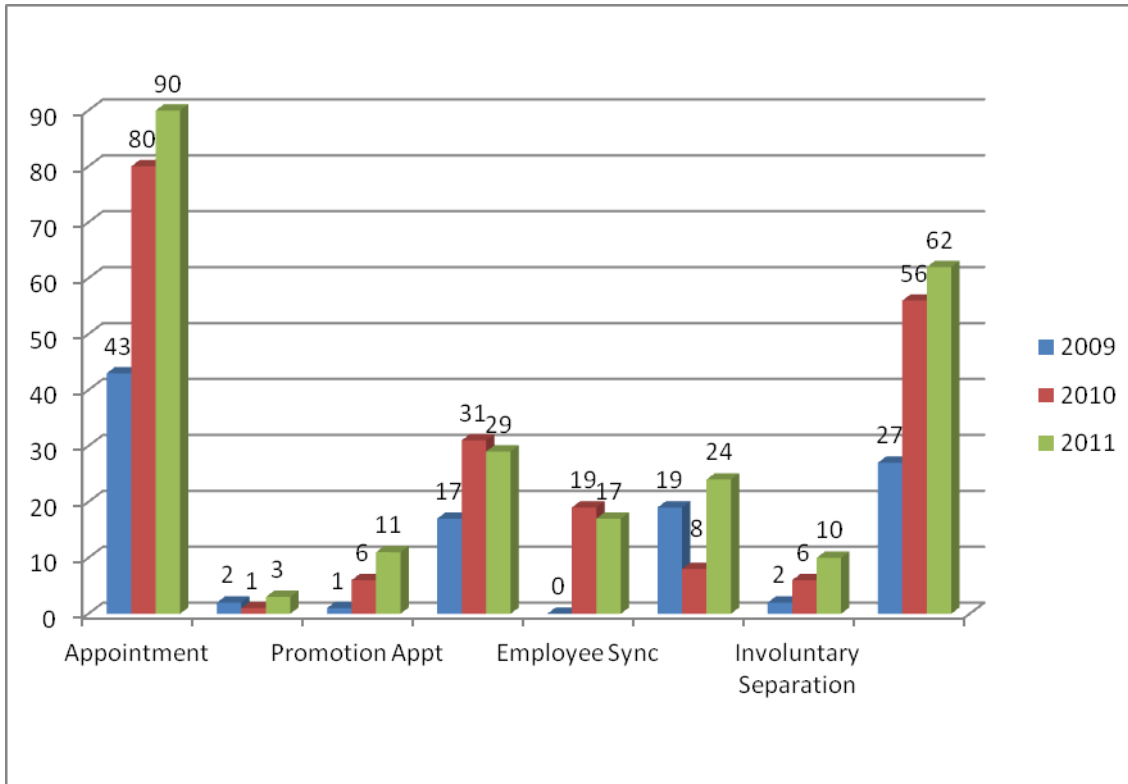
Personnel Actions data dump

Approximately 300 DBS employees, with almost 800 personnel actions from 1/1/2009 to 4/7/12

• 2009 – 181 • 2010 – 250 • 2011 – 303 • 2012 - 50

Condensed results:

Transaction Description	2009	2010	2011
Appointment	43	80	90
Demotion Appt	2	1	3
Promotion Appt	1	6	11
Reassignment Appt	17	31	29
Employee Sync	0	19	17
Pay Change	19	8	24
Involuntary Separation	2	6	10
Voluntary Separation	27	56	62
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>246</b>



**Notable trends:**

- Personnel actions have increased over the years.
- Voluntary Separations have increased from 27 in 2009; 56 in 2010; and 62 in 2011.
- Involuntary Separations have increased from 2 in 2009; 6 in 2010; and 10 in 2011.

Number of positions advertised in People's First:

All (7/26/10 to 4/5/12)

Count of Requisition ID	
Status	Total
Canceled	31
Filled	51
Open	11
Grand Total	93

For 2011 (only full year of data):

Count of Requisition ID	
Status	Total
Canceled	18
Filled	34
Open	4
Grand Total	56

- 90 appointments (from data on the first page)
- 56 positions advertised
- 62% advertised

File Review:

- Appointments – Sampled 5 appointments – 3 judgmental and 2 random.
  - People's First advertisement
    - 3 of the 5 were not advertised in People's First
    - 2 of the 5 were advertised in People's First; however, 1 of those postings was cancelled and the position was not filled from the People's First posting.
  - Internal advertisement
    - 3 of the 5 were advertised internally by email
  - Selection documentation
    - No documentation available to support why the candidate selected was the best for the position.
- Separations - Sampled 5 separations – 3 judgmental and 2 random.
  - Approval documentation
    - Involuntary separations had Notice of Final Agency Action letter signed by the Deputy Commissioner.
    - Separations appear to have followed the appropriate levels of approval (General Counsel, Labor Relations, and Deputy Commissioner).
    - 3 of the 5 did not have clear evidence that the employee was aware of job performance concerns.