**October 2012**

**Division of Rehabilitation Services**

**Community Partnership Newsletter**

**Legislation and Administrative Rules:** Part 552 of the VR rules has been approved by the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules and will be posted in the Illinois Register as adopted on September 28, 2012. This rule pertains to referrals of customers to the VR program and indicates an initial interview must be completed and the customer placed into application status no later than 30 days from the date of the referral.

The following School rules are in various stages of the review process. All have been submitted for Executive Review within the Department and several have completed the Department's review and are being prepared for submission to the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules for consideration. The rules are being revised so they are current with the Illinois State Board of Education's rules pertaining to Special Education and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Part 750 - Role of Residential Educational Facilities Operated by the Department of Human Services

Part 751 - Definition of Terms

Part 755 - Admission Procedures

Part 765 - Special Education Program and Services

Part 795 - Identification, Evaluation and Placement of Students

Part 815 - Special Transportation

Part 827 - Rules of Conduct, Discipline, Suspension and Discharge Procedures

Part 828 - Impartial Due Process Hearing

Part 829 - Sex Equity

Senate Bill 1351 has been signed in law and is now Public Act 97-1019. This measure amends the HSP component of the Division’s enabling act and the changes will assist with HSP programmatic changes and rule implementation.

**Bureau of Blind Services:** Bureau Chief, Bettye Odem-Davis was nominated and chosen to receive a 2012 Chicago Lighthouse Community Partner Award. She and a guest have been invited to attend the annual breakfast at the Lighthouse on October 18th from 8:30 am until 10:00 am. This award is given in appreciation to community partners that make a difference in the lives of those who are Blind or visually impaired.

**Bureau of Field Services:**  In September, Bureau Chief Louis Hamer and Rehabilitation Services Supervisor Lizette Tripur attended a TACE Region 5 Agricultural Technology Training Workshop in Madison, Wisconsin. Topics discussed included Farm Culture, Farm Viability, AgrAbility and Scope of Agriculture. Members of the workshop visited a farm to better understand the viability of employment on a farm. Wisconsin Vocational Rehabilitation is a national leader in employing individuals with disabilities in farming environments.

Bureau Chief Louis Hamer met with Marsie Frawley, Self Employment Resources Network (SERN), to discuss better collaboration between DRS and the Network. Also discussed was the Active Community Care Transition Project which assists individuals moving from DD facilities back to their home communities who have the potential to work independently in that community.

Two meetings were held with ILDOL/DEI and WIA/DEI to discuss collaboration with Disability Employment Initiatives for better serving our customers across Illinois. Region 1 Assistant Bureau Chief, Elayne Weathersby, and her staff held a strategic planning meeting to discuss ways for increasing outcomes in Cook County.

**Bureau of Home Services**: HSP continues to undergo a series of changes and has been working on a series of efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our processes at the front door. We also are working on various efforts required by the proposed FY 13 budget. Many efficiency and effectiveness efforts are also part of the budget.

* **Physically Impaired Only** – During October HSP will start implementing its revised eligibility determination process intended to ensure the program only serves individuals who qualify for service based on a determination that their physical impairment meets the HSP eligibility rule. This was included in the FY 13 budget, but more importantly, it will ensure compliance with federal guidelines on waivers and the intent of the program in general. Implementation will start with new applicants. We are working on protocols with the Divisions of Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health for existing customers. Each customer will be assessed individually.
* **Medicaid Managed Care** – Phase I of the Medicaid Managed Care program will go into effect on December 1. Almost 1,500 HSP customers will be impacted in this round. The managed care entities will assume responsibility for all aspects of a customer’s HSP services other than eligibility determination and redetermination and Personal Assistant timekeeping. This will allow management of in-home care services to be incorporated into management of all other health care services on an equal basis. Larger number of customers will be affected in the next phases on the transition to managed care. Not all HSP customers will be affected. The program will remain as is for children, those on spend-down, and those who are not on Medicaid at all.
* **Waiver Amendments for Budget Initiatives** – Several changes envisioned in the FY 13 budget cannot be implemented until waiver amendments are approved. Amendments have been drafted for the increase in the minimum DON score, for decreasing service cost maximums for those below 40 points on the DON, and for limiting services to children. These amendments cannot be filed until amendments already filed related to managed care are approved. Plans to introduce a new eligibility tool to replace the over 30 year-old DON also are moving forward. It is possible the new tool will be implemented before, and therefore instead of, the increase in the minimum DON score.

**Strategic Planning:** In recent years, DRS has placed an emphasis on staff completing key elements of VR casework on time. The Rehabilitation Services Administration, our federal funding agency, has set a minimum statewide standard of 90 percent on-time completion for two key activities: certification of eligibility and development of an individualized plan for employment (IPE).

**Kudos:** Across the state, 86 counselors achieved 100% on-time performance for certification of eligibility during FY2012. A total of 66 counselors achieved 100% on-time performance for IPE development. Combining these two lists, we found 20 counselors who achieved 100% on-time performance for both measures. This high level of performance is a great benefit to our customers as well as a big boost to DRS in achieving its RSA performance target. A special “GREAT JOB” goes out to the following counselors:

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| Counselor | Office |
| Michael Henson | Humboldt Park |
| Cindy Colon | Wood Street |
| Debra Scott | Downers Grove |
| Rhonda Erickson | Rock Island |
| Judith West | Champaign |
| Kathy Dyson | Jacksonville |
| Joyce Brewers | Jacksonville |
| Tiana Sanders | Mt. Vernon |
| Piedad Arias-Hutchinson | Champaign |
| Barbara Kaurin | Downers Grove |
| Patika Hackleman | East St. Louis |
| Nathan DeJong | Freeport |
| Rochelle Chambers-Hyndman | Joliet |
| Rachel Curry | LaSalle |
| Jennifer Escorcia | Macomb |
| Angelia Downs | Olney |
| Donna Carlson | Quincy |
| Jessica Edwards | Sterling |
| Richard Jonathas | Waukegan |
| Patricia Gallagher | Westchester |

**Education Services:** Interviews occurred in September for the superintendent positions at both the Illinois School for the Deaf (ISD) and the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired (ISVI) in Jacksonville, Illinois. Recommendations have been made to the Governor’s Office for review.

**Training Unit:** The Training Unit has begun conducting webinar trainings with the Vocational Rehabilitation staff. The initial trainings were based on recent changes to Section 590 of the Illinois Administrative Code and focused on three specific areas: Services Related to Post Secondary Training; Supported Employment; and Self Employment. One hour sessions were developed for each topic and offered six different times during a given week. This allowed staff to choose the time and day best suited for their schedule and provided an excellent opportunity for training unit staff to deliver a consistent message to all staff in a fraction of the time it would have taken to travel around the state for face-to-face sessions and with zero expense! Participants were directed to an on-line evaluation form and sessions were archived for future reference and review.

In related news, the Training Unit has purchased and received webinar equipment to be used to create an interactive studio in each field office across the State. The equipment includes: a laptop computer, projector, portable camera, speakers, microphones, and a whiteboard to project an image or Power Point presentation. The roll-out plan to deliver and provide hands on training to set up and operate the equipment is being developed and will be completed by early November.

The Statewide Regional Forums were conducted on September 11, 12, and 13 in Alsip, Champaign/Urbana, and Effingham, respectively. Regional Forums provide an opportunity to disseminate and discuss information related to goals, objectives, new initiatives and ideas for improvement in the delivery of VR and HSP programs and services. Perhaps most importantly, they serve as a mechanism to motivate and promote interaction among staff at all levels of DRS.