**Division of Rehabilitation Services**

**Community Partners Newsletter**

**January 2013**

**Director’s Office** - David K. Hanson became the new Director of the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) on November 15, 2012. Director Hanson has more than 20 years of experience in government and most recently directed the Workforce Institute at the City Colleges of Chicago. While commissioner of the Chicago Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, Director Hanson oversaw the creation of the Mayoral Task Force on Employment of People with Disabilities and also spent five years as Commissioner in the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development. Director Hanson succeeds Kris Smith, who has been Acting Director since August, 2011. Kris will continue as Deputy Director of the Division.

**Home Services Program** - The Home Services Program took a number of important steps forward in the last quarter. All of the activities outlined below were completed in conjunction with partnerships. DRS worked closely with the Department on Aging on a new timekeeping system and the Governor’s Conference on Aging. Managed care is primarily an HFS project but it involves many different partners. The Personal Assistant training program is a joint effort with SEIU (State Employees International Union).

* **Timekeeping Systems** – During December, HSP moved to implement a new Personal Assistant (PA) timesheet which included in-and-out times for the first time. This is an important move to help assure accurate reporting of time and in combination with the recently implemented secondary employment form it helps the program fight fraud. The new timesheet is a precursor to the more important move to electronic visit verification (EVV). An RFP will be issued in mid-January to acquire a system to replace our paper timekeeping system and for use for Homemaker services purchased by both HSP and Aging. HSP has been working on this for a number of years but it got a big push forward due to provisions of the SMART Act (Medicaid reform bill).
* **Medicaid Managed Care** – The initial movement of almost 1,500 HSP customers to the Medicaid Managed Care program was delayed to February 1. All of these individuals are located in suburban Cook and the collar counties. The managed care entities (Aetna and IlliniCare) will assume responsibility for all aspects of a customer’s HSP services other than eligibility determination and redetermination and Personal Assistant timekeeping at that time. The next phase of the move to managed care is slated for next fall and will affect many customers who are eligible for both Medicaid and Medicare (duals) living in the Chicago area, including Chicago, and in a 16 county area of Central Illinois.

* **Governor’s Conference on Aging (and Disability)** – HSP has been working closely with the Department on Aging on a number of projects to take advantage of the similarities in our missions and services and to improve services and program efficiency. The most visible of these efforts took place in December when DHS/DRS participated as a partner in the Governor’s Conference on Aging. It included a separate disability track but the majority of sessions labeled for aging have applicability to persons with disabilities. We hope to expand and improve on our participation next year and encourage our partners to consider participating in the 2013 conference. In addition, Quality Assurance Unit Manager Douglas Morton and Bureau of Field Services Bureau Chief Louis Hamer collaborated with the Department of Aging and presented information about VR services at the conference. A session regarding customers over the age of 60 who are benefitting from VR services was the topic. Customers over the age of 60 have a high success rate and contribute to positive outcomes for DRS.
* **Personal Assistant Training** – HSP has agreed with SEIU to expand the offerings of its PA training program to include Grooming and Hygiene, Caring for a Customer with Depression, and Nutrition. We also have agreed to implement mandatory orientation for new workers. Program testing will start testing in early spring in four sites, including Rockford, Chicago South Pulaski, and probably Decatur and Quincy. The goal is to learn what delivery processes work best in different parts of the state and to minimize the number of individuals who fail to complete the training before statewide implementation.

**Legislation and Policy** - The administrative rules pertaining to the DHS/DRS Residential Schools are being revised so they are consistent with the Illinois State Board of Education's rules pertaining to Special Education and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

The following School rules have been posted in the Illinois Register for consideration by the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules:

Part 751 - Definition of Terms

Part 765 - Special Education Program and Services Part 795 - Identification, Evaluation and Placement of Students Part 829 - Sex Equity

The following School rules are in various stages of the Department's Executive Review process:

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

Part 755 - Admission Procedures Part 815 - Special Transportation

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

Part 828 - Impartial Due Process Hearing

**Outcomes** - While FY2012 was a strong year for DRS in terms of employment outcomes, the first half of FY2013 has not shown the continued growth that had been anticipated. In the first six months of the fiscal year, DRS staff assisted 2,454 individuals in achieving employment outcomes, just 1.4 percent higher than the figure of 2,419 obtained in the previous fiscal year. In part this is the result of maintaining a flat level of referrals and applications to the program, with services provided to about the same number of people as last year.

The number of active cases in the VR program on December 31 was 28,984, just 1.2 percent less than the figure of 29,328 on the caseload at the same time a year ago. Referrals to the VR program were down 3.6 percent on a year-to-year basis, while applications were down just under one percent in the same period. The number of persons certified as eligible for VR services was also down one percent compared to FY2012.

Although the national and state economies have continued to expand, results for DRS customers have not been as positive as hoped. The indicators of job quality for persons who became employed tended to decrease slightly compared to a year ago. The average hourly wage declined by 2.9 percent, from $10.50 to $10.20, while the average number of hours worked per week dropped by 1.8 percent to 27.4 hours. Continuing a national trend, the percentage of customers who received health insurance from their employers fell from 23.5 percent in FY2012 to 20.5 percent in FY2013.

On a positive note, the number of individuals receiving Social Security disability benefits (SSI or SSDI) who became successfully employed increased by 15 percent this fiscal year, from 697 to 802. In addition, the number of successful closures for individuals who had received supported employment services increased by 4.8 percent compared to last year.

Also worthy of note is the fact that the number of VR customers who belonged to a racial minority that achieved an employment outcome rose by 23.2 percent compared to the previous year, from 651 to 802 closures. At the same time, the number of white customers who became employed dropped by 6.6 percent on a year-to-year basis.

**Training** - New webinar training to staff in the month of December was completed. This training provides staff with a comprehensive overview of the National Employment Team (NET) and explains the roles and responsibilities of DRS staff.

The NET is an initiative sponsored through the leadership and support of CSAVR, to provide a united or “one company” approach to working with both the private and federal business customers. The NET vision statement is as follows: To create a coordinated approach to serving business customers through a national VR team that specialized in employer development, business consulting and corporate relations.

The NET supports a dual customer base, meeting the employment needs of business through the qualified applicants and support services provided by the public VR system. VR’s community partners have and will continue to play a part in this initiative.

The roll-out plan to deliver and provide training to set up and operate webinar equipment in each field office across the State has begun. The Decatur office was the first to install and participate in a pilot session with the Springfield Central Office. The Training Unit is hopeful all offices will receive their equipment and be fully capable to participate in the webinar sessions within the next few months.

Providing Job Placement training will be one of our priorities this year and a pilot session has been scheduled in Orland Park for later this month. Based upon feedback, future sessions will be arranged for all VR counselors to attend. Benefits and Employment training will also be a priority as the need to explain work incentives and how income affects medical benefits and eligibility for SSDI and SSI has never been greater.

The DRS Success website will be adding new stories of success over the next several months. Please go to our website at drs.illinois.gov/success to view these stories, as well as other program information.

**Bureau of Field Services** - Bureau Chief Louis Hamer participated in a meeting with the Illinois Joining Forces Behavior Health Work Group, DRS, other state agencies, and Illinois Veterans groups to assist veterans and guardsmen find employment upon returning home from the military. Mr. Hamer is now a permanent member of this committee representing DRS to provide input for employment and training.