



*Washington State*  
Dept. of Services for the Blind

# Strategic Plan

## FY 2006 – FY2011

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## ***Plan Revisions***

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
1.0	7/01/04	FY05-11 Final Strategic Plan
2.0	5/30/05	FY06-11 Strategic Plan Revised Strategies
3.0	8/15/05	Revised Admin and Support
4.0	5/11/06	SFY07-09 Update

### **MISSION – What we do and why we do it**

We open doors of opportunity for individuals who are blind and visually impaired to: pursue their dreams, determine their goals, develop their skills and abilities, and participate socially and economically in the community.

### **AUTHORITY - Enabling legislation and statutes**

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended

The Randolph-Sheppard Act, as amended

Chapter 67-25 WAC: VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Chapter 67-35 WAC: VENDING FACILITY PROGRAM FOR THE BLIND

Chapter 67-55 WAC: CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Chapter 67-75 WAC: INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES

RCW 74.18.045: TELEPHONIC READING SERVICES

### **VISION – Where we are headed**

#### **Highest Quality Customer Service**

We deliver the highest quality services to our customers with warmth, caring, and commitment to our agency values. We are proactive and timely. We tailor our services to each individual in an atmosphere that is friendly and easily accessed.

#### **Powerful Partnerships**

We are the national leader in promoting the skills and abilities of people who are blind and visually impaired. Our community partners view us as a premiere resource. We actively team with participants, the community, and fellow staff members.

#### **Dynamic Agency Culture**

Our culture embraces and rewards creativity, risk taking, and leadership from everyone. Every employee is important to and involved in creating the big picture. We hold ourselves individually accountable and personally responsible. We are committed to continuous self-assessment and improvement. We actively seek opportunities to educate and be educated. We honor and celebrate our differences while providing safe environments. Communications are clear, direct, and with positive intent. Employees are recognized and valued and enjoy working here.

#### **Effective Business Processes**

Our programs are models of best practices, continuous improvement, and reinvention. We are a model of accessibility in our physical spaces and our service delivery. We are successful in capturing all the resources necessary to accomplish our mission.

#### **Outstanding Outcomes**

We create the highest quality outcomes for our participants by meeting the full-range of customer needs in each of our programs. People who are blind and visually impaired go to work in careers of their choice. Participants exit with all the skills needed to manage their lives and careers.

## **ISSUES – The opportunities and challenges we face**

### **Agency Issues**

- The Department of Services for the Blind serves an increasing blind and visually impaired population. The current population potentially eligible for DSB services is estimated at 110,702 individuals. By FY11 this number is estimated to increase 20% to 132,897.
- The resources available to serve this segment of the state population have not kept pace with a growing caseload. The major agency programs, Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living have been able to provide services to only 2 to 3% of the eligible population.
- DSB has reduced clerical staff, fiscal staff, IT staff and management positions. Fiscal duties have been transferred to OFM's Small Agency Client Services group. IT staffing has remained static despite increasing IT project and security related workload. Additional contractor support has been acquired to compensate. Current program and support staff levels are considered the minimum necessary to effectively continue the agency's mission.
- DSB must continue to improve program efficiency, leverage external resources and programs to the maximum extent possible.

### **Major Program (Activity) Issues.**

**Vocational Rehabilitation.** The Vocational Rehabilitation program continues to provide high quality services to the citizens of the State of Washington. Since federal performance standards were implemented in July of 2000, the VR program has been rated in the top five programs in the nation for quality employment outcomes. In each rating period, over 92% were in competitive employment settings. Over 95% of these individuals were classified as severely disabled. The program provides a full array of services as mandated by the Rehabilitative Services Administration to be provided to all applicants determined to be eligible for services.

See the attached FFY-05 VR Program Evaluation for a more detailed analysis of program performance and trends.

#### **Population/Caseload**

- The number of blind or visually impaired individuals in the state ages 18-64 has risen from just under 25,000 in FY90 to nearly 39,900 in FY05, and increase of 37%.
- Based on OFM population estimates, this number is projected to rise to 45,620 by FY11, an additional 8% increase.
- The total program caseload during this same period has grown from 1000 to over 1200
- The number of individuals on the caseload receiving Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) services has increased at an average rate of 50 each year for the past seven years.
- Despite technical and processes improvements that have increased program efficiency, it is difficult to conceive that VR counselors will be able to accommodate the 100% increase in caseload realized over the past decade.

#### **Population Diversity**

- OFM population estimates show a steady trend of increasing ethnic diversity in the state.
- The VR program has consistently exceeded the federal standard for service rate for individuals from minority backgrounds. As the ethnic diversity of the state increases, it will become more

difficult for small agencies with limited resources available for specialized services, to provide quality service to these groups.

### **Program Cost**

- The total VR program budget has kept pace with inflation, growing at an average rate of 2.5% each year since FY97.
- The Field Services portion of the VR budget that directly provides services to VR participants has increased at over double that rate, an average of 5.3% each year during this same time period.
- This increase appears to be directly related to the increasing caseload, specifically the number of participants receiving planned (IPE) services. As stated above, the number of individuals receiving services as a part of their vocational rehabilitation plan has increased an average of 50 each year since FY97.
- Assuming this trend continues, Field Services would require an additional \$100K per year for the foreseeable future.

### **Program Effectiveness and Efficiency**

- The VR program has been very effective at producing a consistent number of high quality employment outcomes at competitive wages. Projected increased tax returns on the increased income alone more than double program costs for these outcomes.
- The emphasis on high quality outcomes has resulted in a high cost per outcome when compared to other state VR agencies.

**Independent Living.** The federally mandated Independent Living Program teaches recently blinded Washingtonians how to continue living in their homes after vision loss. Assigned to designated counties, contractors visit individuals' homes to provide low-cost devices and instruction in blindness techniques, including how to care for self and home, travel with the use of a white cane, and how to continue to read and write.

### **Population/Caseload**

- The number of blind or visually impaired individuals in the state ages 55 to 85+ has risen from an estimated 65,342 in FY90 to nearly 100,000 in FY05. Based on OFM population estimates, this number is projected to rise to 110,000 by FY11.
- The IL program primarily relies on contractors to provide services to program participants. The IL program has increased services and the number of service providers. Two additional service providers have been contracted since FY00. The number of individuals served has increased from 1154 in FY00 to over 1700 in FY05.
- Despite this increase, the IL program provides services to less than 2% of the estimated eligible population.

### **Program Effectiveness and Efficiency**

- The IL program has effectively geographically expanded services to a larger number of participants.
- The impact of these services is somewhat anecdotal, with a high level of client satisfaction being the primary measure available.

**Agency Management and Administrative Support.** This activity provides administrative support and management for the agency. Functions include budget and accounting, personnel, training, and information technology. The State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind is also supported.

- Workload of these functions has and will continue to increase proportionate to the major program growth cited above.
- Fiscal functions include budgeting, accounting, facilities management, inventory control and purchasing support to all agency programs. Where feasible, common accounting functions have been transferred to the OFM SACS office to offset FTE reductions but at increased expense and loss of flexibility.
- There is no dedicated agency HR professional support. The Director's Confidential Secretary serves as the focal point for personnel and training functions.
- Information Technology provides services uniquely tailored to an agency in which one quarter of the staff are blind or visually impaired. Security threats, rapidly changing technology and changes to state and federal requirements have added to IT workload. IT management and management support (strategic planning, quality improvement, program analysis and reporting) have been combined under a single manager.
- Increasing program workload requires ever improving efficiency, speed, accuracy, reliability and flexibility of information technology tools at reduced cost.

### **STATEWIDE RESULTS - How our Program Objectives support the Priorities of Government**

The Priorities of Government, Statewide Results are as follows:

1. Improve student achievement in elementary, middle and high schools
2. Deliver increased value from postsecondary learning
3. Improve health of Washington citizens
4. Improve security of Washington's vulnerable children and adults
5. Improve economic vitality of business and individuals
6. Improve statewide mobility of people, goods, information and energy
7. Improve safety of people and property
8. Improve quality of Washington's natural resources
9. Improve cultural and recreational opportunities throughout the state
10. Strengthen government's ability to achieve its results efficiently and effectively

### **AGENCY GOALS - What do we need to achieve to carry out our mission?**

Goals are broad, high-level, issue-oriented statements of an organization's desired future direction or desired state. Goals elaborate on the organization's vision statement, articulating the overall expectations and intentions for the agency.

1. **Optimize the use of existing resources.** The agency faces a continuing trend of population and caseload growth. Efficient use of internal resources and leveraging of external resources is imperative.
2. **Improve our services.** In order to support state priorities and meet the needs of a growing caseload.
3. **Expand our services.** In order to meet the needs of a growing and increasingly diverse population the agency must expand its services to reach underserved populations.

## **PROGRAM (ACTIVITY) OBJECTIVES – What are we trying to achieve?**

Objectives break down agency goals into smaller pieces specific to each agency activity. They describe the measurable results an agency is expected to accomplish within a given time period.

### **Vocational Rehabilitation – (A007) Objectives**

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program directly supports the following Statewide Results:

- Deliver increased value from postsecondary learning
- Improve security of Washington's vulnerable children and adults
- Improve economic vitality of business and individuals

Goal: Improve Services.

Objective: Increase number of employment outcomes

Measure: Number of employment outcomes

Objective: High Quality employment

Measure: Average hourly wage of successful participants

Objective: High Quality employment

Measure: Percentage of outcomes at or above minimum wage

Objective: High Quality employment

Measure: Percentage of participants in competitive jobs.

Objective: Increase number of participants enrolled in certificate or degree programs

Measure: Number of VR participants enrolled in institutions of higher education.

Goal: Expand Services

Objective: Provide services leading to employment to increasing population.

Measure: Number of participants served.

### **Vocational Rehabilitation Strategies – How we will achieve our objectives**

Strategies are statements of the methods for achieving goals. While goals and objectives state what the organization wants to achieve, strategies state how goals will be achieved. Strategies guide the activities that the agency uses to achieve goals and objectives. Strategies and supporting initiatives will be included in quarterly GMAP presentations by program managers to monitor progress and refine and improve them on a continuing basis.

1. **Optimize the use of existing resources.** The agency faces a continuing trend of population and caseload growth. Efficient use and preservation of internal resources and leveraging of external resources is imperative.

In order to reduce or slow increasing case services costs per participant, VR management will continue to emphasize the economical use of case services resources to program staff including the use of comparable benefits so that all eligible applicants can be served (forestall Order of Selection). Management will implement a sequential review of all open VR cases for each counselor. Findings of these reviews will include an assessment of resource use and recommendations on ways to improve efficiency.

Measure: Cost per participant served.

Measure: Cost per participant placed in employment.

In order to ensure that participants, employees and state resources are used efficiently, VR management will step up efforts to improve safety, security and mitigate the risk of lost resources. A thorough risk assessment will be accomplished and policy and procedures developed to mitigate identified risks.

Measure: Complete VR Risk Assessment.

Measure: Complete and implement Risk Management policies and procedures.

In order to efficiently use resources, VR Management will place increased emphasis on efforts to identify and increase the number of individuals served that require vocational services to retain employment. Job retention customers receiving services remain gainfully employed and continue to be economically self-sufficient at lower cost than job placements.

Measure: Increase number of retention cases.

Measure: Increase number of employment outcomes.

2. **Improve our services.** In order to support state priorities and meet the needs of a growing caseload.

In order to improve services, effective Comprehensive Vocational Assessments are essential. Management will implement a sequential review of all open VR cases for each counselor. Findings of these reviews will include an evaluation of participant Vocational Assessment and recommendations on ways to improve. This will help counselors develop timely, efficient and cost effective Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) so the customer can obtain the skills and abilities necessary to become competitively employed in the occupation of their choice.

Measure: Number of vocational assessments meeting standard (case reviews).

Measure: Increase rehab rate.

3. **Expand our services.** In order to meet the needs of a growing and increasingly diverse population the agency must expand its services to reach underserved populations.

VR management will initiate efforts to reduce case load size and more efficiently serve customers by increasing the FTE allocation by four direct service staff for VR Field Services.

Measure: Reduce average caseload size.

Measure: Increase number of employment outcomes.

## **Independent Living – (A005) Objectives**

The Independent Living Program directly supports the following Statewide Results:

Improve security of Washington's vulnerable children and adults

Goal: Improve our Services.

Objective: Increase number of blind adults achieving independence

Measure: Number of IL participants served

## **Independent Living Strategy– How we will achieve our goals**

Strategies are statements of the methods for achieving goals. While goals and objectives state what the organization wants to achieve, strategies state how goals will be achieved. Strategies guide the

activities that the agency uses to achieve goals and objectives. Strategies and supporting initiatives will be included in quarterly GMAP presentations by program managers to monitor progress and refine and improve them on a continuing basis.

1. **Optimize the use of existing resources.** The agency faces a continuing trend of population and caseload growth. Efficient use of internal resources and leveraging of external resources is imperative.

In order to efficiently use existing resources, IL Management will identify all individuals in organizations that qualify to become IL service providers. On an ongoing basis throughout the period of this plan, increase the number of contracted providers who are blind and those who are members of minority groups as vacancies occur or as opportunities arise to add new providers.

Measure: Number of service provider vacancies filled within three months.

We will bring all of our contractors on line electronically as part of the completion of a new data reporting system by June 30, 2008 and will then measure the number of service providers who meet reporting and data collections requirements. This will also allow us to streamline case management, monitoring and reporting by creating processes for contracted service providers to submit case data electronically.

Measure: IL case management project progress reports

2. **Improve our services.** In order to support state priorities and meet the needs of a growing caseload.

IL management will establish an outcome based service delivery process and establish standards for waiting lists and customer contact frequency to ensure timely service delivery. The program will obtain one year of base line data allowing us to measure the percentage of IL customers who achieve service objectives in three or more skill areas by June 30, 2007. Service standards will be include in IL contracts and internal employee performance expectations by June 30, 2007, to ensure service to new IL customers begins within one month of referral.

Measure: 80 percent of IL customers satisfied with services by September 30, 2006

Measure: IL standards included in contracts and internal employee performance expectations by June 30, 2007.

Measure: Develop methods to measure compliance with these standards for all IL cases by June 30, 2008.

3. **Expand our services.** In order to meet the needs of a growing and increasingly diverse population the agency must expand its services to reach underserved

In order to increase services to groups of individuals IL management will create and implement a plan for statewide outreach targeted to minority groups and under-served populations and align the demographics of those we serve in the IL program as closely as possible with population distribution in the state by June 30, 2008.

Measure: Develop and initiate a plan by June 30, 2007.

IL management will develop, test and evaluate a new model to provide short duration, group seminars in underserved areas of the state by June 30, 2007. Part of the evaluation criteria will be to closely examine the numbers of customers participating in such events compared to previous models for similar work shops. It is also our intent to continually increase the number of individuals 55 years to 85 plus who are served by our program each year throughout the duration of this plan.

Measure: model group seminars in underserved areas of the state by June 30, 2007

### **Agency Management and Administrative Support – (A001) Objectives**

The Management and Administrative Support Activity directly supports the following Statewide Results:

10. Strengthen government's ability to achieve its results efficiently and effectively

Goal: Optimize resources

- Objective: Increase service and support efficiency provided to agency programs.

Measure: Ratio of dollars spent on services to dollars spent on support

### **Management and Administrative Support Strategies – How we will achieve our goals**

Strategies are statements of the methods for achieving goals. While goals and objectives state what the organization wants to achieve, strategies state how goals will be achieved. Strategies guide the activities that the agency uses to achieve goals and objectives. Strategies and supporting initiatives will be included in quarterly GMAP presentations by program managers to monitor progress and refine and improve them on a continuing basis.

1. **Optimize the use of existing resources.** The agency faces a continuing trend of population and caseload growth. Efficient use of internal resources and leveraging of external resources is imperative.

In order for programs to provide effective and efficient services, employees need clear and streamlined policies and procedures. Current policy is often out of date, unnecessarily restrictive and unclear. Management and support functions will continue to review and update policies to provide clear guidance and refine procedures to include best practices and service delivery tools.

Measure: Number of DSB policies reviewed, revised, and deleted.

2. **Improve our services.** In order to support state priorities and meet the needs of a growing caseload.

In order for programs to provide effective and efficient services, support processes must be clearly defined and streamlined to avoid unnecessary work, duplication of effort and lost time correcting errors. The fiscal office will review and improve its processes using appropriate quality tools to identify process issues and improve process quality. Quantitative measures of service effectiveness will be developed and included in quarterly GMAP reviews.

Measure: Number of fiscal processes improved.

3. **Expand our services.** In order to meet the needs of a growing and increasingly diverse population the agency must expand its

In order for programs to effectively manage growing caseloads it is essential to have the most effective caseload management computer program requiring the least expensive support. DSB/IT is in the process of acquiring a new case management tool that offers enhanced functionality and reduces overhead costs.

Measure: Vendor Contract by July 2006

Measure: New system fielded October 2007

### **Child and Family – (A002) Objectives**

The Child and Family Program directly supports the following Statewide Results:

1. Improve student achievement in elementary, middle and high schools

- Objective: Educate parents and schools on issues of blindness to increase the number of blind students who successfully complete high school.

Measure: Number of children birth through high school graduation receiving services.

### **Child and Family Strategies – How we will achieve our goals**

Strategies are statements of the methods for achieving goals. While goals and objectives state what the organization wants to achieve, strategies state how goals will be achieved. Strategies guide the activities that the agency uses to achieve goals and objectives. Strategies and supporting initiatives will be included in quarterly GMAP presentations by program managers to monitor progress and refine and improve them on a continuing basis.

1. **Optimize the use of existing resources.** The agency faces a continuing trend of population and caseload growth. Efficient use of internal resources and leveraging of external resources is imperative.

In order to effectively use all available state resources, C&F Management will implement and maintain a system for sharing data and tracking blind children and the families of blind children. An Interagency agreement with WSSB will allow programs to share registration and census data. Procedures will be developed to merge census and registrations, collect and maintain data records.

Measure: comprehensive database of WA blind children

2. **Improve our services.** In order to support state priorities and meet the needs of a growing caseload.

Enhance the comprehensive vocational assessment and training services for transition age youth. Assist blind youth apply for VR services at, or after, their sixteenth birthday. Complete, as appropriate, ASAT, LV, O&M, AT Vocational Assessment for TR students prior to plan development and graduation from high school. Initiate, as appropriate: work experience, career interest inventories and vocational assessments, as pre-plan assessments.

Measure: Increase the percentage of transition participants receiving pre-plan assessment to 80% of total TR caseload

Measure: Increase the percentage of transition participants receiving vocational counseling and guidance, or work experience, to 60% of total TR caseload

3. **Expand our services.** In order to meet the needs of a growing and increasingly diverse population the agency must expand its

In order to increase the percentage of families with blind children, registered with Child and Family Services to 80%, staff will conduct outreach and case-finding activities to help children achieve post school outcomes. Contact with families of children registered with DSB will be made at least annually to determine what level of service children are receiving from local providers. C&F staff will assist families of underserved children with referral to appropriate local providers in order to increase the percentage of blind children with service plans to 75% of total number of blind children.

Measure: Percentage of blind children registered with Child and Family Services

Measure: Annual survey of families registered with DSB

Measure: Percentage of blind children with service plans

In order to expand services, C&F staff will conduct outreach efforts to increase program visibility with Family Resource Coordinators, Developmental Centers and Teachers of the Visually Impaired and provide Consultative Assistance to local providers of services to blind children and youth. A database with current contact information for Teachers of the Visually Impaired, Developmental Centers, and Lead Agencies for Family Resource Coordination will be developed and maintained.

Measure: Contacts with all Lead Agencies for Family Resource Coordination, Developmental Centers, and Teachers of the Blind.

### **Deaf-Blind Service Center – (A003) Objectives**

Statewide Result: Improve security of Washington's vulnerable children and adults

Goal: Expand Services

- Objective: Increase services available through the Deaf-Blind Service Center  
Measure: Hours of service provided by the Deaf-Blind Service Center

### **Business Enterprise – (A004) Objectives**

Goal: Expand Services

- Objective: Increased number of participants employed as BEP vendors.  
Measure: Number of vendors served by BEP.

### **Telephonic Reading Services – (A006) Objectives**

Statewide Result-10: Improve cultural and recreational opportunities throughout the state

Goal: Improve Services

- Objective: Provide Telephonic Reading Services to blind individuals through the use of phone lines  
Measure: Number of uses of service