



DEPARTMENT of
REHABILITATION

Employment, Independence & Equality

Comprehensive Statewide
Needs Assessment
Final Report

October 2011 - September 2014

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California Department of Rehabilitation
In Conjunction with the
State Rehabilitation Council

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Executive Summary

The Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) jointly conducted an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities in California, as well as the need to establish, develop, or improve Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) within the state.

The results of the triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) conducted annually during Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) 2012-14 are based on the review and analysis of information obtained during each year of the triennial period: Year One (2011), Year Two (2012), and Year 3 (2013). All activities for this CSNA concluded in May 2014. The strategies during this period included collecting and comparing population and consumer case data, gathering and analyzing external stakeholder comments made at statewide public meetings and the Business Partner Forum, and analyzing the responses to Consumer Satisfaction Surveys (CSS) and external stakeholder surveys. The results of the CSNA provided areas where DOR could further improve or enhance vocational rehabilitation (VR) and Supported Employment (SE) services to address consumer and stakeholder needs.

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Findings

The state's population of 38,332,521 is spread out among large urban cities, small rural towns, and mid-size suburban areas, and has grown by 2.9% between 2010 and 2013. During this triennial period, the unemployment rate dropped 2%, from 11.8% in 2011 to 8.9% in 2013. From the demographic data and caseload comparison analysis, the following population and disability groups may be unserved or underserved:

- Asian American and Hispanic/Latino population groups continue to be significantly under-represented based on 2012 DOR caseload to total race/ethnicity population differences of 8.8% and 7.7% respectively.
- County comparisons of the Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment (SSI/SSP) beneficiaries to the DOR caseload found that individuals with disabilities may be most unserved or underserved in the following six counties: Fresno, Kern, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, San Joaquin, and Santa Clara.
- Individuals with autism spectrum disorder were identified as unserved or underserved due to the measurable growth in consumers and the complexity of the services required for this disability population. Of

approximately 108,000 served by DOR during FFY 2012-14, consumers with autism spectrum disorder increased from 2.00% in Year 1 to 2.9% in Year 3. In addition, at least 15% of statewide special education students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) are identified with an autism spectrum disorder; most of these students are likely eligible for current or future DOR services.

- Individuals with traumatic brain injuries were identified as unserved or underserved due to the complexity of the services required for this disability population and the potential gap between the population and consumers being served. During FFY 2012-14, DOR served an average 1,500 consumers (1.4%) of 108,000 consumers served during the same period. The California State Independent Living Council estimates that at least 225,000 Californians are living with traumatic brain injuries, and continues to emerge as one of the fastest growing disabilities populations.

From the Stakeholder public meeting and Business Partner Forum comments, and on-line survey responses, the following rehabilitation, America's Job Centers of California (AJCC), CRP, and employer needs include:

- Expanded employment options, soft skills, social skills, and benefits planning.
- Timely communication between DOR, consumers, and stakeholders.
- Streamlined VR service delivery system.
- Timely and consistent provision of VR services.
- Increased awareness of DOR and the VR and SE services available.
- Strengthened employer education and partnerships.
- Improved ability to link employers to job-ready consumers.
- Quality employment opportunities.
- Culturally competent VR service providers.
- Cross-training between AJCC staff and DOR staff.
- Improved administrative processes for authorizations and payments to vendors for VR goods and services.

The 2011, 2012, and 2013 Consumer Satisfaction Survey (CSS) results identified the consumers' needs for:

- Improved administrative processes for authorizations and payments to vendors for VR goods and services.
- Improved communication, interaction, consistent and timely delivery of services.

- Improved knowledge of current labor market and job requirements information.
- Training on employment and work experience options.
- Streamlined VR processes that are clear and easy to understand.
- Expanded availability of quality VR service providers.
- Improved access to and timeliness of receiving needed AT services and equipment.

Recommendations

The CSNA results are used by DOR to help guide future State Plan's goals, priorities, and strategies to best meet the needs of Californians with disabilities and provide a better foundation of VR and SE services. This triennial assessment provided an opportunity to identify the needs of those with most significant disabilities including the needs for SE services, minority groups, under and unserved populations, those served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system, and the need to establish, develop, and improve CRPs. It is recommended DOR:

- Increase consumer benefits planning opportunities.
- Outreach to unserved/underserved population and disability groups, including those identified in the CSNA.
- Improve the timeliness of communication and services delivery between DOR, consumers, and stakeholders.
- Increase DOR staff and VR service providers' awareness about assistive technology and reasonable accommodation options that assist consumers in finding and maintaining employment.
- Expand quality employment opportunities through increased and focused job development activities and resources.
- Provide cross-training for DOR and AJCC staff regarding Employment Development Department and DOR requirements to improve service delivery to individuals with disabilities.
- Modify vendor fee-for-service structure and reimbursement rates for CRPs to support provision of needed VR services.

Introduction

The mission of DOR is to work in partnership with consumers and other stakeholders to provide services and advocacy resulting in employment, independent living and equality for individuals with disabilities. DOR continuously reviews its programs and service delivery systems to identify areas where changes can be made to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.

To ensure each state meets the changing needs of consumers, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, requires that a CSNA be conducted jointly by the state VR agency and SRC every three years.

Purpose and Overview

The CSNA is used to identify the VR service needs of individuals with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities and the need for SE services, minorities, unserved and underserved populations, and those served through the statewide workforce investment system. In addition, the CSNA is conducted to assess the need to expand, develop, or improve CRPs. DOR's CSNA was performed over three years during FFY 2012-14 (October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2014). The findings identified each year were used to annually update the goals, objectives, and strategies in the VR and SE State Plan.

This CSNA shows a trend that identifies the same unserved or underserved demographic and disability groups as the CSNA performed during FFY 2009-11. During this CSNA triennial period, DOR has made substantial progress towards addressing consumer needs through various projects to bridge the VR needs and gaps identified. After years of planning and completion of a 15-month pilot, during FFY 2013 DOR implemented the VR Service Delivery team model statewide to increase the efficiencies, timeliness, and quality of services to their consumers. With the implementation of the Promoting the Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income (SSI) (PROMISE) Grant that seeks to improve the provision for child SSI recipients to achieve improved education and employment outcomes, and reduce reliance on SSI, DOR hopes to see a change in its future consumer profile for transition-aged youth. Through the Work Incentives Planning project, current job-ready consumers who receive SSI/Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) are experiencing increased employment outcomes and consumer self-sufficiency. The implementation

of the Placement Plus Proof of Concept project is identifying improvements to the current Employment Services structure that will address provider concerns regarding rates, referrals and difficult to place consumers.

Program operational inefficiencies are another concern impacting VR service delivery. The Vendor Utilization Management (VUM) project was established in 2013 to address the need to increase the number of successful employment outcomes and improve the performance, efficiency, and accountability of the VR program. The VUM project also was established to identify improvements to DOR vendor authorization, invoicing, payment, and disencumbering processes. The upcoming statewide implementation of the Centralized Invoicing Process, successfully piloted in the first quarter of 2014, will improve efficiencies by transferring the vendor invoice receipt and auditing processes from branches to District Offices. Further, training on the verification of the receipt of consumer goods and services purchased is expected to result in increased communication with consumers to help ensure the timely and effective delivery of VR services.

DOR continues to identify and implement new projects that seek to address the multi-faceted needs of VR service delivery and its impact on consumers.

Methodology

To allow for trend analysis, DOR and the SRC jointly agreed to continue to implement strategies similar to those used during the last triennial CSNA (FFY 2009-11). The following is a brief description of the methodology used for each strategy in the FFY 2012-2014 CSNA:

Demographic Analysis

A demographic analysis was conducted to develop an understanding of the composition of DOR consumers to identify potentially unserved or underserved populations. To document the changes in unserved or underserved groups DOR monitored these groups in Years 2 and 3 to analyze for any trends.

DOR used California's population statistics from the U.S. Census; Department of Finance; SSI/SSP program data from the Department of Social Services (DSS); Autism Spectrum Disorder data from California Department of Education; and American Community Survey (ACS) projections to compare with similar data from DOR's Accessible Web-based Activity Reporting Environment (AWARE) VR case management system. Populations that had lower representation within the AWARE database

compared to similar data sets were considered unserved or underserved populations. Year 2 compared demographic trends found in Year 1. In Year 3, DOR updated findings to allow for a trend analysis from the prior two years for particular disability groups.

Statewide Public Meetings

The DOR and SRC jointly conducted statewide public meetings in April 2012, April 2013, and March/April 2014 for external stakeholders and consumers to provide comments regarding VR needs. Each year, DOR publicized the public meeting dates and information on its website, and through communications to stakeholders, third-party cooperative programs, and CRPs. Participating district offices outreached to local stakeholders and consumers. The public meetings were held in the Sacramento Central Office, and through videoconferences in district offices throughout the state. Individuals also attended or provided comments through statewide toll-free teleconference line. Individuals unable to attend in person or through the teleconference submitted written comments.

When the annual public meetings concluded, DOR analyzed the comments received, and categorized them to identify the needs of persons with disabilities. All public comments were provided to DOR management and the SRC to review and take action or make recommendations as appropriate to address the needs identified.

Over the three year period, more than 280 individuals attended the public meetings and 96 individuals presented or submitted comments in the following locations:

Northern California:

- Fresno (2012,2014)
- Oakland (2014)
- Santa Barbara (2012)
- Santa Rosa (2013)
- San Francisco (2013)

Southern California:

- Los Angeles (2012, 2013, 2014)
- San Diego (2012, 2014)
- Riverside (2013)
- Anaheim (2013)

External Stakeholder Surveys

In 2012, DOR and SRC jointly agreed to use the prior CSNA strategy to distribute and analyze eight surveys to stakeholders representing individuals with the most significant disabilities, those who are minorities and who have been unserved or underserved by VR programs, and individuals with disabilities served through California's workforce investment system. During Year 3, DOR conducted stakeholder surveys in October 2013 to gather quantitative and qualitative data on the rehabilitation needs of targeted disability groups from CRPs (including community rehabilitation and cooperative program partners, Independent Living Centers, and Older Individuals who are Blind service providers), Community Based Organizations, and AJCCs familiar with the following unserved, underserved, and/or growing populations:

- Individuals with traumatic brain injuries.
- Individuals with autism spectrum disorder.
- African Americans with disabilities.
- Native Americans/American Indians with disabilities.
- Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders with disabilities.
- Latinos/Hispanics with disabilities.

The eight surveys developed using SurveyMonkey® proprietary software included questions that contained multiple options from which respondents could select all that applied. The surveys also included open-ended questions for respondents to submit narrative responses. DOR analyzed the survey results to identify areas to improve or enhance services to individuals with disabilities and improve access to services for identified unserved, underserved, and/or growing populations. In addition, CRPs were surveyed to solicit their input on VR needs to establish, develop, or improve CRPs. DOR used the results to identify areas where additional services may be needed or operational improvements could be considered to better serve consumers and partner with CRPs on VR service delivery.

Business Partner Forum

During Year 3, DOR organized a statewide Business Partner Forum to gain employer feedback. In April 2013, employers provided comments during a teleconference meeting to discuss barriers to employing individuals with disabilities, which were reviewed to identify the employer needs to include for this CSNA.

Consumer Satisfaction Survey

The CSS is conducted annually by DOR with the SRC, as federally required, to gather information from applicants and consumers on their appraisal of the quality and effectiveness of the services they receive from DOR and services providers. In Years 1 and 2, the CSS survey was provided to DOR applicants and consumers whose case was in pre-plan, in-plan, closure employed, and closure not employed groups. In Year 3, the CSS methodology substantially changed as it was reduced from four individual surveys to one comprehensive survey, and the questions were modified to focus on pre-employment and post-employment VR services provided by DOR and external service providers. Each year survey materials were translated into six languages: Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese, in addition to English. Survey materials were also available in accessible alternative format versions for blind or visually impaired consumers. DOR analyzed the results from the surveys issued in April 2011, 2012, and 2013 for trends and identified findings on areas to improve or enhance VR services.

Demographic Data Analysis

The DOR analyzed data collected during the triennial CSNA beginning in FFY 2012 to identify (1) potential unserved, underserved, and growing populations; and (2) specific populations to conduct focused, online surveys to determine the specific rehabilitation needs during Year 3 of the CSNA.

California is the third largest state with 155,779 square miles, averaging about 152% more people per square mile than all other states in the nation¹. The state's population of 38,332,521 is spread out among large urban areas, small rural areas, and mid-size suburban areas, and has grown by 2.9% between 2010 and 2013. During this triennial period, the unemployment rate dropped 2%, from 11.8% in 2011 to 8.9% in 2013. Although an improvement, California's unemployment rate still ranked 48 out of 51 states in 2013².

Summary of Findings

Race/Ethnicity Grouped Data

Based on race/ethnicity data comparison results, DOR identified Asian American and Hispanic/Latino population groups to be significantly under-represented in DOR's caseload in 2011 and 2012 compared to U.S. Census and American Community Survey (ACS) data, as shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Year 1 Comparison of Caseload Race/Ethnicities to CA Population³

Race/Ethnicity	2011 DOR Caseload	% of DOR Cases	CA Population	% of CA	% Difference
African American	21,408	19.4%	2,163,804	5.8%	13.6%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	673	0.6%	162,250	0.4%	0.2%
Asian American	4,683	4.2%	4,775,070	12.8%	-8.6%
Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	1,021	0.9%	128,577	0.3%	0.6%
Hispanic/Latino	31,951	28.9%	14,013,719	37.7%	-8.8%
Multiple Race	1,027	0.9%	968,696	2.6%	-1.7%
White	49,807	45.0%	14,956,253	40.2%	4.8%
Statewide	110,570		37,168,369		

Percentages rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent

¹ California Department of Finance

² U.S. Census Bureau State & County QuickFacts

³ U.S. Census Data FFY 2010-11

Table 2: Year 2 Comparison of Caseload Race/Ethnicities to CA Population⁴

Race/Ethnicity	2012 DOR Caseload	% of DOR Cases	CA Population	% of CA	% Difference
African American	20,035	19.2%	2,195,986	5.8%	13.4%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	681	0.7%	163,262	0.4%	0.3%
Asian American	4,338	4.1%	4,862,155	12.9%	-8.8%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	988	0.9%	132,077	0.4%	0.5%
Hispanic/Latino	31,665	30.3%	14,277,952	38.0%	-7.7%
Multiple Race	1,300	1.2%	943,257	2.5%	-1.3%
White	45,582	43.6%	14,995,619	39.9%	3.7%
Statewide	104,589		37,570,307		

Percentages rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent

In comparing Year 1 and Year 2, Asian American consumers in DOR’s caseload dropped by 345 (3.8%) even though the total population increased by 87,000 (.1%) during the same period. In addition, the percentage decrease of .1% of the caseload would have been greater if the total caseload had not dropped by 6,000 in 2012. Comparing the current triennial data with the prior triennial, the trend for Asian Americans in DOR’s caseload declined from 4.6% in FY 2006-07 and remained static around 4% since then, but is 12.9% of California’s population. With the increase in population and reduced caseload percentage, the Asian American community continues to be a proportionally unserved or underserved population.

For the same period, Hispanic/Latino consumers in DOR’s caseload dropped by 286 (.4%) even though the total population increased by over 264,000 (.9%). Comparing the current triennial data with the prior triennial, the trend for Hispanic/Latino in DOR’s caseload shows consistent increases from 24.7% in 2006-2007 to 30.3% in 2012. However, with the population growth exceeding DOR’s caseload percentage growth, the Hispanic/Latino community continues to be a proportionally unserved or underserved population.

⁴ ACS Data projections FFY 2011-12

Social Security Beneficiary Grouped Data

Social Security beneficiaries who apply for DOR services are presumed eligible. DOR caseload data of consumers receiving Social Security benefits was compared to the total number of individuals receiving Social Security benefits in 54 counties within California. County comparisons of the SSI/SSP beneficiaries to the DOR caseload found that individuals with disabilities may be most unserved or underserved in the following six counties included in Table 3 and Table 4 below.

Table 3: Year 1 Comparison SSI/SSP Recipients to DOR Caseload⁵

County Name	2011 DOR SSI/SSP Caseload	% of DOR Cases	CA SSI/SSP Recipients FY 2010-11	% of Total County SSI/SSP	% Difference
Fresno	760	1.9%	41,590	3.3%	1.4%
Kern	700	1.8%	33,026	2.6%	0.8%
Los Angeles	9,095	23.3%	414,512	32.7%	9.4%
San Bernardino	1,521	3.9%	68,671	5.4%	1.5%
San Joaquin	635	1.6%	28,673	2.3%	0.7%
Santa Clara	984	2.5%	47,568	3.8%	1.3%
Statewide	39,018		1,267,504		

Percentages rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent

Table 4: Year 2 Comparison SSI/SSP Recipients to DOR Caseload⁵

County Name	2011 DOR SSI/SSP Caseload	% of DOR Cases	CA SSI/SSP Recipients FY 2010-11	% of Total County SSI/SSP	% Difference
Fresno	751	2.0%	41,956	3.3%	1.3%
Kern	588	1.6%	33,401	2.6%	1.0%
Los Angeles	8,374	22.8%	416,907	32.6%	9.8%
San Bernardino	1,519	4.1%	70,067	5.5%	1.4%
San Joaquin	548	1.5%	28,935	2.3%	0.8%
Santa Clara	821	2.2%	47,568	3.7%	1.5%
Statewide	36,742		1,277,488		

Percentages rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent

As noted in Table 5 below, the DOR caseload numbers declined for all six

⁵ California Department of Social Services

counties by 2,276, while the county population increased by 9,984. Each county percentage increased or decreased due in part to the changing DOR caseload and county demographics.

Table 5: SSI/SSP Recipients to DOR Caseload Differences Year 1 to Year 2

County Name	DOR SSI/SSP Caseload	% of DOR Cases	CA SSI/SSP Recipients	% of Total County SSI/SSP*	% Average Difference
Fresno	-9	0.1%	366	0.00%	1.4%
Kern	-112	-0.2%	375	0.01%	0.9%
Los Angeles	-721	-0.5%	2395	-0.07%	9.6%
San Bernardino	-2	0.2%	1396	0.07%	1.4%
San Joaquin	-87	-0.1%	262	0.00%	0.8%
Santa Clara	-163	-0.3%	0	-0.03%	1.4%
Statewide	-2276		9984		

Percentages rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent, except for * rounded to the nearest hundredth

The following four counties were identified as unserved or underserved in the current and prior triennial CSNAs. Comparing the DOR Caseload and SSI/SSP population differences, improved outreach efforts appear to have resulted in the reductions noted in Table 6.

Table 6: SSI/SSP Recipients to DOR Caseload Differences between Triennial Periods (FFY 2009-2011 and FFY 2012-2014)

County Name	Difference DOR and SSI/SSP 2009 ⁶	Difference DOR and SSI/SSP Average* (2011 & 2012)	% Difference
Fresno	1.4%	1.4%	0.0%
Kern	1.5%	0.9%	0.6%
San Bernardino	2.1%	1.4%	0.7%
San Joaquin	1.8%	0.8%	1.0%

*Average computed to compare with prior triennial, which calculated data for one year. Percentages rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent

⁶ California Triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Final Report October 2008-September 2011

Data on Autism Spectrum Disorder

The Autism Society of California reported in 2012 an estimated 72,000 Californians have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, and continues to be reported as the fastest-growing developmental disability that may be unserved or underserved by existing VR services. Of approximately 108,000 served by DOR during FFY 2012-14, consumers with autism spectrum disorder increased from 2.00% in Year 1, 2.4% in Year 2, and 2.9% in Year 3. DOR also reviewed California Department of Education data and estimated that 15% of special education students with an Individualized Education Plan are identified with an autism spectrum disorder. Most of these students are likely eligible for current or future DOR services. Comparing the current triennial data with the prior triennial, the trend continues to identify autism spectrum disorder as unserved or underserved due to the measurable growth of students and consumers with autism spectrum disorders and the complexity of the services required for this disability population.

Data on Traumatic Brain Injuries

Statistics from the California Department of Mental Health (DMH) Advancing California's Traumatic Brain Injury Service System report issued in 2010 and a California State Independent Living Council report in 2013 estimate that at least 225,000 Californians are living with traumatic brain injuries, and continues to emerge as one of the fastest growing disabilities populations that may be unserved or underserved by existing VR services.

During FFY 2012-14, DOR served an average 1,500 consumers (1.4%) of the approximately 108,000 consumers served during the same period. Comparing the current triennial data with the prior triennial, the trend continues to identify traumatic brain injuries as unserved or underserved due to the complexity of the services required for this disability population and the potential gap between the population and consumers being served.

Needs Identified By External Stakeholders

The triennial CSNA obtained and identified various VR needs for individuals with disabilities and CRPs. After analyzing public meeting and Business Partner Forum comments, and external stakeholder surveys, DOR updated its goals, objectives, and strategies to address the VR service needs of individuals with disabilities, including individuals served through the California WIB. In addition, needs were also identified for the establishment, development, or improvement of CRPs.

Public Meetings and Stakeholder Surveys Findings

DOR held two public meetings each year in 2012, 2013, and 2014 in which interested individuals provided comments on the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities and the VR services provided by DOR. In 2013, DOR also distributed eight on-line surveys to targeted external stakeholder groups to gather qualitative data to identify the rehabilitation and programmatic needs to better serve individuals with disabilities and improve access to services for minorities, and the previously identified unserved, underserved, and/or growing population groups. Table 7 includes the specific surveys issued and the response rate from each survey group.

Table 7: Stakeholder Surveys Response Rates

Survey Disability Population/Groups	Survey Invitations Distributed²	Surveys Received	Response Rate
Minorities ¹	363	87	24%
Autism Spectrum Disorder	34	11	32%
Traumatic Brain Injuries	44	14	32%
AJCCs	51	18	35%
Community Rehabilitation Programs	378	144	38%
Total	870	274	31%

¹Totals include the data gathered from CBOs and other stakeholders for the following racial/ethnicity groups: African American, American Indian, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and Hispanic/Latino.

²Invitations sent through email to DOR stakeholder distribution lists.

The feedback received from stakeholders and consumers from the public meetings and on-line surveys were supportive of the VR and SE services provided by DOR. Individuals providing input at public meetings continue to

express their appreciation for the efforts DOR has initiated over the past three years to continuously improve services and business operations. Projects such as the VR Services Delivery team model and the VUM project have been well-received, resulting in recognized improvements in communication and more timely processing activities to further enhance DOR's ability to provide quality and timely services to consumers. DOR also received input to improve VR services that would further address consumer, individuals with disabilities, and stakeholder needs.

Summary of Rehabilitation Needs for Individuals with Disabilities

Based on the public meeting comments and stakeholder survey results the following needs for each category of individuals with disabilities were identified:

Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities

The DOR identified the need to increase consumers' knowledge of and access to:

- Expanded quality employment opportunities, including federal and state government and affiliated positions.
- Improved VR services after job placement to maximize retention success.
- Improved communication and support to applicants and consumers to maximize participation towards successful employment outcomes.
- Enhanced counseling and guidance provided to consumers to develop a quality Individualized Plan for Employment considering current and future labor market trends.
- Increased opportunities for short-term vocational training such as certificate programs.
- Internship opportunities with educational programs and businesses to broaden work experience for consumers.
- Developing and clarifying the Individual Plan for Employment (IPE).
- Expanded soft skills and social skills training including, but not limited to, communication, interviewing, teamwork, attitude, networking, problem solving, and critical thinking.
- Increased promotion of assistive technology and accommodations for consumers both during and after VR services; and improve location of AT products and services to be more available to consumers.
- Increased support for accommodations for consumers attending college, including assistance or referral support for personal needs.
- Improved access and referral to healthcare and transportation services.

VR/SE Service Needs of Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities

The DOR identified the need to increase consumers' knowledge of and access to:

- Increased benefits planning guidance to inform applicants and consumers on how paid employment can work together with disability and other public benefits.
- Increased SE job coaching services to individuals with autism spectrum disorder, including exploring the possibility of job coaching services for unpaid internships.
- Enhanced services that provide consumers with acquired or traumatic brain injuries (1) assistance to establish routines and follow through; (2) flexibility, including options for self-employment due to the need to self-pace; (3) behavioral, medical, or speech therapy; and (4) need assessments to help establish functional abilities that may bridge communication barriers.
- Enhanced employment preparation guidance for consumers in SE.
- Expanded situational assessments to determine job strengths.
- Expanded services to conduct social interactions training especially for consumers with autism spectrum disorder.
- Increased supported employment job development services for individuals with mental health disabilities.

Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities who are Minorities

The DOR identified the need to increase awareness of and address barriers to access VR services by minorities through:

- Improved awareness about DOR and the VR and SE services available.
- Culturally competent VR service providers.
- Removal or reduced language and cultural barriers which may discourage individuals from applying for VR services.
- Training on Americans with Disabilities Act individual rights during the hiring process.

Rehabilitation Needs of Unserved or Underserved Individuals

The DOR identified the need to increase awareness of and address barriers to access VR services by individuals who are unserved or underserved through:

- Improved awareness and educational resources about DOR and the VR and SE services available, including services for transition-age youth.
- Culturally competent VR service providers.

- Improved alternative technology and communication methods and resources.
- Focused VR and SE services that specifically address barriers applicable for applicants and consumers with autism spectrum disorder and acquired brain injuries, including traumatic brain injuries.
- Enhanced vocational employment opportunities for transition-age youth, including those who are deaf or hard of hearing or with autism spectrum disorder or traumatic brain injuries.

Administrative/Operational Needs

The DOR identified the need to improve service delivery systems and increase knowledge and communication through:

- Streamlined VR services, including the intake process, to enable applicants with disabilities to access services more timely.
- Improved timely and consistent provision of VR services to consumers.
- Expanded training to enhance the knowledge of staff and stakeholders regarding the VR and SE program regulations, policies, and procedures.
- Improved administrative processes for authorizations and payments to vendors for VR goods and services to prevent service delivery delays that could impact the consumers' ability to achieve their IPE goal.
- Increased VR service providers' knowledge about assistive technology (AT) and other reasonable accommodation options.
- Increased VR service providers' experience in working with specialty groups, particularly individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing and consumers with mental health disabilities.
- Enhanced training for DOR staff and CRPs to strengthen partnerships; educate CRPs on DOR's goals as a VR program.

Partnership Needs

The DOR identified the need to strengthen the education and partnerships with key stakeholders to reduce barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities through:

- Continued education of employers on DOR services including reasonable accommodation; continue presenting the Windmills curriculum to employers; encourage DOR Employment Coordinators to reach out to the one-stop centers and local employers.
- Developing more Limited Examination and Appointment Program positions to provide more options for state jobs.
- Sharing information such as CSNA data with stakeholders and CRPs.

- Educating the community on the VR Service Delivery Team roles, and how teams will work in tandem with community partners and CRP's; functions for the new VR Service Delivery should be consistent and communicated to the CRPs.
- Partnering with CBOs to remove language barriers which may prohibit consumers from obtaining DOR services.
- Providing more workshops regarding the Social Security Ticket-To-Work Program.

Summary of Rehabilitation Needs for Individuals with Disabilities Served Through Other Components of the Statewide Workforce Investment System

Identified needs to enhance collaboration efforts with the state and local WIBs and AJCCs include:

- Improved access and removal of barriers for individuals with disabilities.
- Increased cross-training between AJCC staff and DOR staff regarding Employment Development Department and VR regulations, policies, and procedures to improve service delivery provided by AJCCs to individuals with disabilities.
- Enhanced relationships with state and local WIBs to develop linkages with employers and stakeholders; increase communication between agencies to assist consumers with disabilities; work collaboratively with businesses that work with the state WIB; develop cross training to strengthen professional development; and increase the knowledge base of staff to better serve Californians with disabilities.
- Increased collaboration with state WIB on how DOR could use local WIB job market analyses to assist consumers with IPE employment goal development.
- Enhanced collaborative relationships with AJCCs providing consumers with job development services.
- Training on how to deal with difficult situations and effective communication, particularly to enhance AJCC's ability to provide quality services to individuals with disabilities.
- Increased capacity to serve transition-age youth with disabilities.

Summary of Needs for Establishing, Developing, and Improving Community Rehabilitation Programs

The needs for establishing, developing, and improving CRPs were based on data gathered from the stakeholder surveys, annual public meetings and written comments. The analysis identified the need for strengthened

communications, training, improved consumers' understanding of the services they will receive from CRPs, and equitable rates to ensure the availability of VR services. The specific needs identified for the development and improvement of CRPs include:

- Increased vendor fee service rates and structure sufficient to support provision of needed VR services.
- Strengthened communications and on-going partnerships between DOR staff and CRP partners.
- Expanded electronic systems and improved data reporting of VR services performance measures on shared consumers.
- Improved quality, timeliness, and appropriateness of referrals to CRP partners, including consumer job readiness.
- Improved industry relationships between employers, CRP partners, and DOR to increase the ability to network for high wage employment opportunities for consumers.
- Training CRP partners on the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, including autism spectrum disorder and traumatic brain injuries; soft skills limitations of special populations; and, soft skills training on interpersonal, interviewing, and money and time management skills.
- Training for CRP partners who work specifically with individuals with mental health disabilities, including the stigma and specific knowledge of the disabilities and potential discrimination.
- Improved understanding of the CRP services applicants or consumers are referred to receive.
- Expanded availability and/or enhanced job development and placement services for individuals in rural areas; and, for specialized disability needs.
- Expanded transportation training services for individuals with vision loss, particularly in rural areas.

Summary of Findings from the Business Partner Forum

DOR conducted a Business Partner Forum in April 2013 to encourage partnerships and obtain input from employers regarding the benefits of and their needs to increase recruiting and hiring efforts for individuals with disabilities. Six employers participated in the forum, where focused questions were posed and their responses summarized. The responses were reviewed and the employer-defined needs to reduce barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities include:

- Disability awareness training to address misconceptions and stereotypes regarding hiring individuals with a disability.

- Improving the ability to link employers to qualified, job-ready consumer candidates timely.
- Preparing consumer candidates with broad soft skills and quality resumes that effectively illustrate how their skills match the position.
- Expanding interactive relationships between DOR and employers based on consistent individualized communication, distribution of job openings, and assistance with statewide recruiting.
- Training to DOR consumers on the federal employment application process and Schedule A.

CSNA Stakeholder Needs Trend Comparison

The DOR has implemented many initiatives and system changes since the last triennial CSNA conducted in FFY 2009-2011. Comparing the current stakeholder feedback with the prior triennial the following needs were noted during both periods, indicating that targeted or expanded improvements to specifically address these areas may be needed.

- Provide more training and education of consumers regarding VR services.
- Continue to expand employment preparation and employment options for consumers.
- Expand outreach to unserved, underserved, and growing populations.
- Increase collaboration with partners to enhance services for consumers.
- Enhance training for DOR staff, service providers, and employers.
- Improve the VR service delivery system and administrative processes.
- Develop or expand CRPs by 1) strengthening partnerships between CRPs and the DOR and sharing successful methods in reaching, educating, and training persons with disabilities and, 2) streamlining authorization procedures to speed services for consumers.
- Enhance the knowledge of DOR staff, CRPs, and other providers of Assistive Technology (AT) services especially for consumers who are deaf, hearing impaired, blind, or visually impaired.

Needs Identified By Consumer Stakeholders

The DOR conducted the CSS jointly with the SRC each year to gather information from applicants and consumers on their appraisal of the quality and effectiveness of the services they receive from DOR and services providers. The data gathered from the CSSs conducted in 2011, 2012, and 2013 provided DOR insight into how VR services are meeting consumers' expectations.

As recommended by the SRC, the 2010 CSS was conducted primarily through an online survey format. The shift to an online survey format resulted in the ability to reach a significantly larger sampling than prior years (from 4,000 in 2009). However, although more surveys were distributed in the following years, as indicated in Table 8, the response rate of surveys received from applicants and consumers from 2011 to 2013 has decreased by 7%.

Table 8: CSS Response Rates⁷

Year	Surveys Distributed	Surveys Received	Response Rate
2011	9,062	1,794	19.8%
2012	9,688	1,267	13.1%
2013	12,009	1,534	12.8%

In FY 2013 and 2014, the SRC recommended the CSS results be shared with field staff to discuss results and make improvements with management on how to better serve consumers in their districts; and to improve the CSS methodology and response rate. DOR is committed to working with the SRC to improve services and increase the response rate for future surveys. In 2014, DOR met with District Administrators to review the CSS results to improve DOR's services, issued reminder notification to survey recipients to further encourage responses; instituted marketing efforts; and established a workgroup to research and develop an online survey system.

CSS Findings by Year

In Year 1, respondents were generally satisfied with DOR services, with strongly agree at 38.0%, and agree at 32.9%. Respondents in the Closure Employed category reported higher satisfaction levels across a number of

⁷ DOR CSS Reports 2011-13

questionnaire statements as compared to respondents in the Closure Not Employed category. Consumers who were not employed had the following comments about why they were not able to achieve a successful employment outcome: their need to develop soft skills and self-esteem, their decision to return to school, they moved out-of-state, they had felonies, they had health complications, they had cognitive difficulties, counselor turnover, poor communication, and the perception that VR counselors did not understand their vocational goal.

In Year 2, respondents were generally satisfied with the services they received. Respondents in the Closure Employed category reported higher satisfaction levels across a number of questionnaire statements, especially as compared to respondents in the Closure Not Employed category. Consumers in the In-Plan stage also had higher levels of satisfaction. Respondents in the Closure Not Employed status were least satisfied.

In Year 3, respondents again expressed overall satisfaction with the services provided by DOR. With more focused questioning, 90% of consumers reported they understand the reason for DOR services is to help them become employed.

The most prevailing respondent findings across Years 1-3 include:

- Consumers are generally satisfied with DOR services.
- Consumers need more:
 - Communication and time with their counselor.
 - More frequent updates on matters related to their program of services.
 - Access to transportation and assistance with costs.
 - Collaboration between partnering agencies.
 - Counselor knowledge of disability types.
 - More job leads and assistance towards getting the job.
- Consumers report that plans are developed jointly with VR counselors.
- Employed consumers need more:
 - Health benefits available at their job.
 - Employment benefits in general.
 - Employment plans more consistent with their job result.

During the FFY 2009-2011 CSNA, DOR also noted similar consumer concerns including the needs to increase communication and time spent with their VR counselors, receive more frequent updates regarding services, and increase job leads and assistance with job search and placement.

Summary of Needs from Consumer Satisfaction Surveys

The CSS findings provided a useful basis for ongoing discussions of consumer satisfaction issues at DOR. Results suggest that increasing the communication and time spent between VR counselors and consumers would likely contribute to an increase in consumer satisfaction. The completed implementation of the VR Service Delivery teams is expected to improve the services concerns identified, contributing to an increase in consumer satisfaction.

The 2011, 2012, and 2013 survey results identified the consumers' need for improved communication and interaction, consistent and timely delivery of services, training on employment and work experience options, and improved knowledge on work experience opportunities. Through the CSSs, individuals identified the following needs:

- Improved timeliness and frequency of communication and responses between DOR staff and consumers.
- Improved interaction with VR service providers and professional, courteous treatment.
- Improved consistent and timely delivery of services with clear and complete information.
- Streamlined VR processes to effectively navigate through each service, including a reduced focus on paperwork and document requests, and more efficient meetings or offer alternative communication methods or locations to reduce trips to DOR offices.
- Increased understanding of the purpose for and full range of VR services available that is clear and easy to understand.
- Improved knowledge of current labor market and job requirements information.
- Enhanced training on how to apply for and obtain federal, state, and private employer jobs that provide competitive living wages and benefits.
- Improved knowledge on available options such as unpaid internships, Employment Development Department training programs, and job shadowing to gain work experience.
- Expanded availability of quality VR service providers.
- Improved access and timeliness of receiving needed AT services and equipment.

CSNA Recommendations

The CSNA results are used by DOR to help guide future State Plan's goals, priorities, and strategies to best meet the needs of Californians with disabilities and provide a better foundation of VR and SE services. This triennial assessment provided an opportunity to identify the needs of those with most significant disabilities including the needs for SE services, minority groups, under and unserved populations, those served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system, and the need to establish, develop, and improve CRPs. It is recommended DOR:

- Increase consumer benefits planning opportunities. Consumers need more information and resources on how paid employment can work together with disability and other public benefits.
- Outreach to Asian Americans, Hispanic/Latinos, individuals with traumatic brain injuries, and individuals with autism spectrum disorder by increasing awareness of DOR services and improving relationships with CRPs, CBOs, schools, development centers, faith-based organizations, and hospitals/clinics that serve these potentially unserved and underserved populations.
- Improve the timeliness of communication and services delivery between DOR, consumers, and stakeholders.
- Increase DOR staff and VR service providers' awareness about assistive technology and reasonable accommodation options that assist consumers in finding and maintaining employment.
- Expand quality employment opportunities through increased and focused job development activities and resources.
- Provide cross-training for DOR and AJCC staff regarding Employment Development Department and VR regulations, policies, and procedures to improve service delivery provided by AJCCs to individuals with disabilities.
- Modify vendor fee-for-service structure and reimbursement rates for CRPs to support provision of needed VR services. The fee structure and rate reviews are to strengthen consumer outcomes through enhancing the mutually beneficial relationship between DOR and CRPs.