

# **SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND**



## **2008 ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT**

**“Commitment to Excellence”**

# **SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND 2007-2008 ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT**

## **Section I: Executive Summary**

### **1. MISSION AND VALUES**

#### MISSION

The mission of the South Carolina Commission for the Blind is to provide individualized vocational rehabilitation services, independent living services, and prevention of blindness services to blind and visually impaired consumers leading to competitive employment and social and economic independence.

#### VALUES

1. We value the abilities, dignity and potential of consumers who are blind and visually impaired.
2. We value compassionate, professional and committed staff.
3. We value progressive, effective leadership.
4. We value human, fiscal and information resources.
5. We value the support of the community, the Legislature, the Executive Branch and the Federal Partners.
6. We value employer partners who are receptive to training and employing the blind and visually impaired.
7. We value collaboration with other organizations, training programs and community based programs.

### **2. Major achievements from past year**

The South Carolina Commission for the Blind (SCCB) experienced a 23% increase in the number of new referrals in all consumer service programs in FY 2008. Prevention efforts resulted in the provision of 199 cataract removal procedures that stabilized or restored vision so that consumers could either obtain or maintain gainful employment and have an improved quality of life and independence. 313 individuals met their vocational objectives and were closed as successful rehabilitants.

#### **Assistive Technology Outreach Training Initiative**

SCCB collaborated with the South Carolina Chapter of the Association for the Blind to provide assistive technology outreach training to consumers in the Vocational Rehabilitation and Older Blind Programs.

The goal of the outreach training initiative was to promote a quality of life agenda for blind and visually impaired individuals who reside in Charleston, Columbia and Greenville counties. Participants were trained on the use of magnification software such as JAWS and Zoomtext, Outlook and Internet Explorer and software to read mail (Text Cloner). Upon completion of the training and successfully passing a test on training material, trainees received a donated computer and a copy of the assistive technology on which they were trained.

### **3. Key Strategic Goals**

The SCCB's key strategic goals are to maintain the number of competitive employment outcomes; maintain independence and quality of life in the home and in the community; prevent, stabilize or restore the loss of vision; provide the workforce leadership, guidance and tools necessary to accomplish the mission of the agency; provide the administrative leadership necessary to ensure accountability, effectiveness and efficiency and implement a comprehensive information system that integrates organizational, informational and knowledge management. Action plans pertaining to each of these goals have been developed and incorporated into the agency's Strategic Management Plan.

### **4. Key Strategic Challenges**

The SCCB's key strategic challenges were referral and outreach to the unserved and underserved populations in the state; job retention; recidivism and provision of transition services for students with multiple disabilities. Each of these strategic challenges has been identified as significant barriers to effective service delivery and the achievement of the agency's mission. The impact of each strategic challenge was assessed through performance measures, feedback from service delivery staff and consumer needs.

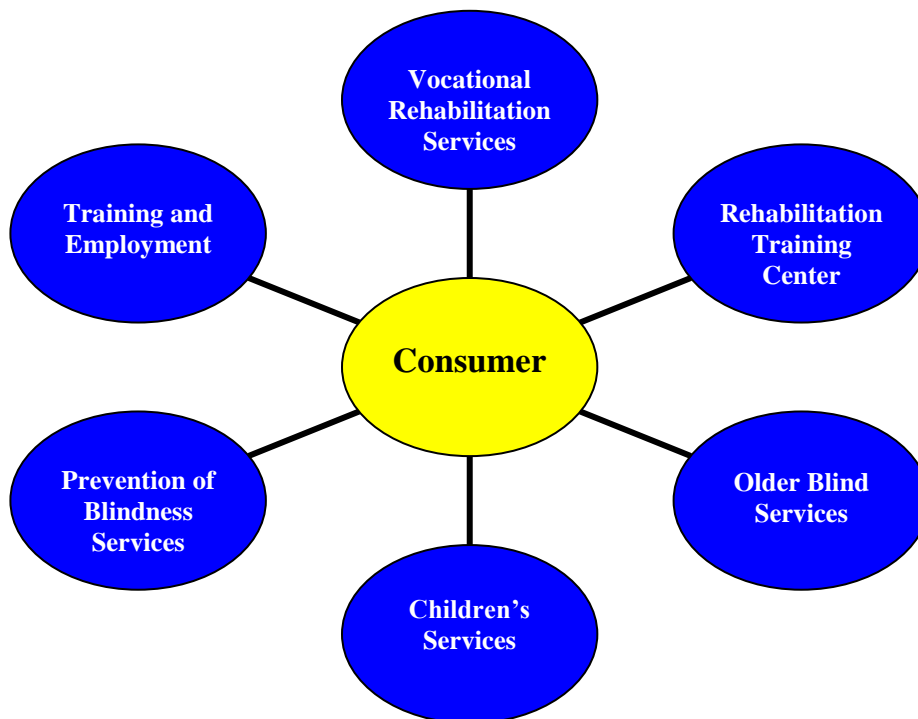
60% of blind children do not graduate and receive a HS Diploma. In response to this alarming statistic, the SCCB took an aggressive and proactive approach to expand services to transition students and established a new committee entitled the Interagency Transition Committee (ITC). The committee consisted of representatives from the SCCB, the SC School for the Deaf and Blind, Teachers of the Visually Impaired, the University of South Carolina Upstate and the Department of Education. Increasing awareness of the services the agency provides to the Teachers of the Visually Impaired and the availability of services to children age 3 and older were the primary goals of the ITC. Committee members also make referrals and suggestions on improvements of SCCB service delivery.

### **5. How the accountability report is used to improve organizational performance**

The Commissioner of SCCB is committed to utilizing the Accountability Report as a self-assessment tool to guide the agency toward continuous quality improvement in agency operations. As categories on the Accountability Report are added, streamlined or redefined, the agency's Strategic Management Plan will be updated accordingly to ensure consistency with regards to the agency's response to Senior Leadership, the strategic planning process, customer focus, measurement, analysis and knowledge management, workforce focus and process management.

## **Section II: Organizational Profile**

### **1. Main Products, Services and Service Delivery Methods**



- ◆ **Vocational Rehabilitation:** Provides services which lead to competitive employment and independence;
- ◆ **Rehabilitation Center:** Provides unique adjustment to blindness training skills which are designed to promote independence and job readiness skills
- ◆ **Training and Employment:** Provides training to consumers on assistive technology and customer service training skills that are needed to become competitively employed.
- ◆ **Business Enterprise Program (BEP):** Provides job training, stand development, consulting services, job placement and stand maintenance to carry out the mandates of the Randolph-Sheppard Act;
- ◆ **Older Blind:** Provides services to increase independence and quality of life in the home and community by providing adjustment to blindness skills training for individuals age 55 and older;
- ◆ **Prevention of Blindness:** Provides services to prevent, stabilize or restore the loss of vision by providing appropriate medical services to detect eye diseases in their early stages;
- ◆ **Children Services:** Coordinates provision of services within the school system for blind and visually impaired children (birth to age 13) and their families;

All of the above mentioned services are coordinated by counselors at one of 10 district offices throughout the state. Provision of these services affords the agency the opportunity to serve South Carolinians of all ages who meet the criteria for blindness and legal blindness outlined in Section 43-25-20 of the Code of Laws of South Carolina.

## **2. Key Customer Groups and Their Requirements/Expectations**

The agency's key customers are blind and visually South Carolinians. In order to be eligible to receive SCCB services, individuals must meet all of the following criteria:

- Medical documentation of a visual impairment which constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment
- The ability to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of an employment outcome
- Require vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, retain or regain employment.

Medical service providers are also key customers. In addition to providing medical services to our customers that are essential to determining eligibility, medical service providers also serve as an invaluable referral source.

## **3. Key Stakeholder Groups (Other than Customers)**

- ◆ SCCB Foundation for the Blind
- ◆ Consumer Advocacy Groups
  - National Federation of the Blind
  - Charleston Association for the Blind
  - SC Lion's Club
  - American Council for the Blind
  - Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities

## **4. Key Suppliers and Partners**

- ◆ Ophthalmologists, Optometrists and Physicians
- ◆ SC Business and Industry
- ◆ Workforce Investment Partners
  - SC Department of Education (Office of Exceptional Children)
  - SC Employment Security Commission
  - SC Vocational Rehabilitation Department
  - SC Department of Health and Human Services

## **5. Operation Locations**

- ◆ Headquarters - 1430 Confederate Avenue, Columbia, South Carolina  
Administrative Services, Columbia District Office, Ellen Beach Mack Rehabilitation Center
- ◆ District Offices: Charleston, Conway, Florence, Greer and Greenville.
- ◆ Space shared with other state agencies: Aiken, Greenwood, Rock Hill and Walterboro

## **6. Number of Employees by Employee Category**

- ◆ 134 authorized FTE positions
- ◆ 102 authorized positions filled
- ◆ 1 unclassified position
- ◆ 20 grant/temporary positions

## **7. Regulatory Environment**

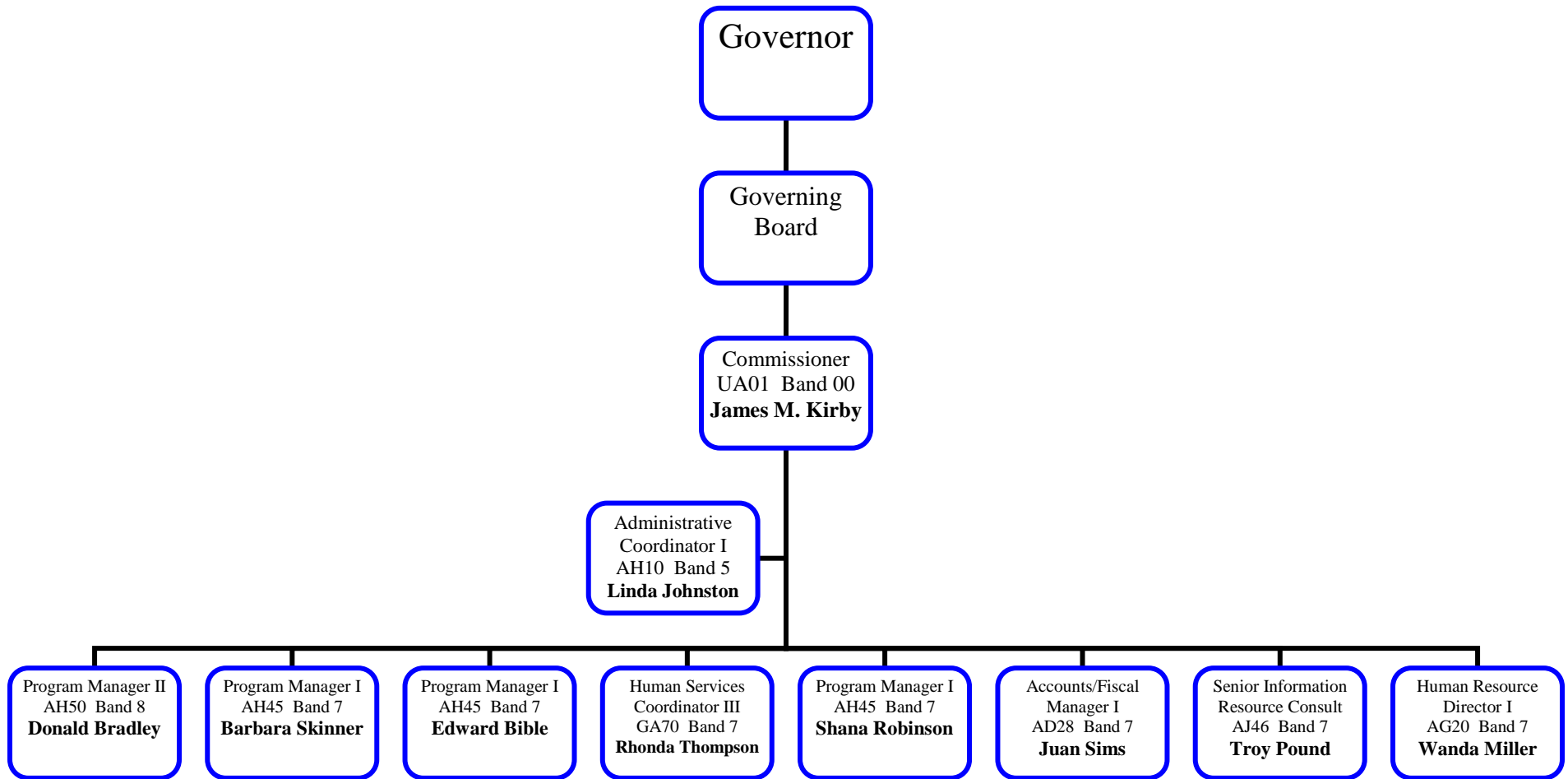
- ◆ Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended
- ◆ Rehabilitation Services Administration (U.S. Department of Education)
- ◆ Governor and State Legislatures
- ◆ SC Budget and Control Board
- ◆ Department of Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards
- ◆ SCCB Commission Board

## **8. Performance Improvement Systems(s)**

- ◆ Strategic Management Plan
- ◆ SCCB Quality Assurance Department
- ◆ Human Resources Staff Development Training

## 9. Organizational Structure

### South Carolina Commission for the Blind Organizational Chart - Management



10. Expenditures/Appropriations Chart

**Accountability Report Appropriations/Expenditures Chart**

**Base Budget Expenditures and Appropriations**

| Major Budget Categories       | FY 06-07 Actual Expenditures |                | FY 07-08 Actual Expenditures |                | FY 08-09 Appropriations Act |                |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
|                               | Total Funds                  | General Funds  | Total Funds                  | General Funds  | Total Funds                 | General Funds  |
| Personal Service              | \$4,234,112.00               | \$1,306,804.00 | \$4,234,112.00               | \$1,565,559.00 | \$4,700,771.00              | \$1,776,218.00 |
| Other Operating               | \$2,224,342.00               | \$783,024.00   | \$2,328,342.00               | \$292,670.00   | \$2,238,188.00              | \$300,516.00   |
| Special Items                 | \$61,179.00                  | \$0.00         | \$61,179.00                  | \$20,000.00    | \$61,179.00                 | \$20,000.00    |
| Permanent Improvements        | \$0.00                       | \$0.00         | \$0.00                       | \$0.00         |                             |                |
| Case Services                 | \$4,923,401.00               | \$1,171,226.00 | \$4,923,401.00               | \$1,209,639.00 | \$5,019,945.00              | \$1,291,183.00 |
| Distributions to Subdivisions | \$0.00                       | \$0.00         | \$0.00                       | \$0.00         |                             |                |
| Fringe Benefits               | \$1,330,034.00               | \$411,806.00   | \$1,330,034.00               | \$474,034.00   | \$1,400,516.00              | \$527,416.00   |
| Non-recurring                 | \$0.00                       | \$0.00         | \$0.00                       | \$0.00         | \$125,000.00                | \$125,000.00   |
| <b>Total</b>                  | \$12,773,068.00              | \$3,672,860.00 | \$12,877,068.00              | \$3,561,902.00 | \$13,545,599.00             | \$4,040,333.00 |

**Other Expenditures**

| Sources of Funds      | FY 06-07 Actual Expenditures | FY 07-08 Actual Expenditures |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Supplemental Bills    | \$0.00                       | \$0.00                       |
| Capital Reserve Funds | \$0.00                       | \$0.00                       |
| Bonds                 | \$0.00                       | \$0.00                       |



## 11. Major Program Areas

| Major Program Areas   |   |                           |                |     |                     |                           |                |                                   |
|---|---|---------------------------|----------------|-----|---------------------|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Program   | Major Program Area  | FY 06-07                  |                |     | FY 07-08            |                           |                | Key Cross                         |
| Number and Title  | Purpose (Brief)   | Budget Expenditures       |                |     | Budget Expenditures |                           |                | References for Financial Results* |
| II. Rehabilitation Services   | Provide training leading to competitive employment and social and economic independence                 | <b>State:</b>             | \$1,335,412.94 |     |                     | \$1,278,387.70            |                | 7.3-1, 7.3-5                      |
|   |   | <b>Federal:</b>           | \$4,097,887.96 |     |                     | \$4,968,815.18            |                |                                   |
|   |   | <b>Other:</b>             | \$84,290.26    |     |                     | \$50,396.81               |                |                                   |
|   |   | <b>Total:</b>             | \$5,517,591.16 |     |                     |                           |                |                                   |
|   |   | <b>% of Total Budget:</b> |                | 42% |                     |                           | 47%            |                                   |
| III. Prevention   | Prevent, stabilize or restore loss of vision through medical services and Prevention Awareness Programs | <b>State:</b>             | \$874,609.10   |     |                     | \$1,011,515.22            |                | 7.3-3                             |
|   |   | <b>Federal:</b>           | \$381,751.84   |     |                     | \$465,448.40              |                |                                   |
|   |   | <b>Other:</b>             | \$0.00         |     |                     |                           |                |                                   |
|   |   | <b>Total:</b>             | \$1,256,360.94 |     |                     | \$1,476,963.62            |                |                                   |
|   |   | <b>% of Total Budget:</b> |                | 10% |                     |                           | 11%            |                                   |
| V. Employee Benefits  |   | <b>State:</b>             | \$411,811.61   |     |                     | \$534,298.37              |                |                                   |
|   |   | <b>Federal:</b>           | \$647,354.42   |     |                     | \$699,191.28              |                |                                   |
|   |   | <b>Other:</b>             | \$5,182.75     |     |                     | \$5,250.64                |                |                                   |
|   |   | <b>Total:</b>             | \$1,064,342.78 |     |                     | \$1,238,740.29            | 9%             |                                   |
|   |   | <b>% of Total Budget:</b> |                | 8%  |                     |                           |                |                                   |
| <b>Below: List any programs not included above and show the remainder of expenditures by source of funds.</b> |   |                           |                |     |                     |                           |                |                                   |
|   |   |                           |                |     |                     |                           |                |                                   |
| <b>Remainder of Expenditures:</b>   |   | <b>State:</b>             | \$1,005,742.74 |     |                     | <b>State:</b>             | \$1,287,035.85 |                                   |
|   |   | <b>Federal:</b>           | \$585,057.69   |     |                     | <b>Federal:</b>           | \$517,900.58   |                                   |
|   |   | <b>Other:</b>             | \$0.00         |     |                     | <b>Other:</b>             |                |                                   |
|   |   | <b>Total:</b>             | \$1,590,800.43 |     |                     | <b>Total:</b>             | \$1,804,936.43 |                                   |
|   |   | <b>% of Total Budget:</b> |                | 12% |                     | <b>% of Total Budget:</b> |                | 12%                               |

## **Section III: Elements of Malcolm Baldrige Award Criteria**

### **Category-1: Senior Leadership, Governance and Social Responsibility**

#### **1. Senior Leadership**

The Senior Management Team is the senior leadership of SCCB. The Senior Management Team consists of the Commissioner and Program Managers from each consumer service and administrative services program. Short and long term organizational priorities, performance measures and organizational values are communicated in Senior Management meetings on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. Each Senior Manager is directly involved with the day to day operations of the agency and is responsible for analyzing, formulating and assessing action plans and evaluating the agency's key performance measures. Policies, procedures and action plans are evaluated as part of the strategic planning process in order to ensure that performance measures are measurable, accurate and reliable.

Senior Managers encourage and promote staff participation in community activities. These activities include, but are not limited to, attending state sponsored employment events, raising public awareness of the existence of the agency, eligibility requirements and the purpose and availability of services.

Quality Assurance meets with each Senior Manager on a quarterly basis to solicit input on each of the categories outlined in the Strategic Management Plan and the Accountability Report. As categories on the Accountability Report are added, streamlined or redefined, the Strategic Management Plan is updated accordingly so as to ensure consistency with regards to the agency's response to Senior Leadership, the strategic planning process, customer focus, measurement, analysis and knowledge management, workforce focus and process management.

Office managers have been designated in each of the 10 district offices statewide in order to assist in the continuity of accountability, office coverage and collaboration of service delivery. Each staff member is required to know the basics of each program of service in order to ensure that consumers are referred to the appropriate department.

Ethical behavior, including standards of conduct, is communicated to staff through the dissemination of written policy, interdepartmental meetings and Quality Assurance audits. Consumers are informed of the availability of assistance through the Client Assistance Program if there are any complaints against the agency regarding service delivery or agency staff.

## **1.2 Focus on Customers and Other Stakeholders**

Focus on customers is communicated through the agency's mission statement, values and the Strategic Management Plan. Informed choice with regards to service delivery is a primary focus during the development and implementation of the plan of service in all consumer service programs. Quality Assurance evaluates consumer service plans to ensure that Counselors have adequately documented consumer participation. Quality Assurance also disseminates consumer satisfaction surveys so that consumers can provide feedback on the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery and service providers. Currently, the results of the satisfaction surveys are only distributed to Senior Management Staff. In FY 2009, the collection and dissemination of survey results will be expanded to include training programs such as the Ellen Beach Mack Rehabilitation (Training) Center and the Training and Employment Division.

## **1.3 Impact on the Public**

The provision of individualized services which lead to competitive employment is a key part of the SCCB's mission statement and the focal point of the Strategic Management Plan. In adhering to this aspect of the agency's mission, the immediate impact on the public is a reduction in the dependence on public support funds and services and an increase in revenue to the state once individuals become tax payers. For the older blind consumers who have been successfully rehabilitated in terms of being able to live independently, service delivery often results in the individual remaining in the home instead of being placed in a public nursing facility. SCCB Participation in the payment of medical services for individuals reduces the dependency of service providers on federal programs such as Medicaid and Medicare. The Training and Employment Division impacts the business community by conducting statewide presentations on the benefits of hiring the blind and visually impaired, including tax incentives and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

In an effort to maximize space and reduce operating expenditures, the SCCB shares space with the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department and the Employment Security Commission. This results in a substantial savings of state dollars that would have otherwise been used as administrative overhead cost of operation.

The Facilities and Maintenance Manager works diligently to reduce any associated risk related to staff and consumer safety by conducting frequent inspections of the working environment of staff and the training environment of consumers. Written communication regarding safety awareness is disseminated to all staff to ensure effective communication on the specifics of safety regulations and to promote feedback on improvements for reducing the possibility of injury and workers compensation claims.

#### **1.4 Maintaining Fiscal, Legal and Regulatory Accountability**

Fiscal accountability is achieved by adherence to state and federal laws. The State Auditor's Office measures fiscal accountability through independent audits. Once the agency's annual budget is submitted, the State Budget and Control Office and State Legislators provide oversight as well. Senior Managers evaluate fiscal accountability on a monthly basis to ensure administrative and consumer service compliance throughout the agency. Budget reports are disseminated to staff in order to obtain feedback on deficiencies and/or the need for additional funding.

Currently, the SCCB does not have the infrastructure to support a fulltime attorney. However, legal accountability is maintained through an attorney with whom the agency contracts on all matters pertaining to administration and consumer services.

Regulatory accountability is accomplished through adherence to the policies and procedures of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) of the U.S. Department of Education and state regulations. RSA is relied upon to provide notification of changes in federal regulations that have a direct impact on the agency's service delivery systems. Quality Assurance conducts weekly internal audits to ensure consistency of regulatory compliance with federal and state regulations as well as agency established policy and procedure.

The Commissioner ensures accountability by proactively soliciting input and support from the Commission Board regarding program initiatives and/or proposed policy changes. SCCB Board Meetings are public forums in which consumers can attend and actively participate by speaking directly to Board members. The Client Assistance Program provides oversight with regards to consumer grievances pertaining to service delivery or agency service providers. In such instances wherein diplomacy has failed at the counselor level, Senior Management staff are proactive in working to achieve a balance between consumer satisfaction and compliance with federal, state and agency established policy and procedures.

#### **1.5 Performance Measures Review**

Senior Managers review program goals pertaining to referrals received, referrals processed, eligibility determinations, development of service plans for employment and total served on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. The quality of competitive employment placements is assessed by reviewing the number of individuals competitively placed at or above the federal minimum wage. Performance measures, consumer satisfaction survey results and compliance with federal and state regulations and agency established policy are reviewed by Quality Assurance and submitted to the Commissioner and the Senior Management staff. The results outlined in the Quality Assurance reports are used to assess the need for performance improvement and to evaluate the effectiveness of service delivery and the strategic planning process.

## **1.6 Organizational Review Findings and Employee Feedback**

The results of the organization performance review findings are used by Senior Managers to establish short and long term organizational direction and priorities and improve performance. The goals, objectives and action plans on the Strategic Management Plan are reviewed quarterly to evaluate trends in terms of meeting program goals. Success is measured by the ability to meet or exceed key performance measures. In addition to the agency mission statement, a dedication to promote continuous quality improvement in all areas of service delivery and administrative support is the primary focus of the Senior Management Team. Performance measures are not only evaluated in terms of whether or not goals and objectives were met, but also in accordance to how, when and where improvements can be made. An assessment of the number of consumers placed in competitive employment and total served provides Senior Managers the opportunity to improve upon the distribution of workforce capacities and reallocation of resources to reach the unserved and underserved. Consumers Satisfaction Surveys are conducted to obtain input from consumers on the quality of service delivery and the accessibility and responsiveness of agency service providers. Performance review findings – including those that are disseminated by Quality Assurance - are used to assess deficiencies in service delivery.

The performance review findings are communicated in performance measures on the Strategic Management Plan and the Accountability Report. The Commissioner takes a personal interest in ensuring that the Accountability Report is used as a self-assessment tool to guide the agency toward continuous quality improvement in agency operations. The performance results of the Strategic Management Plan and the Accountability Report are the basis on which the need for program and policy changes and staffing needs are communicated to the Commission Board, the General Assembly and the Governor.

Employee feedback is communicated through individual performance appraisals and department staff meetings. Based on this feedback, training initiatives and interagency collaborations are established. Input on the barriers to service delivery and the opportunity for agency expansion are sought from staff. Staff are encouraged to be direct and to share their field experiences with Senior Managers as well as other agency staff in an open forum. This feedback is used by Senior Managers to explore and implement best practices in program management and service delivery. This would include, but not be limited to, an assessment of the need to collaborate with education officials, employment partners (those established by the federal Workforce Investment Act) and consumer advocacy groups.

## **1.7 Succession Planning and Development of Future Organizational Leaders**

SCCB has identified succession planning as an essential component to the continuity of service delivery. Cross training for administrative support staff has already been implemented. Potential leaders and managers are identified through individual performance appraisals and project initiatives. Senior Managers encourage mentoring among staff in all departments to ensure that best practices are fully integrated at all levels of service delivery, including routine administrative functions.

Future cross training initiatives will include a mandate that staff participating in cross training will be required to perform the job function(s) on which they were cross trained on a monthly basis in order to maintain the transfer of knowledge. Future plans to expand upon the leadership and professional development of the Counseling staff in all consumer service programs will include training on communication, conflict resolution, time and project management and supervisory best practices.

## **1.8 Performance Improvement and the Accomplishment of Strategic Objectives**

Continuous quality improvement is the cornerstone of the agency's approach to performance improvement and effective strategic planning. Goals, objectives and the actions plans outlined in the Strategic Management Plan are consistently evaluated on a quarterly basis to accomplish this. Senior Managers communicate to staff the results of the performance measures and solicits feedback on barriers to accomplishing objectives and performance measures. With this direct interaction with staff, Senior Managers can make informed decisions regarding program effectiveness and the identification of barriers and best practices to service delivery.

A review of the strategies and action plans identified in the Strategic Management Plan are also conducted to ensure that the categories outlined on the Accountability Report are adequately addressed. The purpose of this is to ensure that the agency is utilizing the Accountability Report as a self-assessment tool to improve performance and identify deficiencies in strategies and action plans.

## **1.9 Organizational and Workforce Learning**

Organizational and workforce learning is accomplished through succession planning and staff development training initiatives such as time management, reinforcement on best practices of service delivery, character building and teamwork. As an integral part of the succession planning process, policy and procedure manuals are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure consistency of program operations and best practices of job performance. Staff are encouraged to provide input on any additional training needs not addressed in the agency's core training curriculum.

Organizational and workforce learning is also accomplished through the use of performance measures data trends. Senior Managers use data trends to assess whether or not the agency's mission and the goals outlined in the Strategic Management Plan have been achieved. Barriers to service delivery are typically exposed through data trends performance appraisals. In such instances, Senior Managers meticulously document the performance appraisal and provide assertive feedback on the expectation of performance improvement. An open line of communication is encouraged when there are questions, concerns or uncertainty regarding the success criteria of job duties or the means by which job duties are to be carried out.

## **1.10 Motivation of Workforce and Reward and Recognition Process**

The primary means by which the Senior Managers communicate to staff their role in the achievement of the agency's mission is through performance appraisals. Each job function and the success criteria to accomplish the job function are directly related to the agency's mission and the goals, objectives and action plans identified in the Strategic Management Plan. Consumer feedback on service delivery and staff performance are also utilized to motivate staff. Senior Managers use the feedback obtained from the results of the Consumer Satisfaction Surveys to emphasize the impact of thorough and efficient service delivery in the lives of the consumers.

In an effort to boost staff morale and improve attitudes about job performance and the work environment, a Rewards and Recognition Program has been established. Staff are encouraged to recognize and nominate their peers on the basis of extra effort, teamwork, positive attitude, service and loyalty to the Agency, process improvement and innovation, initiative, customer service, ethical behavior, professional development and community service. The types of awards range from informal Peer Award Cards to monetary awards. The type of reward that is dispersed is contingent upon the number of responses received for each individual nominee.

Staff are also provided the opportunity to make nominations for an Employee of the Year Award. The selected employee is one who epitomizes the agency's mission and has consistently demonstrated exemplary efforts in promoting the well being of consumers and staff. The recipient of this award is recognized at the agency's annual staff meeting.

The Fun Team has been established to boost employee moral through activities fostering teamwork. Although membership on the Fun Team is strictly voluntary, team members expend their personal time to coordinate activities throughout the year to create a more harmonious work environment for all staff.

## **1.11 Strengthening the Community**

Areas of emphasis for community involvement are based on the mission of the agency, the need to collaborate with other human service initiatives, advocacy groups, vision related service groups and the expressed needs of the blind and visually impaired community. Community involvement is achieved through service on interagency committees, participation in community efforts such as the United Way, Red Cross Blood Drive, Good Health Appeal, Prevention Partners, and Palmetto Health (i.e. flu shots). Collaboration with other state agencies reduces the risk of duplication of services, provides exchange of useful information and creates opportunities for joint endeavors such as grant funding. Staff members in consumer service programs set up booths at local community events to raise awareness about the availability of services. The SCCB also collaborates with consumer advocacy groups for the blind and visually impaired to reach underserved populations such as the deaf-blind, transitioned aged-youth, Hispanics and individuals living in rural areas.

## **Category 2: Strategic Planning**

### **2.1 Strategic Planning Process**

The mission statement is the basis of the development of the Strategic Management Plan. The Strategic Management Plan describes, in detail, each department's contribution to the goals and objectives that are necessary to achieve the agency's mission. A statewide comprehensive needs assessment is conducted every three years. This includes an assessment of consumer needs as well as an evaluation of consumer and key stakeholder feedback with regards to improving service delivery. Additionally, internal and national data trends, accountability to the federal government, the Commission Board, legislatures and tax payers are also incorporated in the strategic planning process. The result is a structure by which Senior Managers coordinate and evaluate performance measures. The goals, objectives and action plans identified in the strategic planning process have all been integrated into the performance appraisals for all staff to ensure that objectives and performance measures are met or exceeded in each program or department.

The development and implementation of the strategic planning process included an identification of the agency's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and barriers to the achievement of the agency's mission to provide services which lead to competitive employment and social and economic independence. Initiatives which lead or could potentially lead to securing employment for consumers were identified as strengths and opportunities. These included building and maintaining relationships with business and industry; Developing cooperative agreements with employment partners, nonprofit organizations, and consumer advocacy groups to expand training opportunities and increase referrals; Accessibility to district offices; Establishment of specialized caseloads such as Transition, Deaf/Blind, Independent Living and Supported Employment to reach previously unserved or underserved individuals and Quality Assurance case reviews.

Conversely, weaknesses and barriers were identified on the basis of issues and concerns that could impede employment outcomes and independence living. These included workforce capacities to consistently provide outreach services to the unserved and underserved populations in the state; Job retention for consumers with multiple disabilities; Lack of reliable transportation; Provision of transition services for students with multiple disabilities; Rate of recidivism and alternate funding sources. Quality Assurance provides the Commissioner and Senior Managers with data reports pertaining to each of the latter mentioned concerns so that an informed decision can be made relative to the development and implementation of the most appropriate action plans.

The strategic planning process addresses the financial needs of the agency in terms of the best practices for the allocation of funding that is necessary to achieve the performance measures outlined in the Strategic Management Plan. In an effort to maintain service delivery, performance standards and implement new program initiatives, Senior Managers evaluate the availability and cost effectiveness of funding. Potential risks would be funding that was not consistent with the increasing cost of service delivery.



These would include, but not be limited to, the increased cost on the provision of assistive technology software and equipment needed to train consumers and the cost of tuition assistance for those consumers whose vocational objective require a college degree.

In order to streamline and improve the accounting and procurement process, the agency will be implementing the South Carolina Enterprise Information System (SCEIS) in the fall of 2008. The results of this initiative will be communicated in the 2008/2009 Accountability Report.

As federal and state funding requirements change, strategic planning is adjusted according. Strategies and action plans are evaluated by the Senior Managers to ensure compliance with federal and state regulations as well consumer informed choice. The agency's capacity to provide services to consumers is closely linked to the analysis of the workforce. Staffing needs are evaluated by the Senior Managers to ensure that the consumer to counselor ratio is manageable. Consideration is also given to the need to strategically restructure job functions among staff. Succession planning is kept current as workforce capacities expand to meet the needs of the consumers. Performance appraisals are also current and include an evaluation on the need for additional training.

Office Managers have been identified in each of the 10 district offices statewide and are relied upon to assist in the assessment of workforce capabilities and needs. Office Managers have been put into place to ensure the continuity and consistency of service delivery. A team approach is utilized in that each staff member is required to be knowledgeable about basic program information so that consumers and the general public can be referred to the appropriate department.

Changes in technology remain a challenge for SCCB consumers. Because most software and equipment is not accessible for the blind, software compatibility remains a consistent barrier. In order to keep up with technological advances, assistive technology training initiatives for the staff of the Employment and Training Division are continual. Strategic planning would include expanding training to ensure that consumers are prepared for technological changes as they occur. Communication must be maintained with the companies who employ the blind and visually impaired so that software compatibility can be accomplished. Other potential financial risks include the prospect of state budget cuts. Strategic planning by Senior Managers would include actions plans designed to absorb any potential budget cuts so that the quality of service delivery will not be compromised.

Execution of the Strategic Plan includes an internal review of the Accountability Report biannually to assess target goals and to ensure that initiatives and strategies previously identified are being addressed and/or followed. Additionally, consultation from the Budget and Control Board's Office of State Budget will be utilized to assess the quality and clarity of the agency's Accountability Report.

## **2.2 Addressing Strategic Challenges**

Strategic challenges are specifically addressed in the strategies and action plans outlined in the Strategic Management Plan. Performance review data and internal and external feedback are vital components of the agency's strategic planning initiatives to address programmatic and service delivery strategic challenges. To ensure that the strategic challenges identified in the strategic planning process do not impede the range and quality of service delivery or have a negative impact on performance measures, strategic objectives include best practices to responsiveness to consumer informed choice. Additionally, a comprehensive approach to encourage continuous quality improvement is coordinated through Quality Assurance. As each strategic challenge is evaluated in accordance to the relevance of achieving performance measures, action plans are developed or modified accordingly.

## **2.3 Developing and Tracking Action Plans**

Senior Managers develop and track action plans. Action plans are monitored for compliance and achievement of goals and strategic objectives. They are also used to identify staff development training needs and establish new program initiatives. Senior Managers review performance measures on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis to evaluate the effectiveness of any associated action plans. As strategic challenges are identified, action plans are modified to ensure consistency of performance measure results and effectiveness of service delivery. The results of consumer satisfaction surveys are also incorporated into the development of actions plans.

Quality Assurance works closely with Senior Managers and service delivery staff to provide data needed to coordinate and establish strategic planning initiatives and identify areas of potential weakness. The Finance Department conducts quarterly meetings with each Senior Manager to review and discuss case service expenditures and make recommendations for reallocation of resources to meet the needs of consumers and service delivery staff.

Senior Managers establish and communicate individual goals for successful rehabilitation through staff performance appraisals. Factors which determine the basis of individual and program goals include caseload size, referral sources, demographic and economic conditions, data trends indicating previous achievements and the availability of financial resources.

## **2.4 Communication and Deployment of Strategic Objectives**

Strategic objectives are communicated through Senior Management meetings – both individually and collectively – and communicated to staff through performance appraisals and monthly reports outlining data trends and achievement of quarterly performance measures. Senior Managers conduct monthly and quarterly follow-up to ensure that goals and objectives of service delivery are clearly understood and that staff are proactively working towards compliance.

Staff are encouraged to provide feedback and to communicate any potential barriers to the achievement of goals. Senior Managers utilize feedback to assess best practices and training needs, including the need to initiate cross training on unique and/or specialized job functions. The Information Technology Department assists Senior Managers with maintaining consistent case management practices by ensuring that standardized case file forms are readily accessible on the agency's internal Intranet System.

## **2.5 Measuring Progress on Action Plans**

Measuring the progress of action plans is a vital part of the agency's continuous quality improvement initiative. Quality Assurance disseminates performance measures and data trends on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis to Senior Managers and individual staff. Senior Managers evaluate this data to determine the effectiveness of the action plans as it relates to the achievement of key performance measures. Quarterly and annual data trends are used to devise future projections of workforce and financial resource needs. Quality Assurance disseminates survey results from consumers. These results are used by Senior Managers to improve service delivery and responsiveness to consumer needs.

Regulatory compliance is accomplished through adherence to federal and state regulations and agency established policy and procedure. Additionally, Quality Assurance conducts weekly internal audits of consumer case files to ensure consistency of regulatory compliance. Reports are disseminated to the responsible staff for corrective action in instances of noncompliance. Follow-up is a collaborative effort by Quality Assurance and the Senior Manager of the responsible staff to facilitate compliance which could include, but not be limited to, the provision of training to achieve and maintain compliance.

Federal standards and indicators measure the agency's performance on all closed cases. Performance measures pertaining to successful closure rates, competitive employment closures, comparative wage earnings, and the number of self supporting individuals at application and closure and access to services by minorities are all evaluated and compared to all federally funded blind agencies throughout the country.

## **2.6 Evaluating and Improving the Strategic Planning Process**

Senior Managers evaluate the strategic planning process on the basis of whether or not goals and performance measures have contributed to the achievement of the agency's mission. Feedback from the Commission Board, Quality Assurance, staff, consumers, consumer advocacy groups and other key stakeholders is used to assess the agency's past and current status, possible solutions to potential barriers to employment outcomes and action plans which have led or will lead to improvement(s) in service delivery.

## **2.7 Availability of the Strategic Management Plan**

The agency's Strategic Management Plan is currently not available to the public. It is available through the agency's Intranet System for staff.

## 2.8 Key Strategic Objectives

| <b>Strategic Planning</b>   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <b>Program Number and Title</b>   | <b>Supported Agency Strategic Planning Goal/Objective</b>  | <b>Related FY 07-08 Key Agency Action Plan/Initiative(s)</b>   | <b>Key Cross References for Performance Measures*</b>         |
| II. Rehabilitation Services   | Maintain the number of competitive employment outcomes   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish benchmarks on referrals, referrals processed, eligibility determinations, and successful closures</li> <li>Provide training that will enhance blind and visually impaired adults' ability to become more independent and employable</li> </ul>    | 7.1-1, 7.1-5, 7.1-6, 7.1-8, 7.5-1, 7.6-1<br><br>7.1-9, 7.1-10 |
| IV. Community Services  | Enhance and maintain independence and quality of life in the home and in the community.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide adjustment to blindness skills training to consumers 55 years of age and older (Older Blind Program)</li> <li>Identify and serve blind and visually impaired children (birth to age 13) and their families (Children's Services Program)</li> </ul> | 7.1-2, 7.1-9, 7.1-10, 7.5-2<br><br>7.1-4, 7.1-10, 7.5-4       |
| III. Prevention   | Prevent, stabilize or restore the loss of vision through medical services and Prevention Awareness Programs.                   | Provide appropriate medical services to detect eye diseases in their early stages  | 7.1-3, 7.5-3  |
| I. Administration   | Provide the human resources leadership, guidance and tools necessary to accomplish the mission of the agency                   | Develop and/or maintain the skills that are necessary for employees to accomplish the agency mission   | 7.4-1, 7.4-3, 7.4-4   |
| I. Administration   | Provide the administrative leadership necessary to ensure accountability, effectiveness and efficiency                         | Assure compliance with state and federal regulations governing programs<br><br>Maintain sound fiscal procedures and accountability levels that are acceptable by all funding sources   | 7.3-1, 7.3-2, 7.3-2, 7.3-4, 7.3-5                             |
| I. Administration   | To implement a comprehensive information system that encompasses the organizational knowledge, management and strategic levels | Develop a consumer tracking system that supports the agency data reporting requirements<br><br>Develop a standardized information system that reflects and supports the agency infrastructure  |   |
| * Key Cross-References are a link to Category 7 – Business Results. These references provide a Chart number that is included in the 7th section of this document. |  |  |   |

## **Category 3: Customer Focus**

### **3.1 Key Customers and Requirements**

The agency's key customers are those individuals who meet all of the following criteria:

- A visual impairment which constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment
- Can benefit from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of an employment outcome
- Require vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, retain or regain employment.

Medical service providers are also key customers. In addition to providing medical services to our consumers that are crucial in determining eligibility and additional impediments to employment, medical service providers also serve as invaluable referral source.

### **3.2 Keeping current with Changing Customer/Business Needs and Expectations**

All direct service delivery staff are provided training that is focused on service delivery in the specific areas relevant to agency programs. Staff also maintain contact with providers of services such as assistive technology, Braille products and independent living aids. Senior Managers ensure that all staff stay current with literature in the field of rehabilitation for the blind and severely visually impaired. The information gathered through these activities is applied to program planning, expansion and improvement. Attendance at local, state and national conferences and workshops are encouraged and supported as resources allow. Consumer satisfaction on service delivery and service providers is collected, evaluated and incorporated into current and future strategic planning. Consumer Advocacy Groups such as the National Federation for the Blind and the Association for the Blind are key stakeholders which provide invaluable information on the agency's initiatives to meeting the needs of the community.

### **3.3 Key Customer Access Mechanisms**

SCCB has 10 district offices located throughout the state which provide consumers with direct access to services and service delivery staff. Quality Assurance and consumer service Senior Management staff monitor cases to ensure consistency of consumer contact, documentation of informed choice and consumer participation in the rehabilitation process. The agency's web site is a resource for individuals seeking services or information. Inquiries are forwarded to the appropriate local offices to initiate services. As staff members market the program, they also receive feedback from the community. During the application processes, each consumer is advised of the existence and purpose of the Client Assistance Program (CAP). Service delivery staff ensure that consumers have a full understanding of their right to contact CAP if they are dissatisfied with service delivery or agency staff.

The Commissioner and Senior Managers attend advocacy group meetings, consumer group meetings and meet with individual consumers to obtain feedback on concerns and needs. Consumers can also attend agency Board meetings to obtain information on the state of the agency and initiate discussions in an open forum with the Commission Board.

The Educational Radio Program is a state funded program which enables consumers to obtain statewide information. Consumers are provided with daily access to newspapers (i.e. the State, Greenville News and the Post & Courier), magazines, books, and other contemporary printed material through radio receivers loaned to SCCB consumers. The radio reading service is noncommercial and operates on a subchannel of the South Carolina Educational Television (SCETV). Programs air 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. The newspapers, magazines and books are all read by volunteers.

### **3.4 Customer/Stakeholder Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction**

Quality Assurance measures customer satisfaction with Consumer Satisfaction Surveys. All consumers for whom an Individualized Plan for Employment was developed and implemented are surveyed on questions pertaining to service delivery (including timeliness and substantiality) and staff responsiveness. They are also asked to provide recommendations for improvement. The results are compiled and disseminated to Senior Managers on a quarterly and annual basis. As a part of continuous quality improvement, Senior Managers use survey results to make changes to the strategies and action plans on the Strategic Management Plan and assess management and staff training needs.

Quality Assurance also disseminates data trends to Senior Managers pertaining to unsuccessful closures and the reasons for such. During individual meetings with service delivery staff, Senior Managers are proactive in obtaining feedback on the specific case details of unsuccessful closures. This feedback is used to modify strategies and action plans specifically designed to reduce the number of unsuccessful closures.

The extent of consumer dissatisfaction is assessed through service delivery staff, Consumer Satisfaction Surveys and the Client Assistance Program (CAP). In such instances wherein the consumer is dissatisfied with the agency, Senior Management staff are diligent in working with CAP to achieve a balance between consumer satisfaction and compliance with federal, state and agency established policy and procedures.

### **3.5 Providing Continuous Quality Improvement**

Continuous quality improvement is an essential component of the strategic planning process. To accomplish this, focus on consumer informed choice and consumer needs is given the utmost attention. Feedback from consumers and other key stakeholders is evaluated and integrated into the action plans of the strategic management planning process to evaluate program effectiveness and make changes. Performance measures and data trends identified in the Accountability

Report are also evaluated to assess the need for program initiatives and training. Cooperative agreements have been developed and maintained to ensure collaboration relative to comprehensive service delivery.

### **3.6 Building Positive Relationships with Customers and Stakeholders**

Counselors in all consumer service programs expend a significant amount of time in ensuring that the consumer understands that rehabilitation is a process and that participation is essential in order to achieve independence and an improved quality of life. Once the eligibility process has been completed, Counselors are proactive in empowering the consumer to exercise informed choice and become an active participant not only in the development of an Individualized Plan for Employment or Independent Living, but in every phase of the service delivery process. The counseling and guidance service that is utilized to accomplish this fosters a positive rapport and builds trust between the consumer and the Counselor.

The Employment and Training Division works diligently to build and maintain a positive relationship with business and industry employers. Services provided to accomplish this include conducting consultation on the Americans with Disability Act, providing diversity training to promote an integrated work setting, providing information on tax incentives for hiring the blind and visually impaired and providing consultation and demonstrations of assistive technology software and equipment.

Job Coaches are utilized to build and maintain a positive relationship with business and industry employers. Job coaches assist in preparing consumers for employment by providing training as it relates to preparing a resume, job interviewing skills and developing interpersonal relationships with co-workers in a professional manner. Extended support to assist consumers with mastering the skills needed to maintain employment is also provided.

SCCB utilizes cooperative agreements to build positive working relationships with other state agencies, nonprofit organizations and educational institutions. The purpose of the cooperative agreements is to expand the availability of service delivery to consumers and increase referrals.

## **Category 4: Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management**

### **4.1 Determination of Measures**

Achievement of the agency's mission statement and the Strategic Management Plan are the key determinants of operations, processes and systems used to track financial and organizational performance. Data utilized to evaluate performance is disseminated from the Quality Assurance Department and through a national data comparison of other blind agencies. Key action plans and performance measures have been developed which integrates federal and state regulations and feedback from consumers, key stakeholders and staff. Senior Managers review financial and organizational performance measures to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of action plans

and make informed decisions regarding program improvement. This includes the development and subsequent tracking of new procedures as the needs of consumers change.

#### **4.2 Integration of Data/Information for Analysis**

The agency's mission and performance measures relating to federal regulations and federal and state reporting requirements (including the federal Standards and Indicators) determine the data to be collected and integrated into the service delivery systems. Data is collected via the agency's Client Information System. Quality Assurance compiles and disseminates data trends and caseload comparisons to Senior Managers so that a thorough, informed decision regarding the effectiveness of service delivery can be made. Data trends in all key performance measures reflect at least four (4) years.

#### **4.3 Key Measures**

The agency's key measures for all consumer service programs include referrals, referrals processed, eligibility determinations and active status consumers. Other measures which may be program specific include:

- Number of individuals competitively employment at or above the minimum wage
- Number of individual plans of employment/service developed
- Individuals served per program and county
- Consumer satisfaction
- Number of cases in compliance with federal, state and agency guidelines
- Comparison of Blind Licensed Vendor earnings to the state's average earnings
- Number of individuals who received training (adjustment to blindness, assistive technology, etc.)

Key performance measures are directly related to the agency's mission to achieve competitive employment and social and economic independence. Program goals pertaining to referrals received, referrals processed, eligibility determinations, development of service plans for employment and total served are reviewed on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. The quality of competitive employment placements is assessed by reviewing the number of individuals competitively placed at or above the federal minimum wage. Performance measures, consumer satisfaction survey results and compliance with federal and state regulations and agency established policy are reviewed by Quality Assurance. Reports are subsequently submitted to the Commissioner and Senior Managers on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. The results outlined in the Quality Assurance Report are used to assess the need for performance improvement and to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategic planning process.

The results of key measures are used by Senior Managers to establish short and long term organizational direction and priorities and improve performance. The goals, objectives and action plans on the Strategic Management Plan are reviewed quarterly to evaluate trends in terms of meeting program goals. Performance measures are not only evaluated in terms of whether or not goals and objectives were met, but also in accordance to how, when and where



improvements can be made. An assessment of the number of consumers placed in competitive employment and total served provides Senior Managers the opportunity to improve upon the distribution of the workforce and reallocation of resources to reach the unserved and underserved. Performance review findings – including those that are disseminated by Quality Assurance - are used to assess deficiencies in service delivery. The data affords Senior Managers the opportunity to assess staff training needs and to develop in-service staff development training accordingly.

#### **4.4 Use of Key Comparative Data**

The SCCB's federal regulatory agency, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), compiles data submitted from a Case Service Report from all rehabilitation agencies (blind as well as general) in the country. The Case Service Report outlines detailed data on all case closures - successful and unsuccessful - pertaining to successful closure rates, competitive employment closures, comparative wage earnings, the number of self supporting individuals at application and closure and access to services by minorities. The SCCB uses this data to assess the effectiveness of its vocational rehabilitation program and to compare its rank to other agencies servicing the blind throughout the country.

The goals, objectives and action plans identified in the strategic planning process have all been incorporated into the service delivery programs and administrative services. This includes a direct correlation to job functions and success criteria on performance appraisals. Feedback from consumers and key stakeholders is used to assess the agency's current performance, possible solutions to potential barriers and action plans which have led or will lead to improvement(s) in service delivery and new program initiatives.

#### **4.5 Ensuring Data Integrity for Decision Making**

The Client Information System (CIS) provides detailed data on each case as it progresses through the rehabilitation process from application to closure. Data integrity is achieved through multi-level checks and balances which have been identified for data validation. To ensure timeliness of data entry, service delivery staff adhere to a weekly and monthly deadline by which data must be entered. Reports produced from the CIS are reviewed by service delivery staff at least once a month to ensure that each case is in the appropriate status within the established timeframe. Quality Assurance performance audits verify the quality and integrity of case files and includes a comparison of case file information to CIS data. System backups and a stable, controlled operating environment have provided 100% system availability.

Quality Assurance provides Senior Managers with productivity statistics so that an informed decision pertaining to modifications to the strategic planning process can be made as needed. The information is also used for completing required Federal reports. The Database reporting system requirements are updated and validated for integrity and accuracy as needed to ensure completion of federal reporting requirements.

All data is stored on a network server and are backed up on a daily basis. To protect the confidentiality of consumer data, strong firewalls have been put into place to safeguard against unauthorized access.

#### **4.6 Translating Performance Review Findings Into Continuous Improvement Priorities**

Senior Managers utilize the strategic planning process to identify potential barriers to the achievement of the agency's mission. The priorities for improvement are driven by the results of key performance measures that are directly linked to staff performance appraisals. The Quality Assurance Department reviews cases to determine compliance with federal and state regulations and agency established policies and procedures. Senior Managers use the information generated from Quality Assurance to evaluate improvements needed for service delivery. Continuous improvement priorities are communicated through the dissemination of written policies and procedures, feedback on performance appraisals and training initiatives.

#### **4.7 Maintaining Organizational and Employee Knowledge**

Organizational and employee knowledge is maintained through succession planning. Senior Managers routinely evaluate workforce capacities as it relates to the needs of consumers. Quarterly reviews of staff availability are conducted to ensure that any succession planning previously outlined is updated as needed with regards to current staffing needs and the continuity of service delivery.

Organizational and employee knowledge is also maintained through a New Employee Mentoring Program. A new employee is paired with a veteran employee who has similar job duties. The veteran employee is responsible for orienting the new employee to the agency, training on job duties, and serving as a mentor. The transfer of knowledge on standardized administrative task is communicated through procedure manuals. Senior Managers routinely review procedure manuals to ensure consistency of agency operations. Best practices are implemented and shared among all agency staff when applicable.

### **Category 5: Human Resource Focus**

#### **5.1 Organization and Measurement of Work**

Performance appraisals are the primary means by which Senior Managers monitor the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce. Performance measures pertaining to all aspects of the strategic planning process (i.e. objectives, strategies and action plans) are integrated into performance appraisals. Staff are encouraged to be an active participant in staff meetings and provide input on the development of procedures that are to be identified as best practices to improve service delivery. Future Quality Assurance initiatives include surveying staff at least once annually on their perception of the state of the agency. They will also be provided the opportunity to offer recommendations on improvements and program initiatives.

Senior Managers have taken a more active role in ensuring that all staff have a clear understanding of how his/her job affects the overall mission of the agency. As a part of succession planning, cross training is a valuable tool that is used to assist staff in developing their full potential. Staff benefit from cross training in that they are afforded the opportunity to develop additional experience and skills.

The agency recognizes employees for meeting or exceeding goals during Public Service Recognition Week. Service awards are also presented to staff during the agency's annual staff meeting. Empowerment of staff is encouraged through participation in the Rewards and Recognition Program. Staff are encouraged to recognize and nominate their peers on the basis of extra effort, teamwork, positive attitude, service and loyalty to the Agency, process improvement and innovation, initiative, customer service, ethical behavior, professional development and community service. The types of awards range from an informal Peer Award Card to monetary awards. The type of reward that is dispersed is based on the number of responses received for each individual nominee.

## **5.2 Effective Communication and Shared Knowledge/Skill/Best Practices**

Shared knowledge, skill and best practices are accomplished through succession planning and cross training. Effective communication with regards to shared knowledge as it relates to service delivery is most evident in the district offices located throughout the state. In order to provide efficient office coverage, staff are required to know the basic program knowledge of all programs in order to provide good customer service. Staff meetings fostering interdepartmental collaboration are conducted on a quarterly basis so that staff are afforded the opportunity to be proactive in identifying best practices and addressing internal and external potential barriers to communication and service delivery.

In an effort to strengthen the communication and succession planning process, staff who have participated in cross training will be required to perform the job on which they were cross trained once a month. To better facilitate this process for the future, Senior Managers will develop training schedules so as not to disrupt the workflow of any program area or district office during this process. All staff participating in this new cross training initiative are encouraged to provide feedback relative to the effectiveness of the training in terms of satisfactory job performance. Successful procedures will be incorporated into the strategic planning process accordingly. The results of this new initiative will be reported in the SCCB's 2008/2009 Accountability Report.

## **5.3 Recruitment, Placement and Retention of New Employees**

Recruitment of staff is primarily based on whether or not the minimum training and experience and education have been obtained for vacant positions. Assessment of staffing needs is based on the goals, objectives and action plans of the strategic planning process. A persistent barrier to recruitment has been identified as recruiting qualified staff who have already meet the educational requirements of the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development component of the federal regulations.

#### **5.4 Workforce Capability and Capacity Needs**

Workforce capabilities and capacity are driven by the needs of consumers. Senior Managers consistently review staffing needs to determine its impact on service delivery. An evaluation of workforce capabilities also provides Senior Managers with an opportunity to develop and implement training initiatives designed to expand organizational knowledge and enhance job skills.

#### **5.5 Work Performance Management System**

In order to maintain continuous quality improvement, it is essential that every employee understand the responsibilities of his/her job and be given continuous and constructive evaluation of their performance. This is accomplished through the use of the Employee Performance Management System (EPMS) as it is an effective management tool for communicating job duties, evaluating performance and encouraging improvement. The EPMS promotes two way communication between Senior Managers and staff. Senior Managers acknowledge successful achievements of job duties and make comments and recommendations for performance improvement. Staff are afforded the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the best practices which lead to the successful achievement of job functions as well as barriers which lead to the inability to achieve job functions. Best practices pertaining to the successful achievement of job functions are communicated to staff with similar job duties and incorporated into the strategic planning process.

#### **5.6 Development and Learning System for Leaders**

Development of personal leadership attributes is accomplished through staff development training. Through the Inservice Training Grant, Senior Managers and midlevel supervisors are afforded the opportunity to attend leadership development seminars and conferences. The agency's Training Coordinator collects feedback from participants in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the training and to assess the need for additional training. All training is coordinated on the basis of its relation to organizational usefulness and the agency's mission statement.

#### **5.7 Addressing Key Developmental Training Needs for the Workforce**

Staff Development training is designed around the agency's mission and supports the needs of the staff with regards to organizational knowledge, job skills and career advancement. A core training curriculum for service delivery staff includes diseases and treatment of the eye, performance improvement, diversity and sensitivity awareness, ethics and team building. A federal Inservice Training Grant is the primary funding source for staff development training.

In an effort to develop training sessions designed to enhance the ability of all staff to support the agency's mission, an assessment of the effectiveness of training and the need for additional training continues to remain an ongoing process. This process is accomplished through the

identification of barriers to service delivery, EPMS documents, training requests, cross training and succession planning of job duties and the results of follow-up surveys on the performance impact of training.

Safety training and awareness is managed by the agency's Facilities Maintenance Manager and is conducted by way of routine fire drills, dissemination of information pertaining to evacuation procedures in the event of an emergency and defensive driver training courses. The Facilities Maintenance Manager is also responsible for the administration of the safety and health issues concerning the agency. Efforts to ensure consumer and staff safety include maintaining a lock system in which employees and consumers are assigned an entry card for access to the buildings located at the agency's main complex. The district offices are located in facilities in which visitors come to a main entrance before visiting any staff. The Facilities Maintenance Manager also works closely with other state agencies such as the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation and Construction and Planning of the Budget and Control Board in order to maintain current information with regards to compliance with safety regulations. As a direct result of this collaboration, the agency's Emergency Action Plan is reviewed annually and updated accordingly.

## **5.8 Use of New Knowledge and Skills**

In an effort to encourage continuous quality improvement among staff, training sessions are developed to expand organizational knowledge and enhance job skills. As part of the evaluation process of the effectiveness of training, new knowledge and skills which have been identified as best practices are incorporated in the EPMS of staff who have comparable job duties and/or program goals. The success criteria for functions which require the use of new knowledge and skills are evaluated in accordance to its impact on service delivery. Use of new knowledge and skills is also communicated through cross training and succession planning of job duties.

## **5.9 Contribution of Employee Training to Achieve Action Plans**

The purpose of staff development training is to ensure that staff are provided with the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully perform their job duties. Staff training needs are directly linked to the achievement of the agency's mission. As staff become more knowledgeable and skillful in performing their jobs, successful achievement of performance measures is assured. The result is a substantial impact on efficient and effective service delivery. Training initiatives which lead to the successful completion of performance measures are incorporated into the Strategic Management Plan. Conversely, training initiatives that have had minimal or no positive impact on improving employee performance and service delivery are discontinued.

## **5.10 Evaluation of Workforce, Leader Training and Development Systems**

The effectiveness of the workforce is evaluated on the basis of whether or not goals and performance measures are met or exceeded. Factors utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of the agency's workforce are caseload size, referral sources, demographic and economic conditions, and the availability of financial resources. In the service delivery programs, Senior Managers evaluate the ratios among referral rates, total served and workforce capacities. This would include, but not be limited to, the development of proposals to redistribute territories or add additional staff to accommodate the needs of consumers. Similarly, the workforce capacity of consumer and administrative service staff are also evaluated to ensure that any additional service delivery needs can be accommodated.

## **5.11 Motivation of Workforce**

In an effort to boost staff morale and improve attitudes about job performance and the work environment, a Rewards and Recognition Program has been established. Staff are encouraged to recognize and nominate their peers on the basis of such qualities as extra effort, teamwork, positive attitude, and community service. These same criteria are also utilized when nominations are made for Employee of the Year. The agency's Fun Team promotes a harmonious work environment for all staff through activities fostering teamwork. Flexible work schedules are also offered to all staff. The use of flex time provides staff the opportunity to balance work and personal commitments.

## **5.12 Workforce Well-Being, Satisfaction and Motivation**

Workforce well-being, satisfaction and motivation are communicated through staff meetings, EPMS performance appraisals, informal conversations and e-mails. Staff are encouraged to provide verbal and written feedback on job satisfaction, training needs, service delivery and the state of the agency. Senior Managers promptly handle staff grievances in an effort to maintain balance and harmony with regards to the best interest of the employee and the agency. Employee separation data is evaluated by Human Resources and communicated to Senior Managers. Senior Managers use this data to be proactive and ensure that separation reasons pertaining to job dissatisfaction are resolved in order to prevent future occurrences.

Future initiatives to measure job satisfaction include the dissemination of an annual survey to all staff. This will provide staff with the opportunity to provide relevant, anonymous feedback on the Commissioner and Senior Management and make thought provoking and meaningful comments and suggestions on agency improvements. Questions will be specifically designed to address agency operations and service delivery in order to obtain constructive responses that would be beneficial to all staff.

### **5.13 Career Progression and Succession Planning**

Career Progression is accomplished through staff development training. In addition to the agency's core training curriculum (diseases and treatment of the eye, performance improvement, diversity and sensitivity awareness, ethics and team building), staff are encouraged to provide feedback on additional training needs that are directly related to job performance and personal development.

Senior Managers continually evaluate workforce capacities to ensure effective continuity of service delivery as it relates to the needs of consumers. Quarterly reviews of staff availability are conducted to ensure that any succession planning previously outlined is updated as needed with regards to current staffing needs. Cross training is used to accommodate workforce changes. The annual review of policy and procedure manuals to ensure consistency of program operations and best practices is also an integral part of the succession planning process.

### **5.14 Maintaining a Safe, Secure and Healthy Work Environment**

Safety training and awareness is managed by the agency's Facilities Maintenance Manager and is conducted by way of routine fire drills, dissemination of information pertaining to evacuation procedures in the event of an emergency, defensive driver training courses and weekly and monthly inspections of the working environment of staff and the training environment of consumers.

Staff are encouraged to participate in state sponsored wellness activities. Monthly bulletins pertaining to health related activities and events are received from the State Health Plan Prevention Partners Employee Insurance Program. This information is forwarded to all SCCB staff via e-mail from the Office of the Commissioner. To date, SCCB staff have voluntarily participated in the following state sponsored wellness activities:

- Weight Management (Greater Columbia Shrink Down)
- Wellness Walks
- Mammogram Screenings
- Prostate Screenings
- Diabetes Screenings/Awareness

## **Category 6: Process Management**

### **6.1 Core Competencies**

The core competencies of the agency are vocational rehabilitation services which lead to competitive employment and social and economic independence for Blind and visually impaired South Carolinians. The provision of specialized training identified on the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is the primary means by which this is accomplished. The SCCB has three specialized types of training for the Blind and visually impaired: adjustment to blindness training, assistive technology training and the Randolph-Sheppard Business Enterprise Program. These training components provide invaluable services that cannot be replicated in the community.

### **6.2 Key Work Processes**

The key work process that contribute to the achievement of the agency's mission to provide individualized services leading to competitive employment and economic and social independence are eligibility determination, development of Individualized Plans of Employment (IPE) and placement in competitive employment. In every phase of the rehabilitation process, the Counselor is the key person in making the provision of services to the consumers. The consumer is a collaborating partner with the development, implementation and evaluation of the IPE.

The consumer exercises informed choice in the IPE process in terms of the selection of the employment goal, services and service providers. Greater emphasis is placed on the fact that services must be provided in the most integrated setting that is both appropriate to the service being provided and reflects the informed choice of the individual. Training needs are determined by the consumer's vocational objective. The specialized training programs include the Ellen Beach Mack Rehabilitation Center (EBMRC), Training and Employment Division (T&E) and the Business Enterprise Program (BEP). The EBMRC curriculum includes Orientation and Mobility, GED Preparatory, Braille Literacy, Home and Personal Management, Vocational Evaluation, Communications and Woodworking. Curriculum in the T&E Division includes Braille Terminals, Speech and Magnification Software, Closed Circuit Television, Scanners/Reading Software and Notetakers. The BEP training program provides job training and placement for individuals to become licensed vendors and operate their own vending location.

Reports detailing the consumer's training progress are provided to Counselors on a monthly basis. Once training and all other services identified on the IPE have been provided, the development of potential job opportunities for the consumer begins. Employment Consultants are available to assist Counselors in providing job search and job placement assistance as needed.



To ensure that each of the above mentioned work processes are consistently utilized, each component has been integrated into each Counselor's performance appraisal. Requirements include the establishment of a benchmark for a minimum number of cases determined eligible, IPEs developed, referrals to each training program and competitive employment placements.

### **6.3 Process Design and Delivery**

The Senior Managers and service delivery staff on all levels utilize the Client Information System (CIS) to evaluate and compare data. Senior Managers utilize the CIS data to direct agency operations, including those specifically identified in the Strategic Management Plan. Service delivery staff utilize the CIS as a case management tool. The system provides status reports that assist the Counselors and Senior Managers in monitoring the progress of meeting performance measures which include referrals, referrals processed, eligibility determinations, individualized service plans developed, case closures and total served.

### **6.4 Meeting Key Performance Requirements**

Quality Assurance reviews and audits client data in all consumer service programs. Additionally, reconciliation of case file and consumer data is conducted during each case review. Compliance is based on federal and state regulations and agency established policies and procedures. Reports regarding compliance and the successful achievement of performance measures are disseminated to Senior Managers on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. Senior Managers evaluate the Quality Assurance reports to determine the effectiveness of the action plans in the achievement of key performance measures and to devise future projections of workforce capacities and financial resource needs.

### **6.5 Key product and Service Related Work Processes**

Key product and service related work processes are evaluated on a quarterly basis by Senior Managers. Data trend comparisons are conducted to assess efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. Action plans are developed or modified to improve those processes which did not produce the desired outcomes or in instances where in consumer needs have significantly changed. Implementation of improvement of key service related work processes would include development and implementation of a proposal, data collection and evaluation of results. Successful initiatives are incorporated into the Strategic Management Plan and all applicable employee performance appraisals. Financial resources are allocated as needed to implement and support the new process.

Employers are a key supplier of employment opportunities for the agency's consumers. Counselors and Employment Consultants maintain direct contact with potential employers on a continuous basis. The agency partners with employers by conducting job site analysis and work site modifications to accommodate Blind and visually impaired employees.

The agency also continues to serve as a technical resource for employers when issues arise concerning Blind or visually impaired staff that could jeopardize employment. These services

not only provide employment opportunities for the agency's consumers but assists employers with meeting the Americans with Disability Act requirements. In addition to working with employers, Counselors are also responsible for maintaining contact with physicians in their respective territories. A significant portion of the referrals to the agency is received from doctors. Maintaining an open line of communication with doctors ensures that the rate of referrals from these key stakeholders remain constant.

## **6.6 Key Support Processes**

The Information Technology, Finance and Human Resources Departments provide administrative support to all staff. Each of these key support processes function under its own strategic planning objectives. These support components are improved and updated in response to internal and external feedback, technological upgrades, performance appraisals and staff development training.

The Information Technology Department is responsible for administering and maintaining the Client Information System (CIS). Senior Management as well as all consumer service staff can access the reports generated from the CIS as needed. Training on the use and importance of accurate data entry into the CIS has been provided to all consumer service staff.

The Finance Department provides monthly reports of the financial status of all departments. Under the direct supervision of Senior Managers, consumer service staff are responsible for managing their budget and purchasing goods and services in the most cost effective manner. Accurate and consistent tracking of budget allocations has been included on the performance appraisals for all service delivery staff.

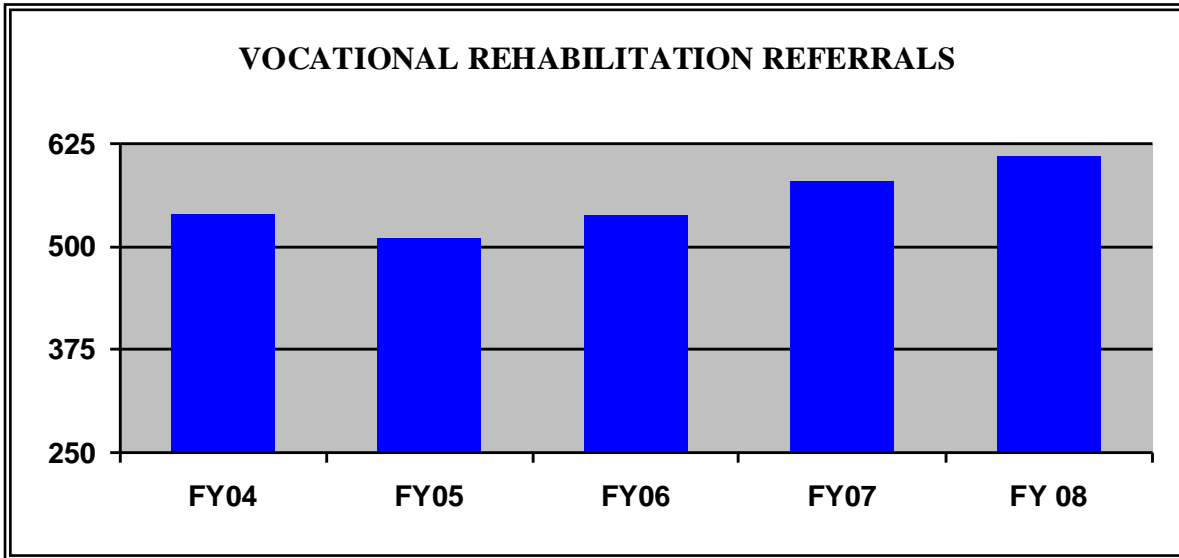
Human Resources works with the Chief of Consumer Services and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors on meeting the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development requirement of obtaining a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. Additionally, the recruitment process for personnel vacancies are handled as expeditiously as possible so as to ensure there is a minimal delay in service delivery.

## **6.7 Determination of Resources Needed to Meet Financial Obligations**

The agency's primary source of funding is federal funds through a Basic Support Grant. Although distribution of funds are contingent upon compliance with federal regulations and federal reporting requirements, the amount of funding remains consistent from year to year.

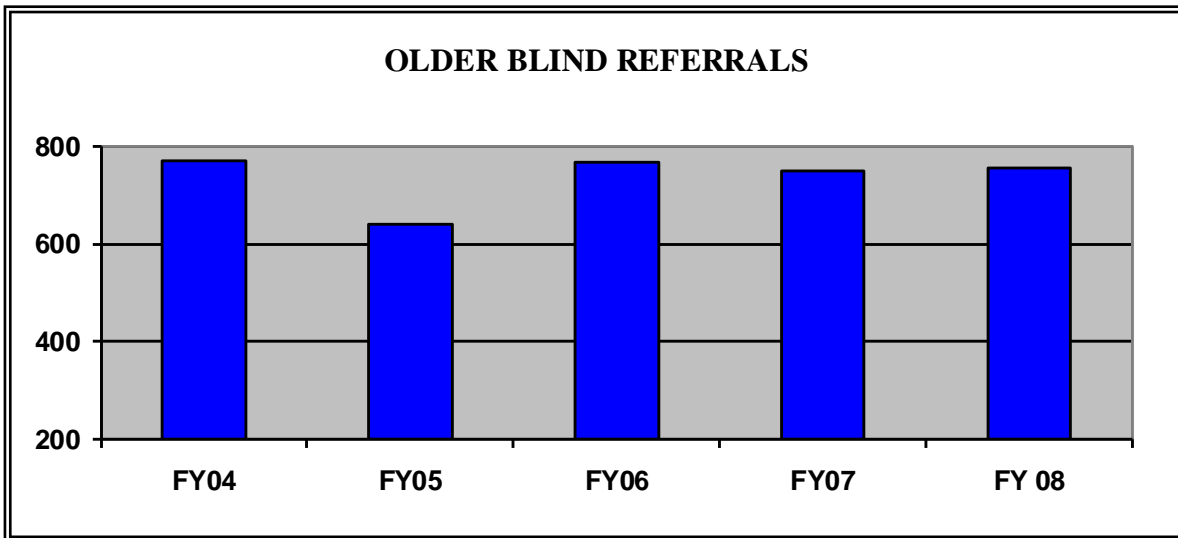
State funds are allocated from the General Assembly and the Governor. Budget requests for state funds are made on an annual basis. The amount of the budget request is contingent upon consumer and staffing needs to maintain quality service delivery and to achieve the agency's mission.

## 7.1 Key Measures of Mission Accomplishment and Service Performance



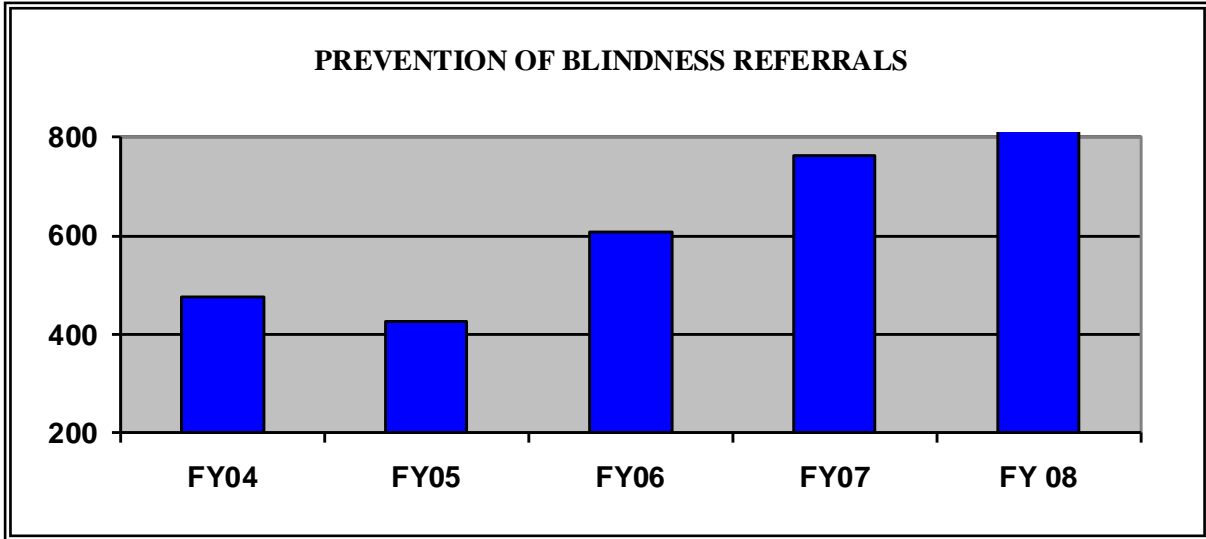
**Figure 7.1-1**

In FY 2008, referrals to the VR Program increased by 5% compared to FY 2007. This increase was attributed to an increase in workforce capacity and the expansion of outreach services to include counties that were previously unserved or underserved.



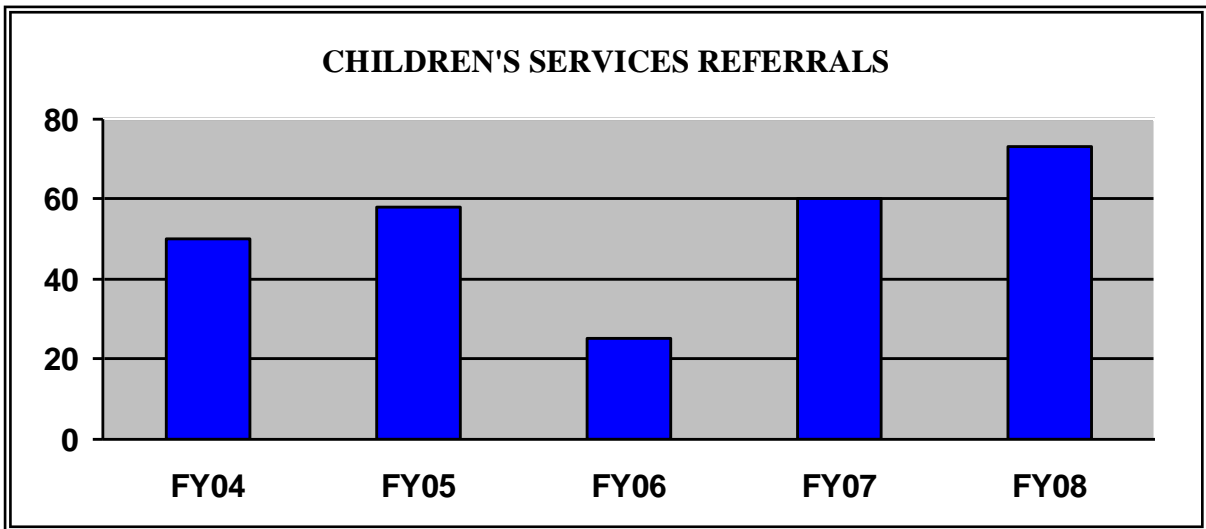
**Figure 7.1-2**

In FY 2008, there was a 1% increase in the referrals to the Older Blind Program compared to FY 2007. The expansion of services to include assistive technology and computer training contributed to this increase.



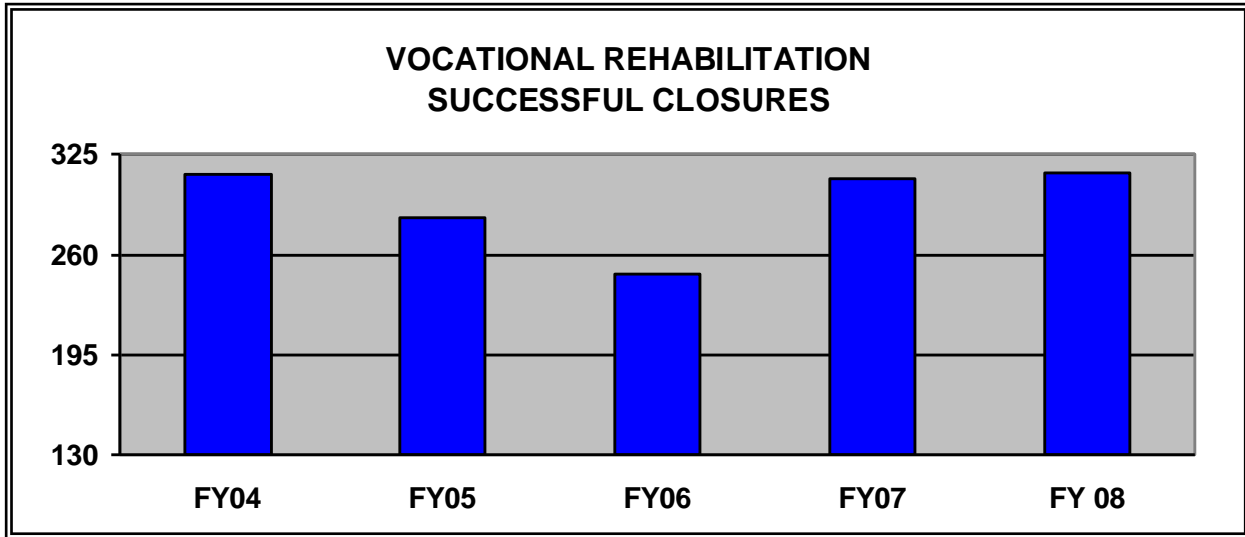
**Figure 7.1-3**

In FY 2008, there was a 19% increase in the number of Prevention of Blindness referrals received compared to FY 2007. An increase in the number of individuals applying for services who could not afford health insurance and the rising cost of medical services and treatments contributed to the increase in referrals.



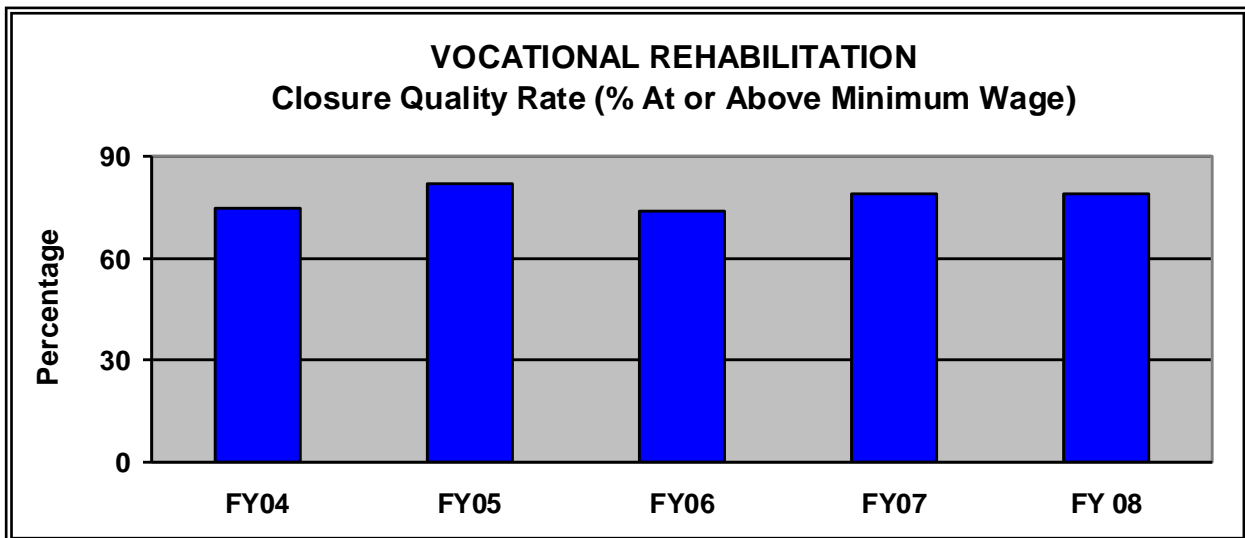
**Figure 7.1-4**

In FY 2008, there was a 21% increase in the number of referrals received by the Children's Services Program. This increase was attributed to the expansion of outreach efforts to school districts and underserved counties of the state.



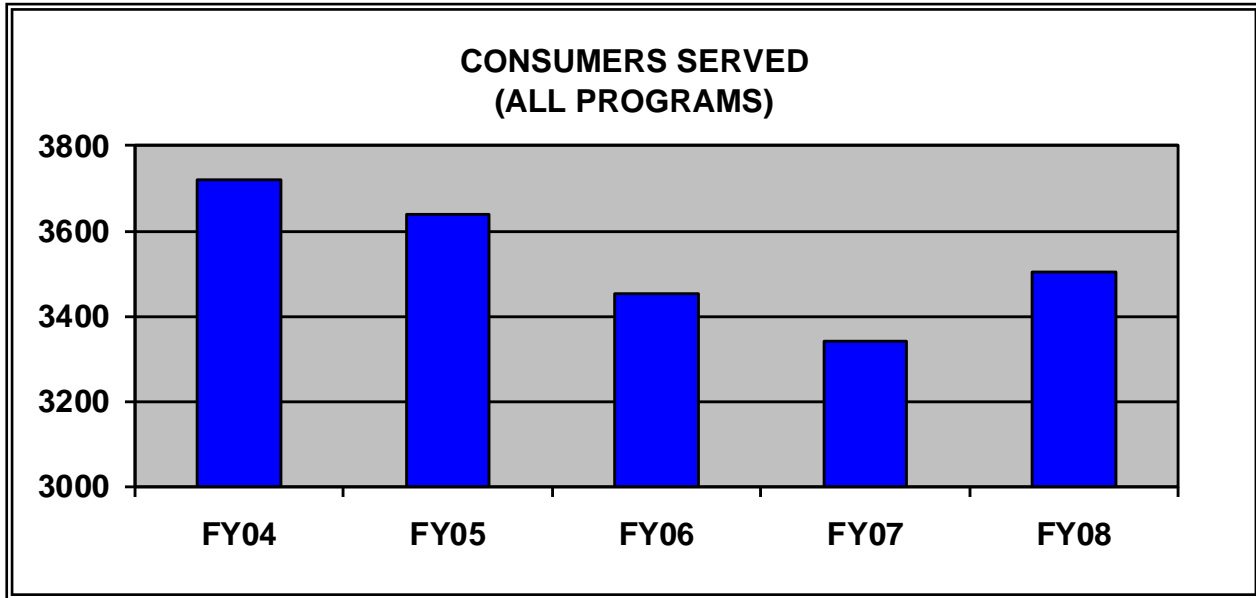
**Figure 7.1-5**

In FY 2008, there was a 1% increase in the number of successful rehabilitants compared to FY 2007. A reorganization of the VR counseling staff and the redistribution of counties contributed to the increase in the number of consumers who were successfully rehabilitated.



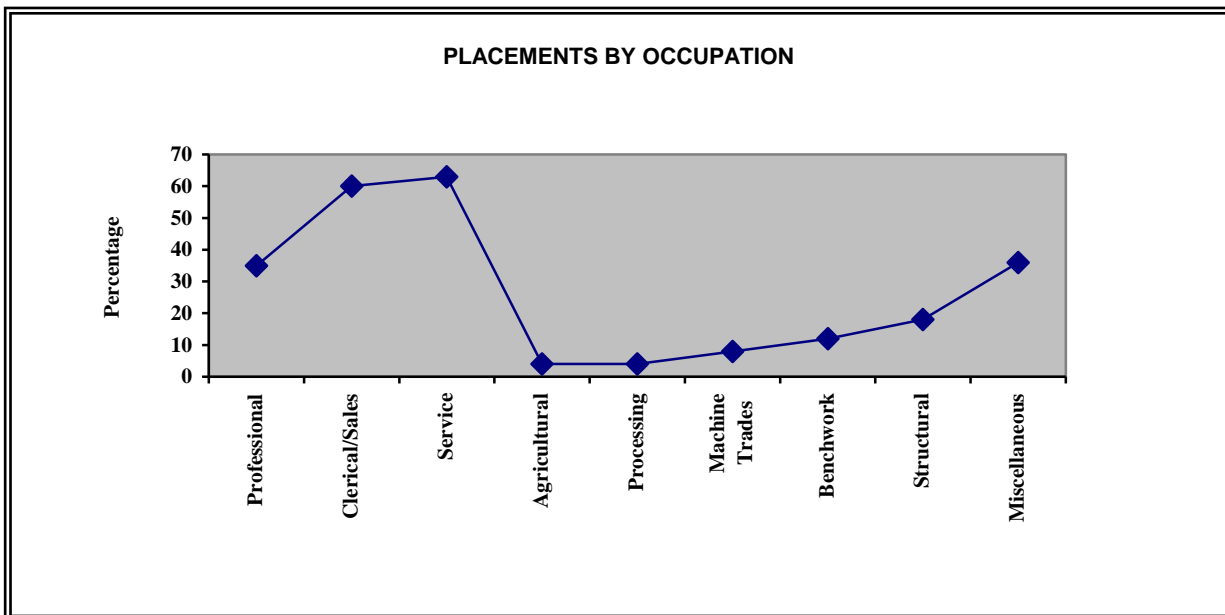
**Figure 7.1-6**

Although the number of successful closures increased by 1%, the quality of the VR closures remained consistent in comparison to FY 2007. The data trend over the past 5 years indicates that the quality of VR closures (at or above minimum wage) was at least 70% of the total number of successful closures.



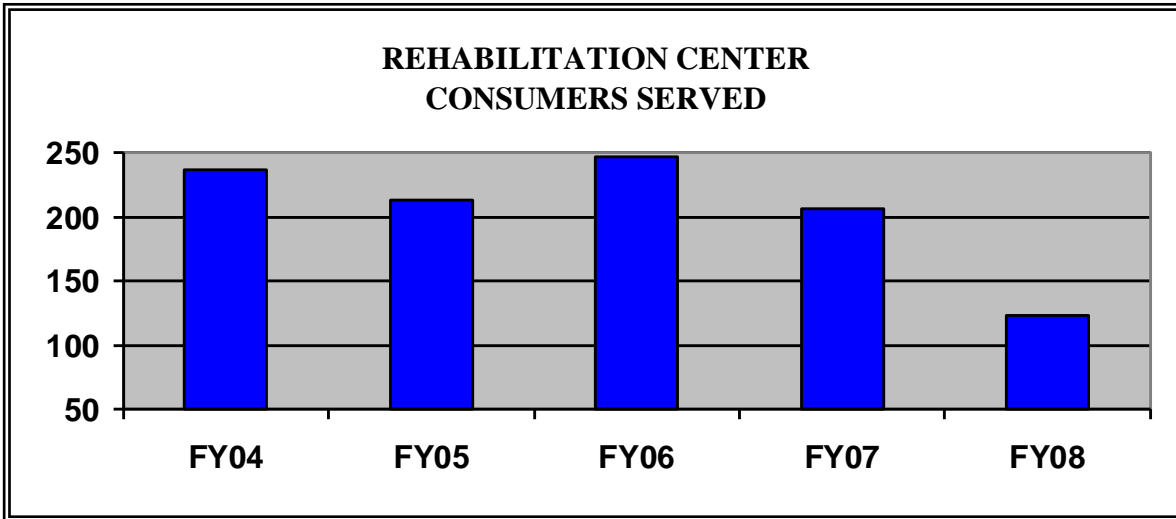
**Figure 7.1-7**

In FY 2008, there was a 5% increase in the total number of consumers served compared to FY 2007. The increase was attributed to an increase in the total number of referrals to the agency as well as the expansion of workforce capacities.



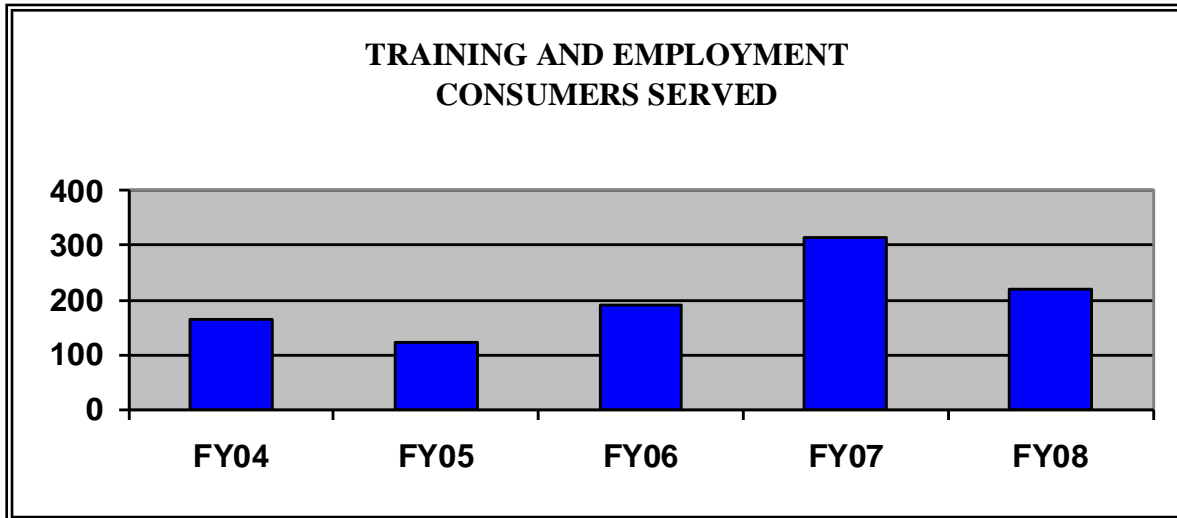
**Figure 7.1-8**

In FY 2008, the majority of the competitive employment placements were in the service, clerical/sales and professional industries. These employment trends have been consistent since FY 2004. The consistency of these employment trends demonstrates the willingness of business and industry stakeholders to continually hire or retain Blind and visually impaired individuals.



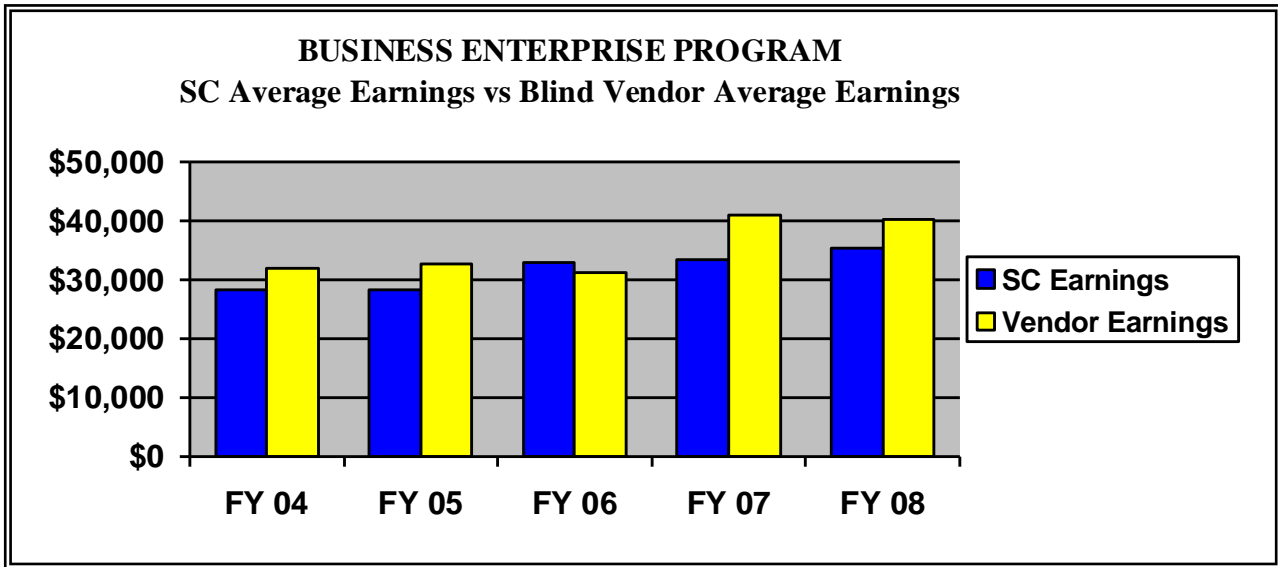
**Figure 7.1-9**

In FY 2008, the decrease in the number of consumers served at the EBMRC was attributed to a shortage of Orientation and Mobility Instructors. The shortage of staff resulted in a delay of service delivery which adversely affected the total number of consumers which could be served.



**Figure 7.1-10**

Consumers referred to T&E in FY 2008 required more extensive training on assistive technology. As a result, the length of training per consumer increased, thereby having an adverse effect on the total number of consumers served. To better accommodate the needs of consumers, additional staff have been hired to expedite training and increase the number served.



**Figure 7.1-11**

In FY 2008, BEP Vendor earnings was approximately 14% higher than SC earnings. However, BEP Vendor earnings in FY 2008 decreased by approximately 2% compared to BEP vendor earnings in FY 2007.



## 7.2 Customer Satisfaction

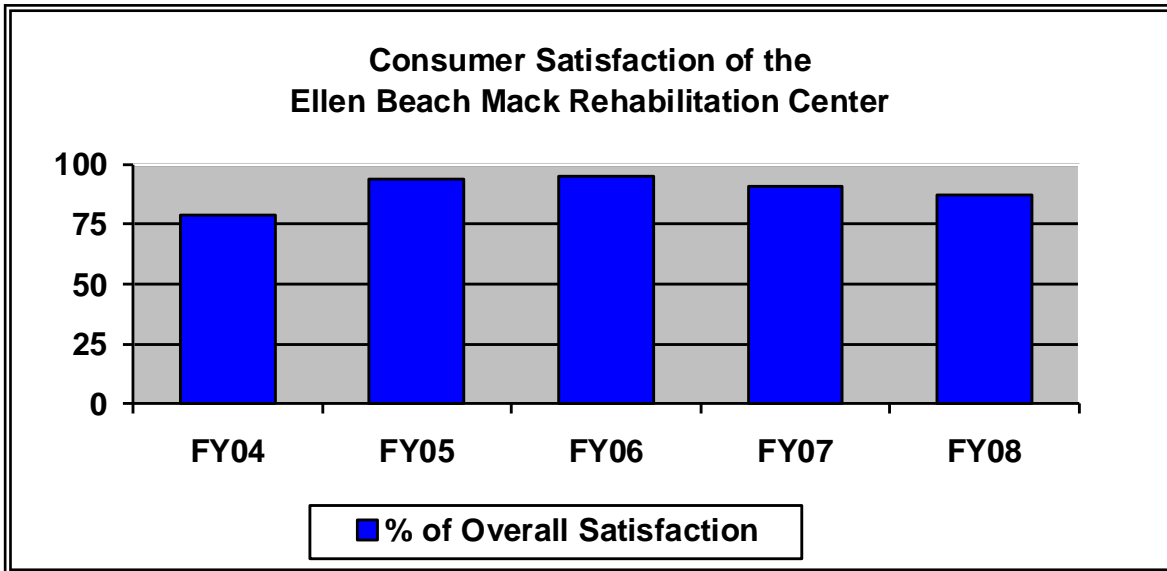


Figure 7.2-1

In FY 2008, there was a 4% decrease in the consumer satisfaction rate at the EBMRC compared to FY 2007. Dissatisfaction with the EBMRC dormitory was indicated as the area of most concern. A capital improvement project to renovate the dormitory is currently underway in an effort to resolve all concerns pertaining to the dormitory.

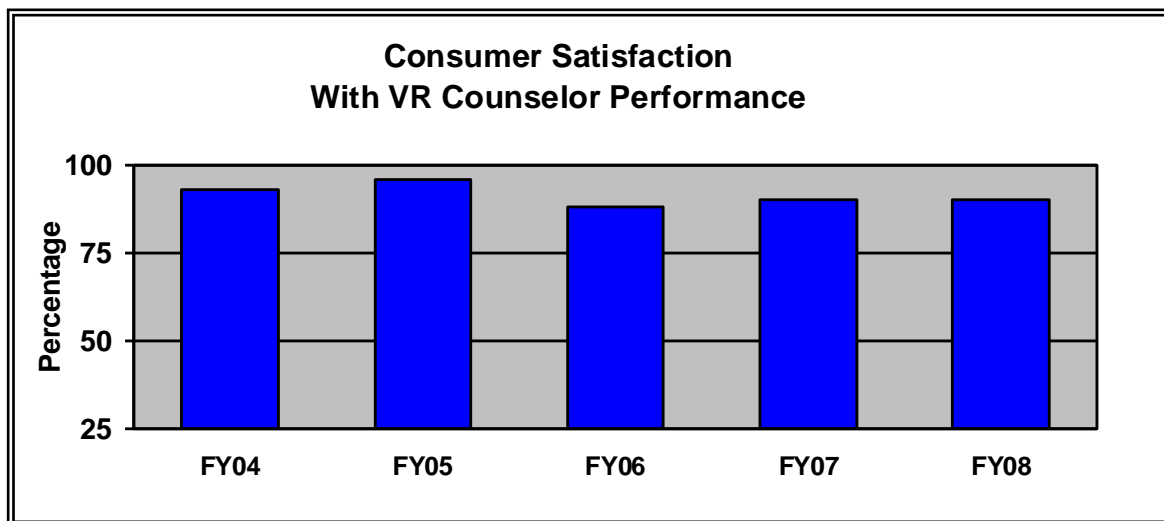


Figure 7.2-2

In FY 2008, the level of consumer satisfaction remained constant in comparison FY 2007. Efforts to continually improve consumer satisfaction in the future will include a focus on effective communication with consumers and techniques on the delivery of efficient and quality customer service.

### 7.3. Key Measures on Financial Performance

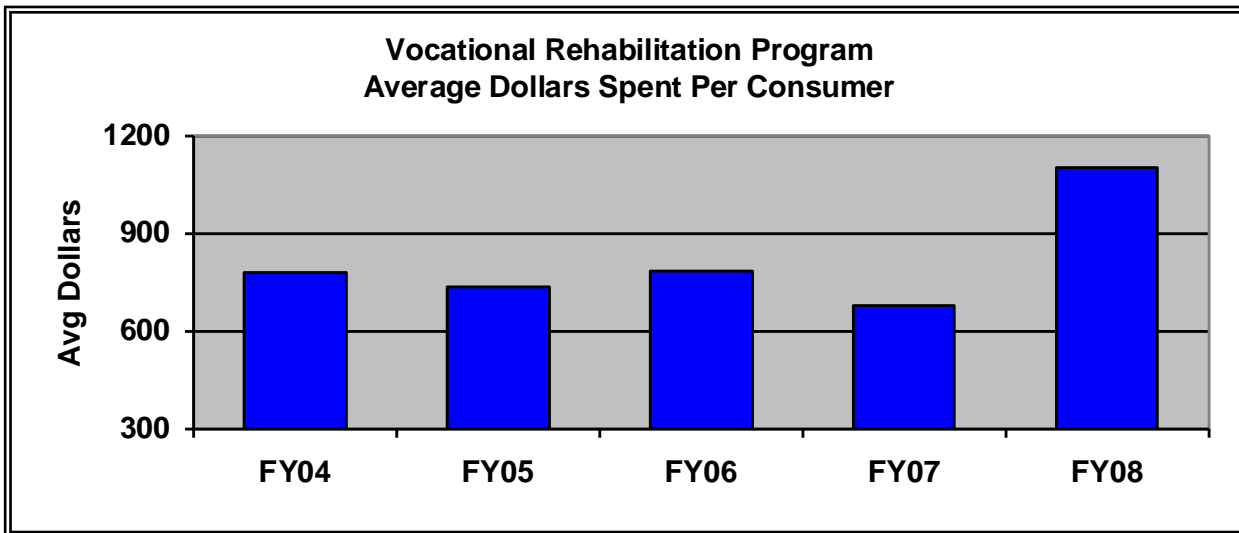


Figure 7.3-1

In FY 2008, the average dollar spent per consumer significantly increased by 62.5% compared to FY 2007. An increase in the need for assistive technology services and tuition assistance and the exorbitant associated cost of each of these services contributed to the increase in the average dollars spent.

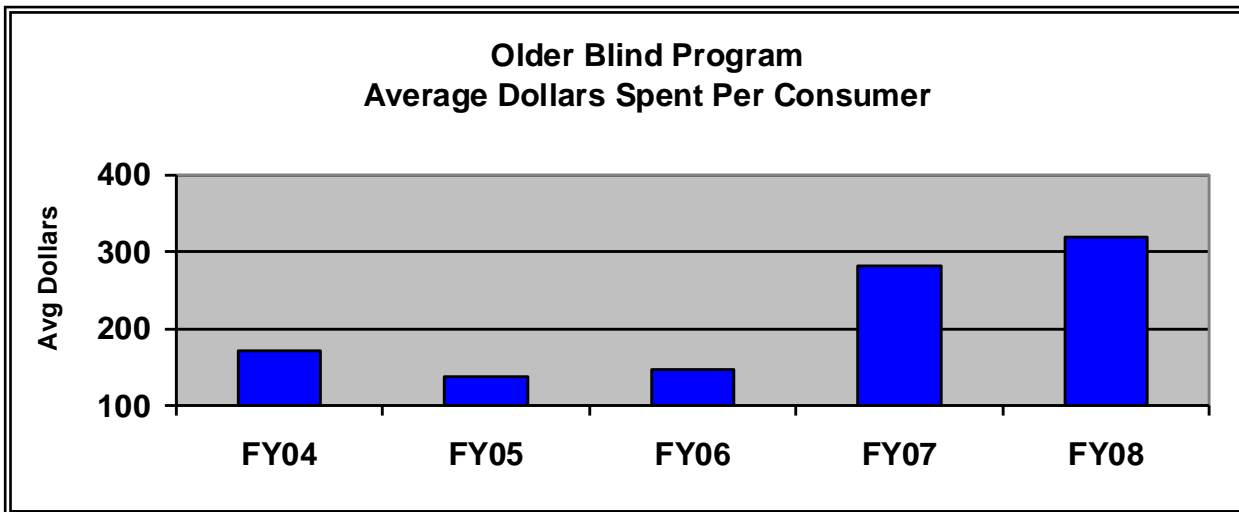
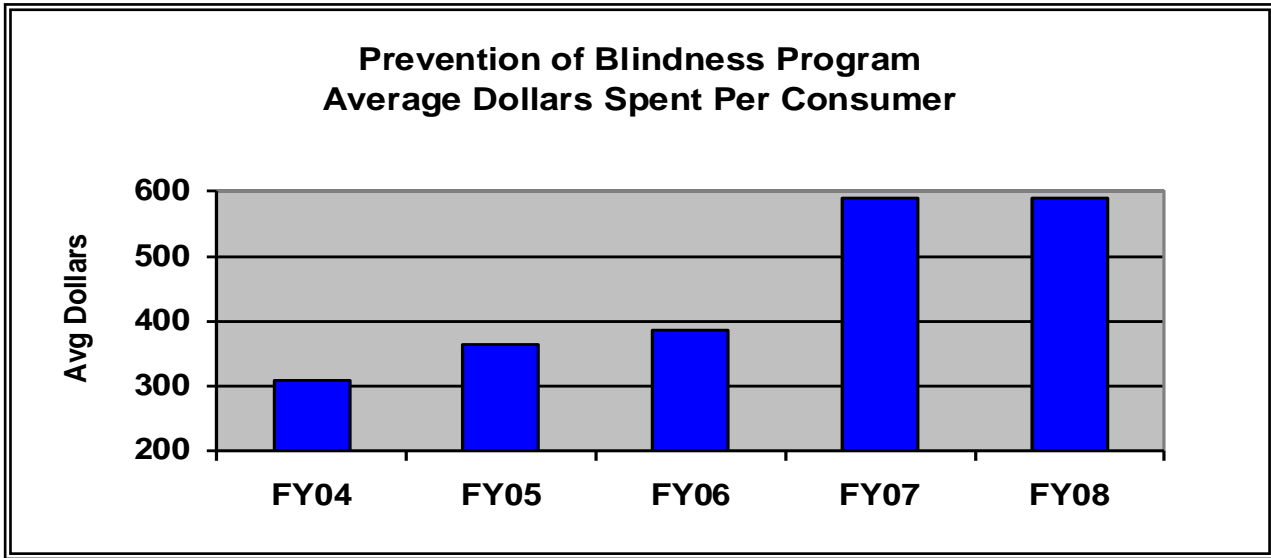


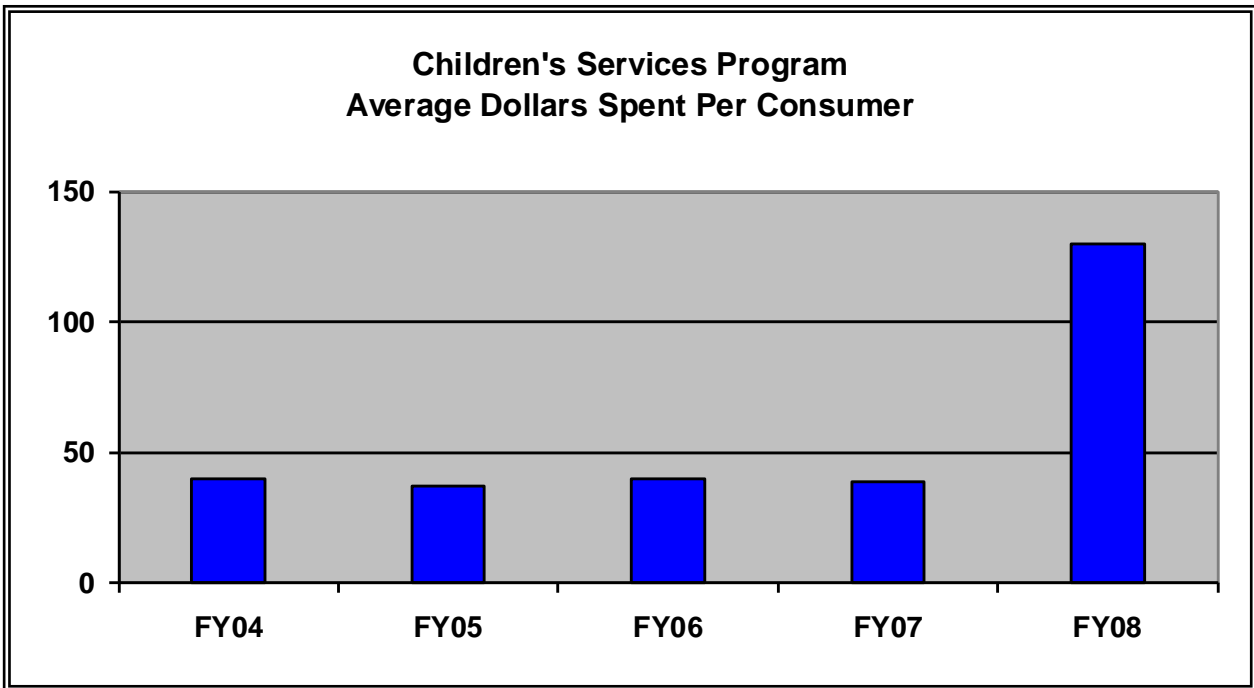
Figure 7.3-2

There was a 13% increase in the average dollars spent per consumers in the Older Blind Program compared to FY 2007. This increase was attributed to the expansion of services to the elderly to include assistive technology software and equipment and the associated costs to provide such services.



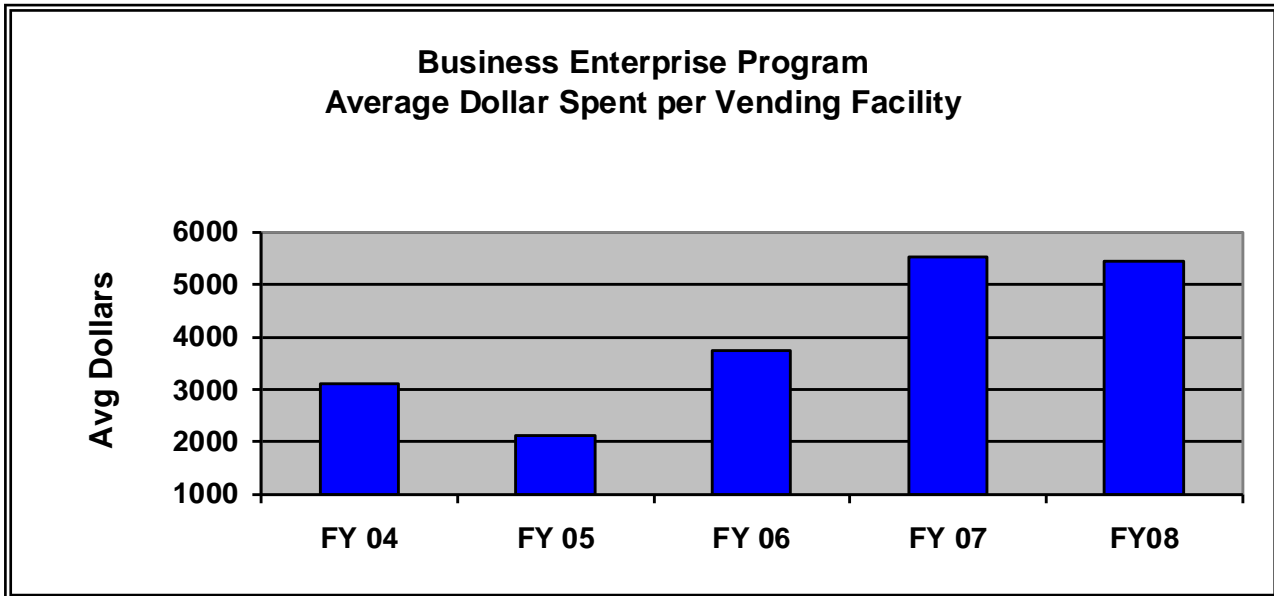
**Figure 7.3 3**

In FY 2008, there was no significant change in the average amount spent per consumer in the Prevention of Blindness Program compared to FY 2007. Cost efficiency in service delivery was accomplished as a result of an increase in the use of comparable benefits (i.e. Medicaid and SSA benefits) by consumers.



**Figure 7.3 4**

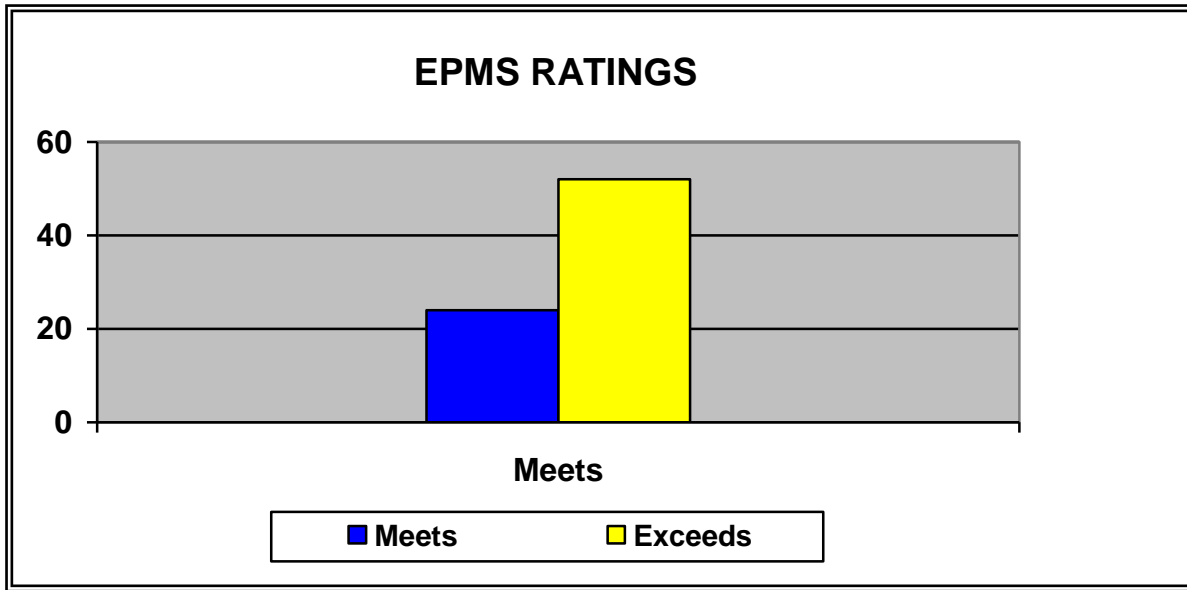
In FY 2008, there was a substantial increase in the average dollars spent per consumer in the Children's Services Program compared to FY 2007. The increase in expenditures was attributed to the need to purchase assistive technology software and equipment for school aged children.



**Figure 7.3 5**

**In FY 2008, the average dollars spent per facility in BEP decreased by 1.8%. The decrease in expenditures was attributed to a reduction in the cost of maintenance and repair of vending equipment.**

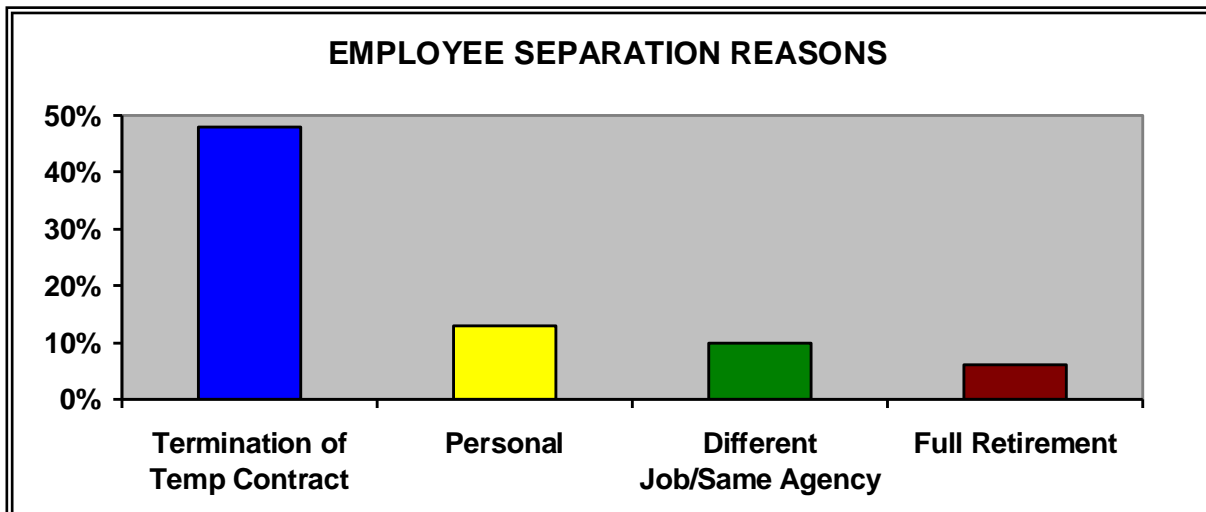
## 7.4. Workforce Engagement



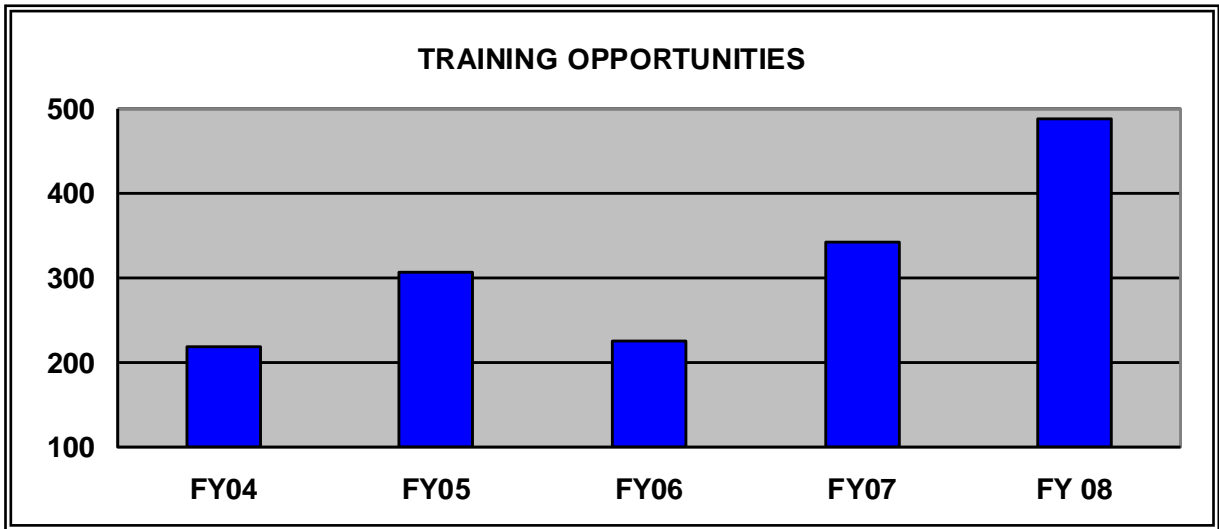
**Figure 7.4-1**

In FY 2008, SCCB achieved 100% compliance for completion of timely EPMS evaluations. There was also a significant improvement in the quality of job performance. The number of staff who received an Exceeds rating was more than double the amount of staff who received a Meets rating.

**Figure 7.4-2**

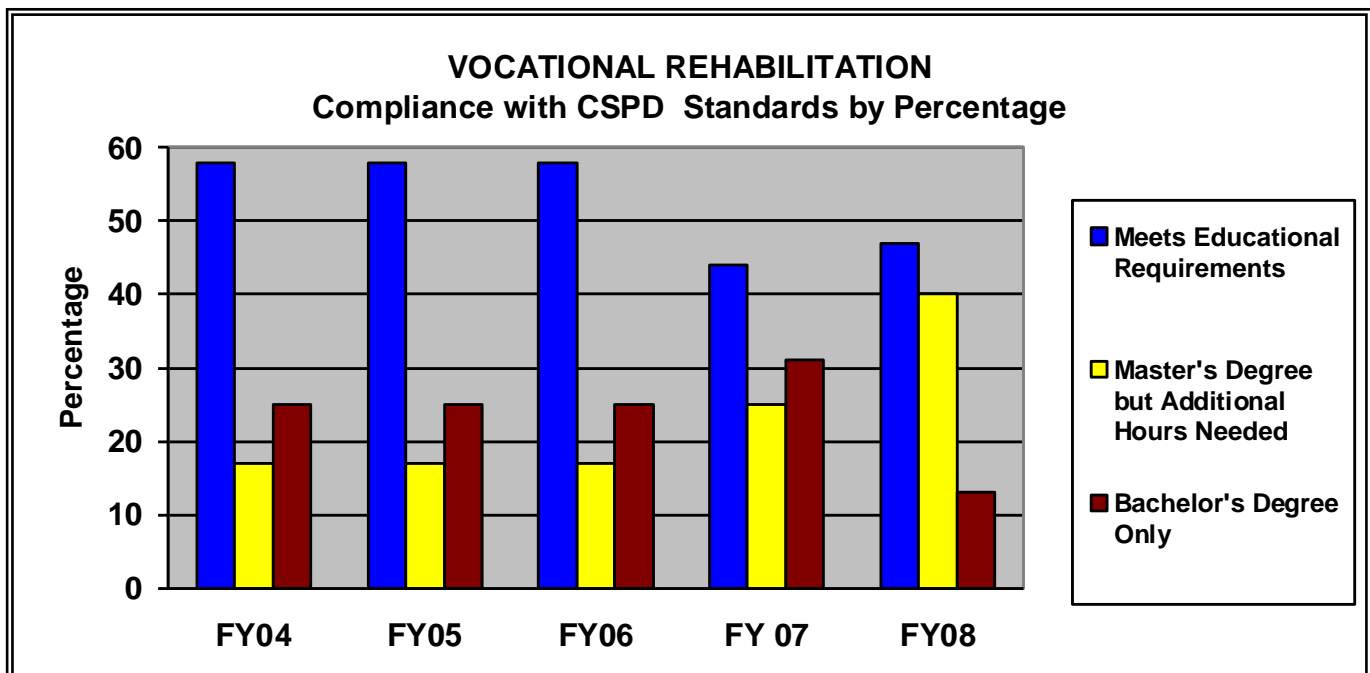


In FY 2008, termination of temporary contracts was the most common employee separation reason. Of the remaining categories of employee separation, job dissatisfaction was not a primary cause of concern.



**Figure 7.4-3**

In FY 2008, there was a 42% increase in the availability of training opportunities. The need for staff development training relative to improving job performance, career and professional development, best practices in case management and team building contributed to the increase in training request.



**Figure 7.4-4**

In FY 2008, compliance with the educational requirements of the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) improved by approximately 6.8% compared to FY 2007. The increase in compliance was attributed to the timely completion of educational requirements by counselors.

## 7.5 Organizational Effectiveness/Operational Efficiency/Work System Performance

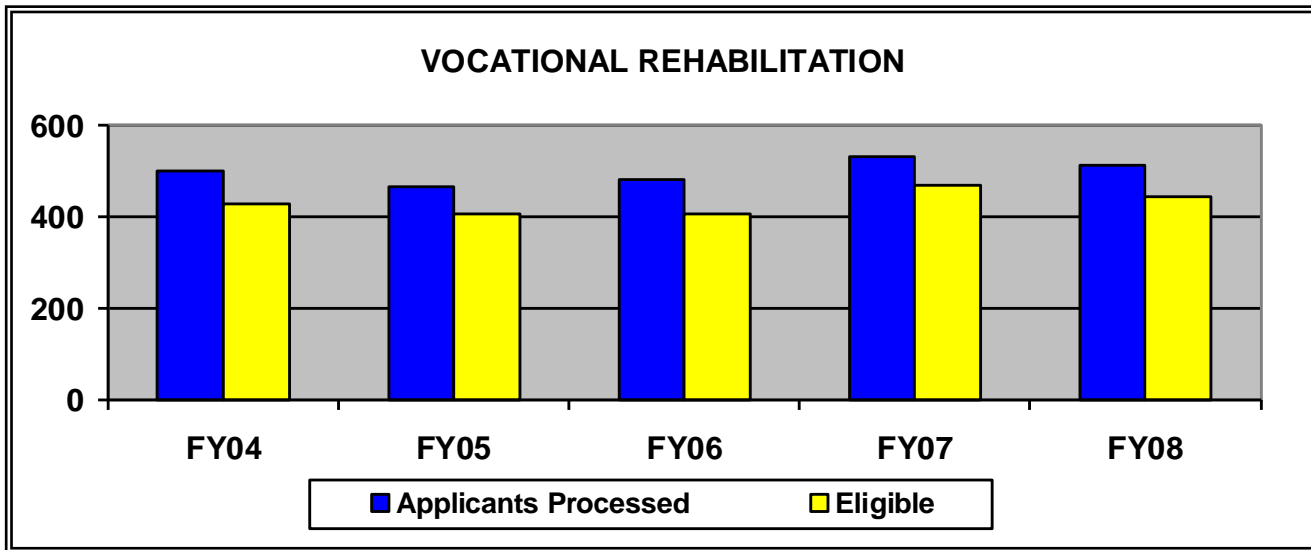


Figure 7.5-1

In FY 2008, 87% of VR applicants were determined eligible. This was a 1.5% decrease in the number of applicants Certified eligible compared to FY 2007. The development of a stronger referral base in the unserved and underserved counties in the state is the action plan the will be utilized to improve this statistic.

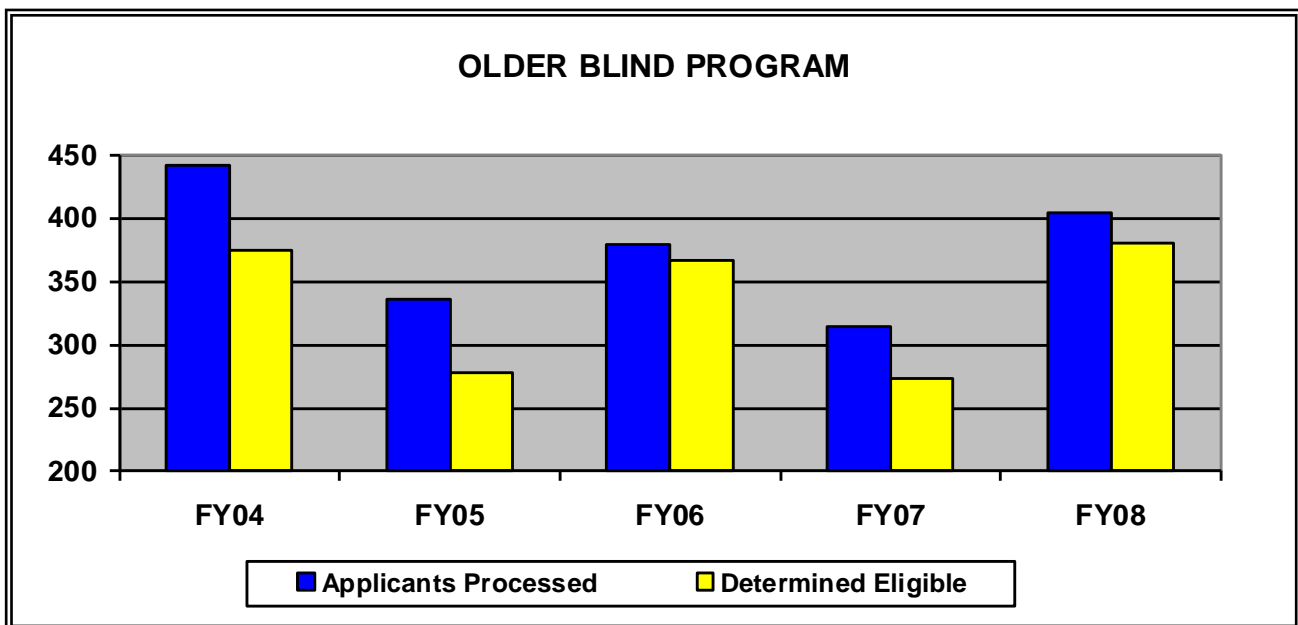
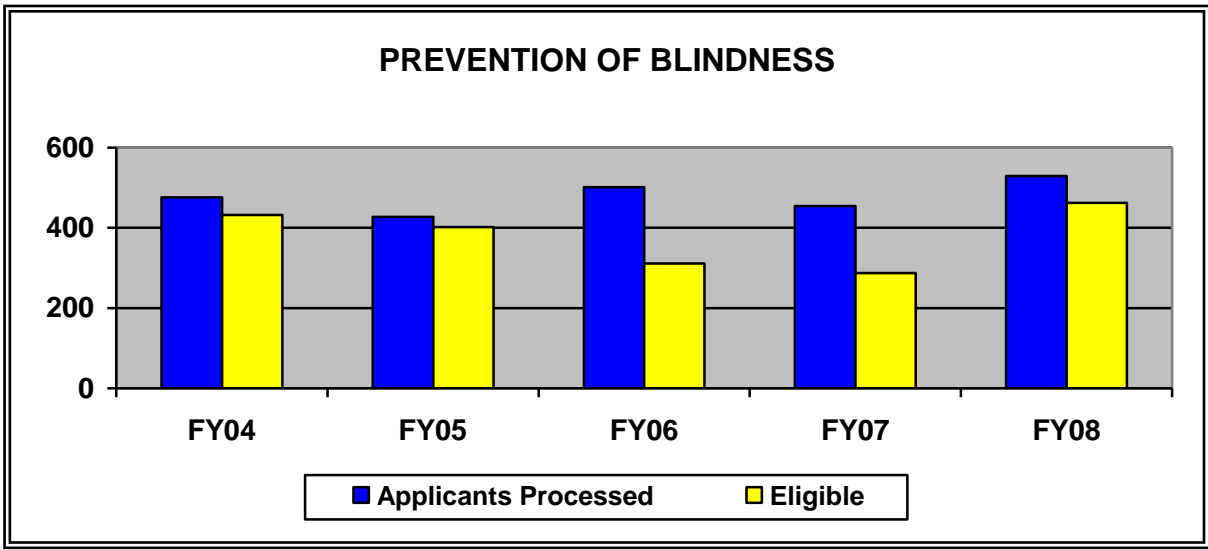


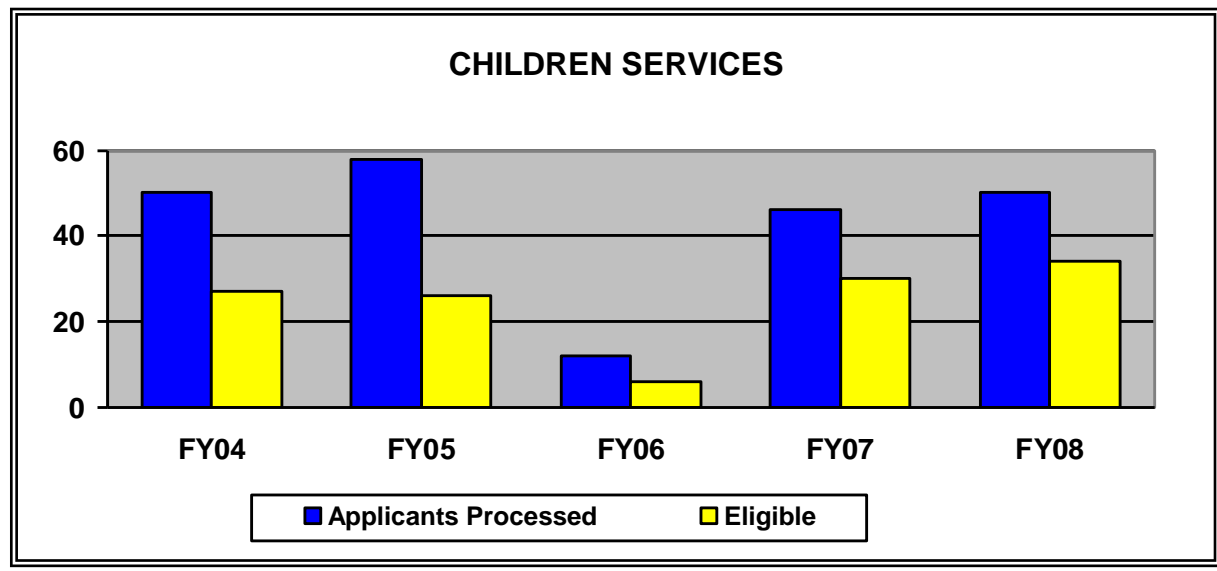
Figure 7.5-2

In FY 2008, 93% of applicants were determined eligible in the Older Blind Program. This figure represents an 8% increase compared to FY 2007.



**Figure 7.5-3**

In FY 2008, 87% of applicants were determined eligible for services in the Prevention of Blindness Program. This was a 38% increase in the number of applicants certified eligible compared to FY 2007.



**Figure 7.5-4**

In FY 2008, 68% of applicants were determined eligible for services. This was a 3% increase compared to FY 2007.



## 7.6 Key Measures of Regulatory/Legal Compliance

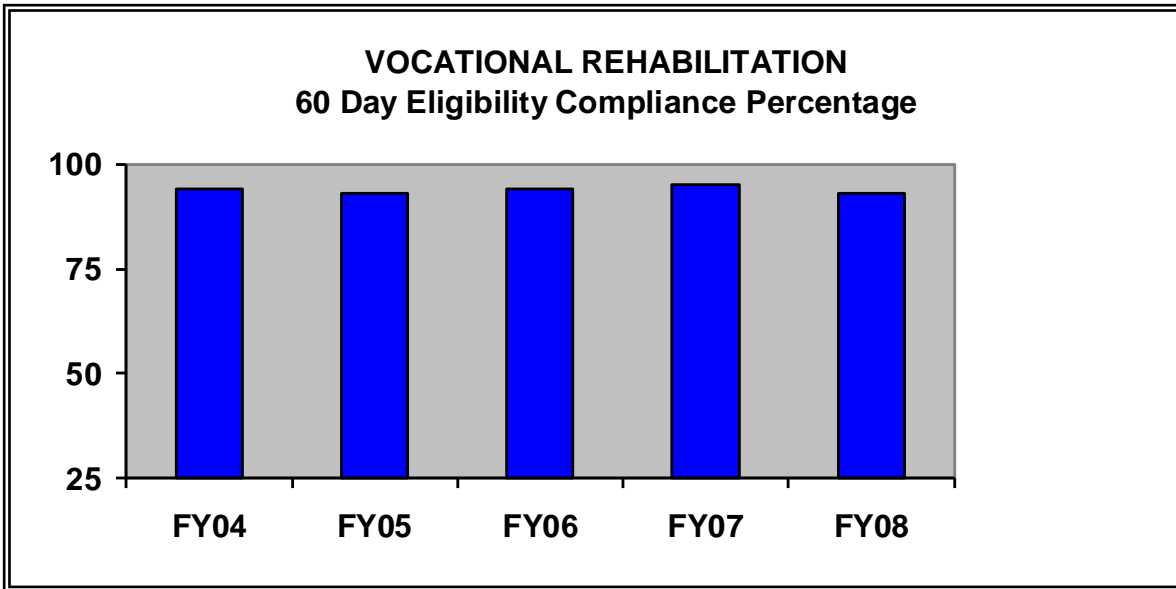


Figure 7.6-1

In FY 2008, timely eligibility determinations slightly decreased by approximately 2%. In most instances, however, compliance was still maintained in that case files contained documentation that the consumer was informed and was in agreement to an extension of time to determine eligibility.

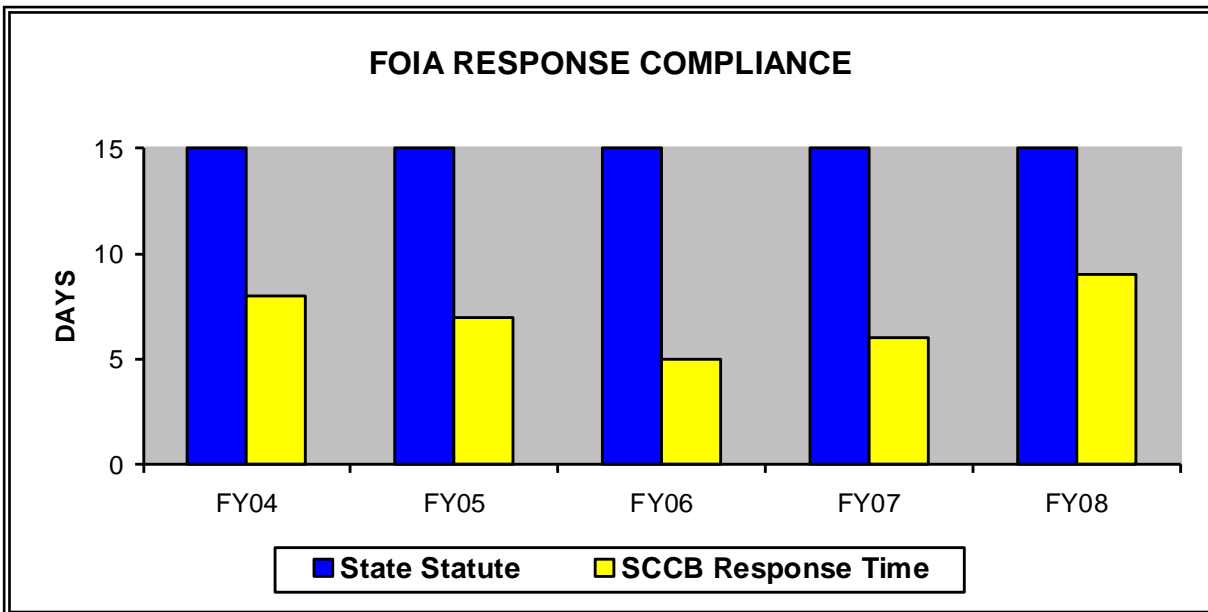


Figure 7.6-2

State statute requires that all FOIA request are responded to within 15 working days. Since FY 2004, SCCB has consistently maintained a response time well below the required state statute response time by at least 40%.