

DATE: October 20, 2000  
TO: Office of the State Budget  
FROM: P. Charles LaRosa Jr., Commissioner  
SUBJECT: Annual Accountability Report for Fiscal Year 1999-2000

The South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department respectfully submits its Annual Accountability Report for Fiscal Year 1999-2000 as required by Proviso 72.58. Federal law and regulations, principally the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, specify the department's mission as well as program objectives.

The South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department continues to set national standards for productivity and cost efficiency. However, the ever-changing and increasingly competitive job market calls for continuous improvement and a sharp customer focus if we are to fulfill our mission of enabling eligible South Carolinians to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment.

We strive to be nothing short of a world class organization, yet in doing so we understand that we bear the responsibility of using the funds entrusted to us wisely and with the utmost accountability. The state as a whole benefits when we reach our goals for competitive employment of our clients, because those clients become taxpayers instead of relying on disability benefits. Our communities gain productive, hard-working citizens who simply needed the right guidance, choices and resources to succeed in the workplace.

The performance measures in this accountability report are all outcome-oriented and directly related to the department's mission. The agency contact for this report is Peter B. Howell, Assistant Commissioner, who can be reached at (803) 896-6502.

Enclosure

## **Executive Summary:**

The role of vocational rehabilitation has never been more vital. Businesses and industries in South Carolina and nationwide need qualified, well-prepared employees. People with disabilities are ready to move into those jobs. The Vocational Rehabilitation Department (SCVRD) is uniquely qualified to enable eligible South Carolinians with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment.

For many years South Carolina has set national standards with its public vocational rehabilitation program. However, six years ago the department recognized the need to conduct an intensive strategic planning effort in order to adapt to the changing needs of its customers entering the new century. The result of this planning has been an across-the-board examination and restructuring, with an increased emphasis on customer service and the ultimate goal of employment outcomes for its clients.

“Making the best better” has been the thrust of the SCVRD’s strategic planning over the past six years. Continuous improvement is vital as the strategic plan continues to become practice. Leadership continues to closely examine and evaluate all practices and procedures throughout the program, and to address new issues that arise from the agency’s changes. This is done through constant attention to formal and informal feedback and to the most obvious indicator—outcomes.

The department is unique in that it serves people with more than 135 different physically and mentally disabling conditions. In 1999-2000, the SCVRD Basic Service Program placed almost 9,000 people with disabilities into competitive employment. With a highly trained staff of rehabilitation professionals working in newly formed, customer-oriented teams, the department is geared to convert dependent tax consumers into independent, working taxpayers. These new taxpayers quickly repay the state’s investment in their vocational rehabilitation services and, in fact, pay back \$2.81 for every vocational rehabilitation dollar spent. On average, they fully repay the cost of rehabilitation in 4.9 years.

National comparisons show that the SCVRD successfully rehabilitates people with disabilities at a much higher rate than its counterparts in other states—nearly three times as many per capita. South Carolina also spends significantly less to achieve those employment outcomes, although successfully rehabilitated SCVRD clients work longer hours and earn more per week than their peers nationally.

The law mandates that each client fully participate in developing his or her Individual Plan for Employment, so providing the information necessary for the client to make informed choices was a focus this year. The department continued to refine new staff roles developed to meet the challenges of quality assurance, accountability, legal compliance and reaching employment outcomes for clients. Specialized training helped staff make the transition into redefined duties.

The department’s partnerships with many state and local human services providers expands its client base to include many who may not have been referred to the program otherwise.

The SCVRD’s local work training centers continued to build effective partnerships with hundreds of the state’s businesses and industries, which provided outsource work for clients at the centers. Clients received valuable work experience and an understanding of the personal, social and professional standards required to succeed in the workplace. Business and industry

benefited through a cost-effective, reliable resource while the department realized \$16.3 million dollars in revenues through these partnerships. Clients were paid \$5.9 million in training wages for work performed in the training centers and remaining funds were used for raw materials, supplies and other operating costs of the centers.

Successfully rehabilitated clients lessen the burden on the nation's Social Security budget and the department benefits through Social Security reimbursement for closures. This year the Vocational Rehabilitation Department realized about \$1.2 million dollars in reimbursements. These funds were channeled into service delivery to help keep costs down.

Customer satisfaction remained high, according to follow-up surveys of rehabilitated clients. Local VR operations also monitored current client feedback through confidential suggestion opportunities provided at area offices and training centers and through case reviews.

Technology advancements played a key role in the agency's efforts to lessen the demands on staff to deal with "process" and increase its customer focus. The conversion of agency data to a new network server system drew nearer to completion. Upgrades to computer hardware and customized agency software enabled field staff to move forward with refinement of the team concept in client service.

The agency values its employees' dedication and accomplishments, and employees meeting and surpassing performance standards were rewarded with agency merit increases that supplemented state increases. The department's "Celebration of Success" program also gained momentum as employees throughout the state were recognized by their co-workers for their accomplishments and customer service efforts.

Meanwhile, the Disability Determination Program continued to strengthen the department's range of services by providing effective and efficient evaluation of claims for disability benefits. With an annual workload of more than 80,000 disability claims, the program strives to process all claims with the highest possible level of quality, in the shortest possible time and at the lowest reasonable cost. During 1999-2000, the division had a higher production rate, higher accuracy rate, and lower cost per case than the regional and national averages.

The Disability Determination Program also works cooperatively with other agencies, processing claims for Medicaid and the South Carolina State Retirement Systems.

## **Mission Statement**

**The mission of the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department is to enable eligible South Carolinians with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment.**

~

South Carolinians with physical and/or mental disabilities make up more than 12 percent of our working-aged, adult population. They are our greatest unemployed minority, but they represent the most significant potential manpower resource for our state and our nation.

Federal and state laws mandate that the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department convert as many eligible people with disabilities from unemployed tax consumers to tax-paying, competitively employed workers as the agency's resources will allow.

The department is uniquely qualified to fulfill this mission utilizing its network of community work training centers and its capacity to both purchase and directly provide specialized disability accommodation and vocational preparation services.

The department's conversion of dependent tax consumers into independent working taxpayers provides significant economic and social benefits to South Carolina. In state fiscal year 1999-2000, the department placed 8,962 South Carolinians with disabilities into competitive employment. Conservative estimates are that successfully rehabilitated people with disabilities will realize a \$13.07 increase in their earnings for every \$1 of vocational rehabilitation funds invested in their rehabilitation.

Likewise, people with disabilities who work return an estimated \$2.81 in taxes for every dollar spent on their vocational rehabilitation. They repay the cost of their vocational rehabilitation in an average of only 4.9 years.

## Leadership

The Vocational Rehabilitation Department's senior managers, with guidance from the agency board and commissioner, are highly involved in developing a program based on input from staff, clients, employers and other customers. Senior managers lead work groups charged with creating and continually refining strategic plans, focusing on the opinions, needs, abilities and talents of the agency's internal and external customers.

All decisions and actions are driven by our mission to enable eligible South Carolinians with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment. The program's integrity is maintained by strict adherence to the department's enabling legislation, the Rehabilitation Act. Senior managers actively participate in business planning to ensure compliance with the strategic plan.

The department's vision and values concentrate on the needs of our customers and our highly qualified staff members are personally accountable to them. Our customers include:

- people with disabilities who strive to achieve and maintain competitive employment;
- the businesses and industries which provide employment and training opportunities for our clients;
- other human service agencies whose partnerships with us enhance employment outcomes for our clients; and
- the taxpayers who depend on us to efficiently and effectively use the resources entrusted to us.

The mission and values are consistently communicated to all levels of employees through postings in all offices. Business cards and department stationery feature the mission, as do all department publications. Staff development and training always point to the mission as its focus.

Senior managers review performance measures regularly through detailed caseload reports that show each area office or facility's success rate in reaching goals in employment outcomes, cost effectiveness and other measures. Regional meetings also provide forums for discussion of performance reviews. External customers are invited to comment on our performance through department publications and Internet resources.

Public hearings allow us to consider the potential risks and effects of proposed policies before they are implemented. Senior managers work closely with the Client Assistance Program in the Office of the Governor to help guard against ill-advised decisions that might adversely affect our customers.

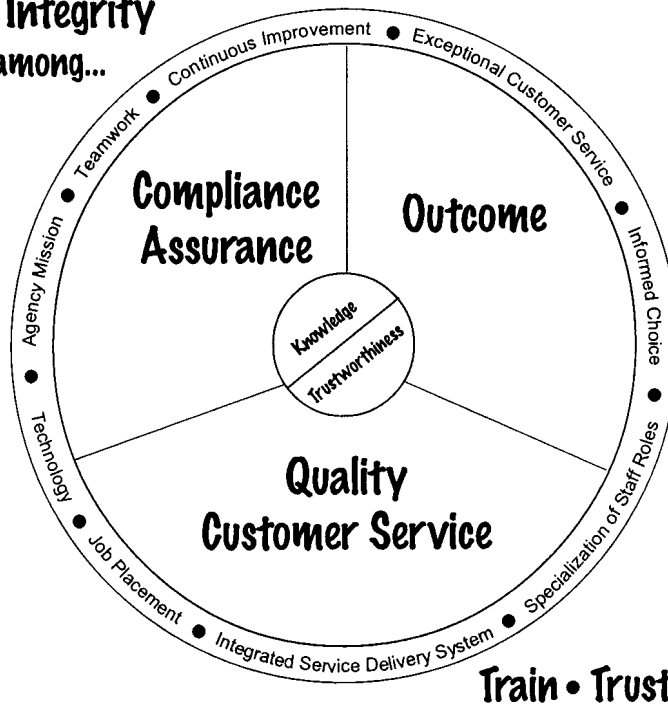
Senior managers use a systematic approach to evaluate future opportunities for the agency by monitoring trends, gathering input from state and local area staff and by ensuring that new strategies comply with the law. For example, this fiscal year saw further development of our department's community partnerships with participation in one-stop centers created through the Workforce Investment Act.

The agency board and management's commitment to quality improvement reached a new level this fiscal year with the opening of the Human Resource Development Center on the department's main campus in West Columbia. This fully-equipped facility allows employees

from across the state to come together, in person or by videoconference, to discuss ways to improve our customer service, to refine service delivery and to learn new roles within the vocational rehabilitation team concept.

Program integrity is the key theme for management. In all staff education and development efforts, leadership pointed to the program integrity model (see illustration) to keep a focus on compliance with enabling legislation, quality customer service and desired outcomes. Empowerment of employees to reach these goals was implemented through the philosophy “train, trust and verify.”

**Program Integrity**  
a balance among...



Management’s commitment to quality employment outcomes was also illustrated in the department’s success in generating reimbursements from the Social Security Administration. Successfully rehabilitated clients lessen the burden on the nation’s Social Security budget and the department benefits through reimbursements for closures. This year the department realized about \$1.2 in reimbursements, which were channeled into service delivery to help keep costs down.

Another leadership priority was improvement of the agency’s technological capabilities. More and more of the department’s services were enhanced by development of new computer programs and hardware upgrades. This was especially vital as staff throughout the state continued to grow into the team concept in providing services leading to competitive employment for our clients.

Under the guidance of the commissioner, the director of the Disability Determination Division and other division management staff participate in developing and implementing national,

regional and state goals for the Disability Program. The division director plays a key role in developing and disseminating regional and national action plans to ensure quality assessment and improvement and serves on a national steering committee on policies and procedures related to the use of technology in the national disability program. The division systems manager serves as a national chairperson for technology infrastructure and as one of three members of a national consortium providing guidance to the Social Security Administration on the effects of systems changes on program operation.

The South Carolina Disability Determination Division has piloted crucial program changes that will be implemented nationally over the next five years. They include areas such as claim development; evaluation and adjudication policy; roles and responsibilities of disability examiners; and pre-decision conferences with claimants to ensure decision accuracy.

## **Customer Focus and Satisfaction**

The department's strategic plan begins and ends with the customer. During the past six years every policy, procedure, service, and organizational structure has come under review as a result of our strategic plan. Revolutionary changes have occurred to better meet the needs of all our identified customers, both external and internal.

Customers access information about our department and services in many ways. Personal contacts, brochures, videos, referrals from a myriad of community organizations, and referrals from friends and family are just some of the ways customers seek assistance. The past year has brought a rise in exposure through the department's web site, where clients often originate their relationship with the agency.

People with disabilities are our clients and primary customers. Enabling them to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment requires constant evaluation of their needs. The law and our own philosophy focus on informed choice as a basis for providing vocational rehabilitation services. In keeping with that, that department strives to provide clients with all the tools and information they need to make informed choices about their rehabilitation. Each client, with the help of a counselor and other vocational rehabilitation team members, develops an Individual Plan for Employment. This plan calls for services specific to the client's needs to reach an appropriate employment outcome. This customer-driven system is operated within the latitude of the enabling law and with a close eye on the public funds entrusted to the agency.

This year featured the development of career planning and employment teams, which emphasize the empowerment of clients to make informed choices. These teams offer instructional classes to enhance a client's employability. Clients may choose a specific job goal by observing or "shadowing" a person in the community who actually performs that job; work under a mentor to learn the job; or actually try the job. Career planning and employment may include vocational training in the department's work training center. Counselors and other members of the rehabilitation team focus on job placement when the client is ready.

The department systematically follows up on client complaints beginning with the basic client-staff relationship at the local service level. Most concerns can be resolved there. However, when local efforts to solve a problem do not satisfy the client, our full-time client relations specialist addresses the issue. The client also has the option, at any time, to take a complaint or concern to an impartial third party—the Client Assistance Program in the Office of the Governor. Every person who formally applies for vocational rehabilitation services is given the toll-free contact information for these offices.

The SCVRD formally collects customer satisfaction information in several ways. During the rehabilitation process, clients can provide feedback through local area customer service plans. This is accomplished through focus groups, surveys and suggestion boxes. On the statewide level, the department does follow-up studies based on surveys sent to a random sample of successfully rehabilitated clients. This survey monitors satisfaction levels and rates of job retention. The department's program evaluation staff regularly conducts area reviews that include clients who were not successfully rehabilitated to learn why they have not reached an employment outcome and to determine if dissatisfaction played a part.

Customer satisfaction trends are charted and reported to staff, the agency board and the public.



Other external customers, such as employers, work training center partner companies, legislators, and other agencies provide feedback through personal contacts and meetings. The department also benefits from local work training center advisory boards at many of its area offices. These boards provide ideas, feedback and advice on meeting the needs of their specific communities.

The department responds to feedback by implementing appropriate new strategies. The most prominent example is the renewed emphasis on direct job placement for clients. This year the department focused a great deal of its training on job placement, and staff realignments were made to better serve clients through direct job placement.

The agency responds to differing needs of clients by conducting training for staff on specific disabilities or topics. This training often includes frank discussions by panels of clients. Newly defined career planning and employment staff roles were developed in response to the needs of the clients classified as significantly disabled.

In the Disability Determination Division, division managers each year develop outreach objectives and plans based on identified and/or projected needs. The leadership designs a schedule for attending conferences and meetings and for individual visits with professionals, advocacy groups or claimants to disseminate information about the program and respond to requests for information. Division personnel make from 20 to 30 presentations each year to various groups. In addition, from 8,000 to 10,000 inquiries from public officials, legal representatives or claimants are received and responded to each year.

## **Other Performance Excellence Criteria**

### ***Strategic Planning***

The department continues to build from its major strategic planning initiative that began six years ago. All of the key result areas of the plan—values, mission, vision; customer service; technology; government relations; partnerships; public information and education; human resource development and management; and continuous improvement—have become integrated into the department’s daily operation. These areas have all been incorporated into staff development and training, into internal and external communications, and directly into job descriptions and performance appraisals. The strategic plan also is communicated throughout the agency through visual means. For example, the mission and values are posted prominently in all offices.

Each of the key result areas features long- and short-range goals, with time frames established for implementation of different phases of the plan. The department has been successful in meeting these goals. As its name implies, the continuous improvement initiative is an ongoing strategic planning mechanism. Committees representing a wide range of perspectives are assembled to address specific needs and changes sparked by the strategic plan.

Customer needs are identified through a variety of resources in each of the key result areas. The strategic plan is developed based on those needs.

The agency constantly compares its performance outcomes with vocational rehabilitation programs in other states. These comparisons consistently show the department as a national leader in most key categories over a number of years (see Key Results/Performance Indicators section). Therefore, it is just as important that the department hold itself against its own standards to evaluate current results.

Disability Determination Division long-range and short-range plans are developed or refined at the beginning of each fiscal year and the objectives for the year are issued to all personnel as goals. Program goals are linked to objectives contained in Employment Performance Management System (EPMS) planning documents.

### ***Information Collection and Analysis***

Department staff throughout the state has gained much easier access to information necessary to support daily operations thanks to substantial upgrades in technology. Information systems personnel have enabled the department to carry out many of its strategic initiatives by equipping local operations with upgrades in computer hardware and customized software. New programs allow suitably retrained staff to streamline the service delivery process in accordance with federal vocational rehabilitation law. In fact, the department was ahead of the national curve because our own strategic plan called for reduction in “process” and increased emphasis on employment outcome before national mandates did the same.

This year, the department continued its transition to a network-server computer operation for customized case management programs, with a goal of eliminating the older mainframe system. To make this transition easier, information specialists throughout the state used LOIS (Local Office Information System), a specially designed software system to enable them to meet the

department's new standards in customer service until a more "permanent" information system is in place.

Information systems reflect a reduction in unnecessary data and antiquated programs due to a good working relationship among case management leadership, field staff and information systems staff. Work groups help identify ways of making programs flow more smoothly to accomplish the desired results for agency customers.

Information to analyze the department's success in achieving its mission comes from all parts of the agency because each area and category of agency operations focuses on enabling eligible people with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment. Performance measures all point in the same direction—successful employment outcomes for our clients. Performance measure data is used to update the strategic planning process.

National standards and indicators are used to compare our department with similar programs. Our participation and leadership in national meetings affords many opportunities for sharing of information. Our commissioner is past president of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation and is in the forefront of national discussions and analysis of performance standards.

The Disability Determination Division maintains an extensive array of daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual reports through comprehensive division, agency and Social Security computer reporting systems. Data on virtually every aspect of case processing, fiscal activity, quality assurance and staffing are issued to the appropriate components. Statistical reports are aimed at providing performance tracking information related to established goals and objectives. Data allow comparisons at the individual, unit, office, state and national levels in areas such as productivity, processing time, documentation and decision quality, cost effectiveness, staff turnover, and age of claims.

### ***Human Resources Focus***

The department's human resource plan is driven by the recent re-engineering of the program, which drastically altered job responsibilities to better meet the needs of our customers. This is being accomplished through development of high performance teams, with each team role defined and responsibilities clearly detailed. Ongoing assessment, training and staff development meet current and future needs of each of these roles. Team members are accountable to each other and to the department as a whole for achieving and surpassing assigned goals. New initiatives are proposed, evaluated, developed and piloted using this team approach with coordination and approval from the State Office.

Promotions are directly linked to an employee's assumption of higher level duties. Career ladders have been established for most of our major job categories to guide employees in that development. Staffing patterns are monitored to ensure that human resources are allocated appropriately to meet the department's mission. Changes are managed through retraining and reassignment with due consideration of the needs of the employee.

The department uses the Employment Performance Management System (EPMS) to inform employees of job expectations and to provide for accountability through success criteria. Employees are encouraged to participate in the development of job duties and success criteria.

The department has tied pay increases directly to performance by providing additional funding to reward employees for “meets,” “exceeds,” and “substantially exceeds” levels of performance.

The department strives to create an environment where employees understand how their positions support the agency mission and feel valued for the efforts they put forth. Input gathered during strategic planning revealed the need for considerable improvement in employee rewards and recognition. This concern has been addressed in several ways. The Celebration of Success program recognizes employee excellence in customer service, individual accomplishment, productivity and program excellence. Award recipients are recognized at local celebration meetings. Three-time honorees qualify to select an item from the Celebration of Success catalog developed by our agency.

Employees’ training needs are assessed both formally and informally. Decisions on training curricula are driven by the agency’s formal state plan, which is revised each year based on customer input, staff input and rehabilitation law. Employees also have the ability to gain approval for specific training offered in their areas of professional concern. Often these requests are for seminars or workshops in their local communities. And, the agency’s staff development and training department gets feedback on training needs through customer service surveys sent out periodically to staff statewide. These surveys offer the chance to critique the effectiveness of training programs.

The agency is actively involved in assistance programs for employees needing special services such as counseling and substance abuse treatment. In fact, the department provides this service for a large number of other agencies, businesses and industries throughout the state. Known as Job Retention Services, this confidential program provides help when a person’s ability to perform a job is impaired by a disability such as anxiety, depression, physical problems, or abuse of alcohol and other drugs. Our own employees have access to this program and are informed about it in orientation sessions and through placement of literature in local offices.

This year, the agency placed renewed emphasis on a safe and healthy work environment. The newly formed Safety and Risk Management office monitors working conditions for employees and for clients in work training centers. New safety policies, unannounced site visits, OSHA compliance, strict smoking policies, basic first-aid training, CPR training, upgraded alarm systems and workplace safety seminars are among the activities of this department.

In the Disability Determination Division, all EPMS performance plans are developed in accordance with program goals and objectives. Reporting systems are designed to provide accurate and timely feedback on all key indices and a comprehensive monthly “Performance Index” is published to ensure that staff members are aware of how their performance in critical areas compares to that of their peers. Through a comprehensive training program emphasizing three levels—Basic, Ongoing and Job Enrichment— efforts are made to ensure relevant, timely and meaningful training. Basic training programs are designed to coincide with established job descriptions and a syllabus containing checkpoints is utilized to ensure that employees are prepared for their assigned tasks. Reward programs such as the agency’s Celebration of Success and the division’s PRIDE (People Responsibly Influencing Decisional Excellence) recognize superior performance in every job category at every level. In addition, awards for creative achievement, humanitarian service and special acts of service encourage well-rounded citizens as well as superior employees.

## *Systems and Processes*

Every work process of the department is geared to meet the standards of program integrity. The integrated service delivery system is designed to provide clients with a seamless program of quality services that comply with the law and lead to the desired employment outcome.

As mentioned earlier, technology advancements contributed significantly to improved customer service. The automation of many casework functions enables rehabilitation team members to spend more quality time helping clients achieve their goals and less time on process.

Quality is determined by customers and measured by staff through outcomes and feedback. Area supervisors conduct quality customer service reviews as a formal part of the quality assurance process.

Critical agency work processes are outlined in detail through role definitions and charts showing the flow of the rehabilitation process. Employees understand their roles in the process through formal training and team building on the job.

Continuous improvement of the service delivery process is a natural byproduct of the program integrity model. The Continuous Improvement key result area brings appropriate staff together to address gaps in areas of service or administration that are revealed by review processes for compliance, customer service and employment outcomes.

The Disability Determination Division uses extensive quality assurance and operational analysis systems to maintain an ongoing assessment of work processes. First-line supervisors maintain regular in-line and end-of-line reviews utilizing both computer analysis and actual case review. Regular random samples are selected from case clearances for review by centralized quality assurance staff. Comprehensive end-of-line audits are conducted by fiscal staff in the administrative services unit to ensure a high level of accuracy in all payment activities. Ongoing operational analyses are conducted by program analysts to provide continuous assessment of efficiency and effectiveness of case processing policies and procedures. All procedural requirements are available to division staff through an extensive array of physical and electronic references.

# Description of Programs

## *Program Name*

Vocational Rehabilitation Basic Service Program

## *Program Cost*

<b>Federal</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
\$ 33,978,846	\$ 16,792,186	\$ 467,629	\$ 51,238,661

## *Program Goal*

The department's goal is to enable eligible South Carolinians with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment. To be eligible, a person must have a physical or mental impairment which hinders him or her from working, and must require and be able to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services that would lead to competitive employment.

The SCVRD's strategic plan, now in its sixth year of implementation, shifts the emphasis from the process to the results with a goal of placing as many persons with disabilities as possible in competitive employment. The plan centers on a customer-friendly service delivery system that prepares clients to successfully compete in a constantly changing workplace. Every process, practice and policy the department has is under constant scrutiny to determine how it benefits the client.

Success requires a staff that is well trained and empowered, equipped with the technology suited to the task and driven by continuous feedback from all customers.

The agency's guiding vision summarizes the ingredients for reaching its goals:

- commitment to the agency's mission;
- using technology to provide maximum benefit to staff and clients;
- being a leader in innovative, individualized customer service that contributes to successful employment outcomes;
- maintaining positive and productive relationships with business, industry and all levels of government;
- providing quality service in an atmosphere of trust, sincerity and commitment;
- providing advancement opportunities to develop and retain exceptional employees;
- showing accountability by using resources efficiently and effectively; and
- providing our customers with the tools, services and products to prepare them to compete successfully in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century workplace.

### ***Program Objective***

The primary objective of the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Basic Service Program is to use its limited resources in the most effective, efficient and customer-oriented manner to serve as many working-aged South Carolinians with disabilities as possible and place them in competitive employment. This objective will be measured by comparing the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department's results in those areas to those of vocational rehabilitation programs across the nation as well as to its own benchmarks.

### ***Key Results/Performance Indicators***

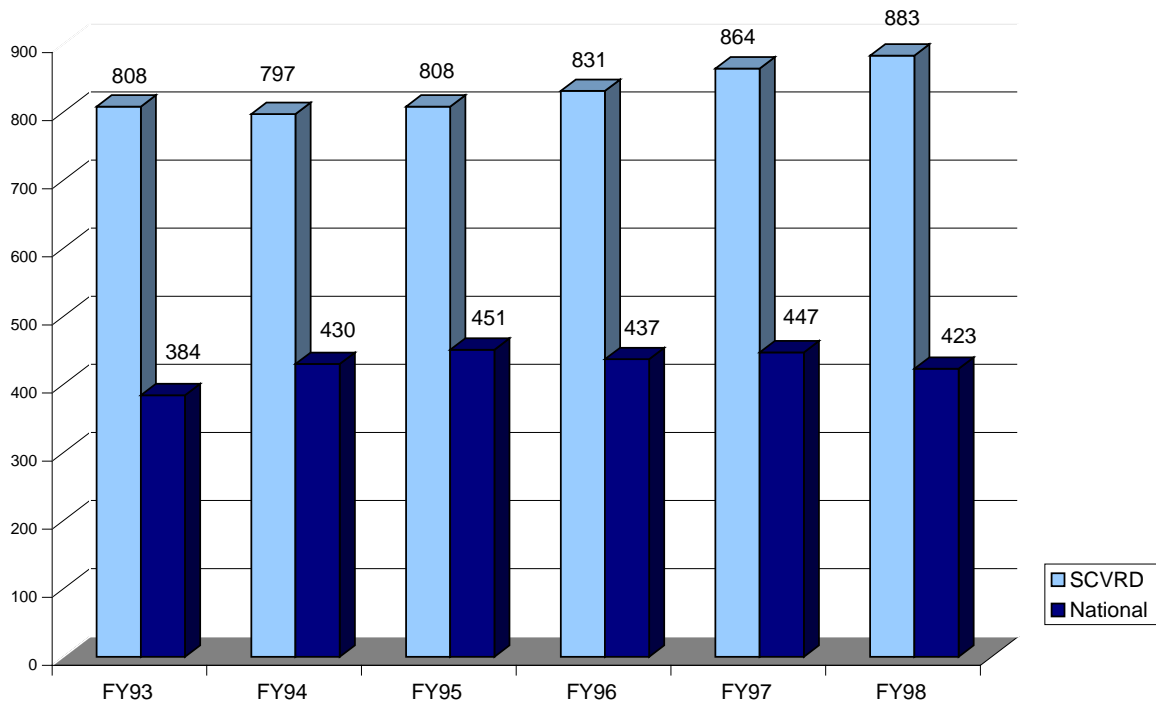
The department's success is rooted in the consistently solid performance of its employees. Shifting from a process-based system to an outcome-oriented, team-based operation has broadened employee ownership and increased accountability from the bottom to the top of the agency.

The department has surpassed national averages in several key categories for many years and therefore also uses its own previous fiscal year outcomes as benchmarks, measuring up as follows:

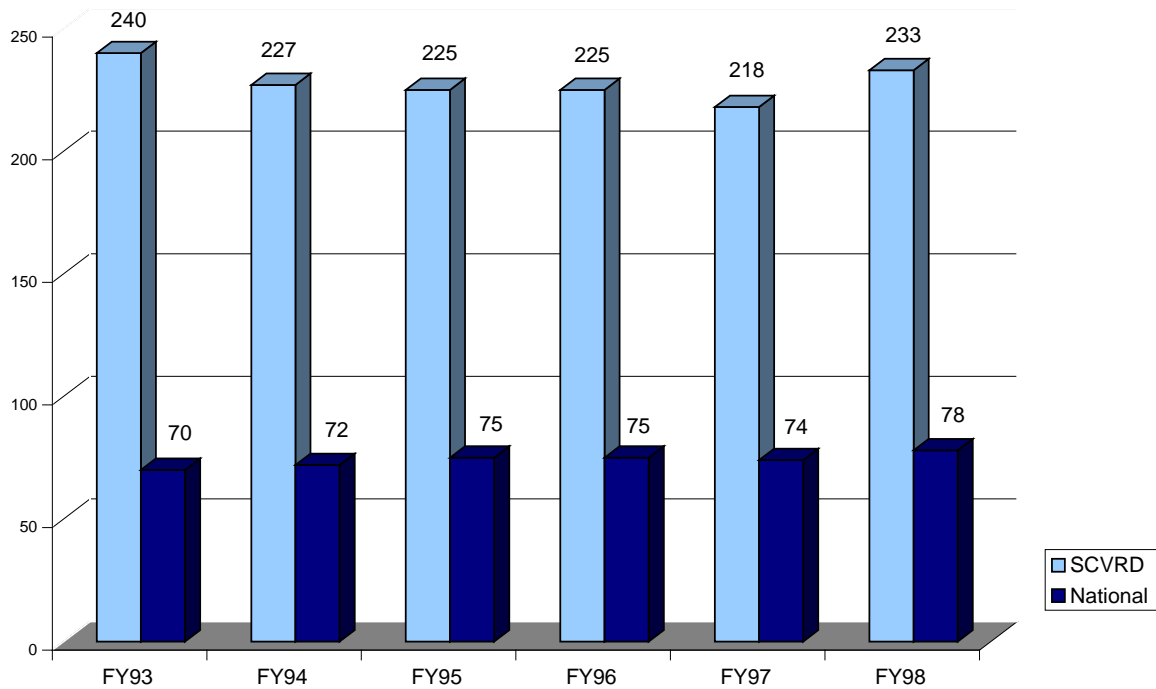
<b>Clients served/rehabilitated</b>	<b>1995-96</b>	<b>1996-97</b>	<b>1997-98</b>	<b>1998-99</b>	<b>1999-2000</b>
Total accepted for services	15,521	16,141	16,742	17,007	16,533
Total active cases served	30,981	32,642	34,187	35,609	36,607
Total number of rehabilitations	8,273	8,379	8,637	8,861	8,962

The performance measures on the following pages illustrate the department's success compared with national averages of public VR programs in every state as well as with its own benchmarks. The most recently available data on national rehabilitation rates and costs reflects fiscal year 1998.

### Clients served per 100,000 population

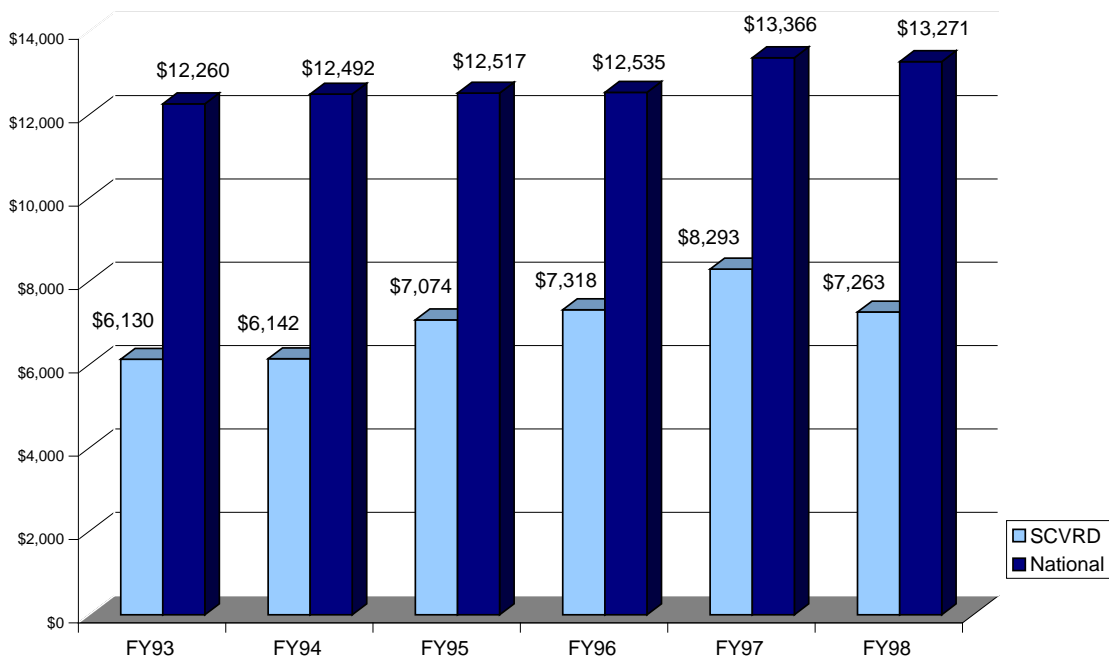


### Rehabilitations per 100,000 population

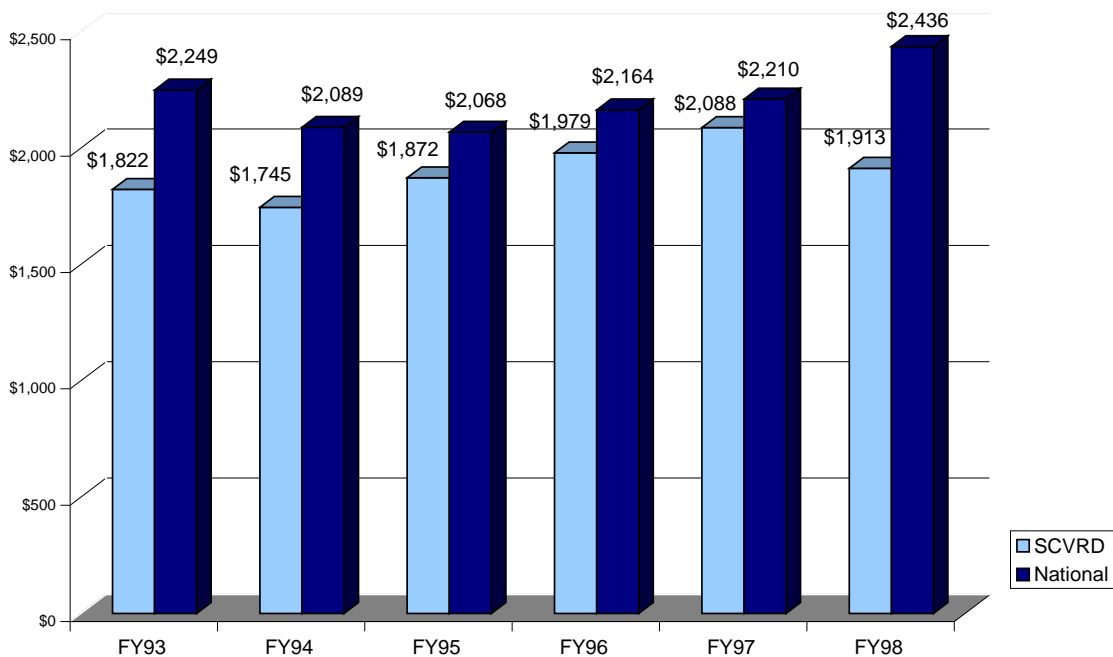




### Average total cost per rehabilitation



### Average total cost per client served



Though the SCVRD cost per client served is slightly less than the national average, the cost per rehabilitation is substantially less because of SCVRD's productivity (see chart on page 16).

## Wages

South Carolina as a whole does not rank high nationally in per capita income, but the Vocational Rehabilitation Department's successfully rehabilitated clients historically surpass their counterparts nationally in average weekly wages. The most recent national figures available (1997) indicated a \$256 average weekly wage, \$19 less than for SCVRD clients, whose wages have shown the following ranges:

	<b>FY 1996</b>	<b>FY 1997</b>	<b>FY 1998</b>	<b>FY 1999</b>	<b>FY 2000</b>
Average weekly wage at intake	\$75	\$88	\$96	\$97	\$107
Average weekly wage at closure	\$265	\$275	\$282	\$282	\$282

Wage at intake reflects all sources of income, including government benefits, family, friends and employment. The department attributes the leveling of weekly wage at closure to an increase in clients classified as "significantly" disabled from 67 percent to 87 percent during this span. The overall client acceptance rate also increased from 73 percent to 80 percent the last three years.

## Work Training Centers

Partnerships with South Carolina's businesses and industries through outsource agreements provide outstanding training opportunities for clients, who also receive training wages for production. The agreements generate revenue for the department's 22 work training centers. Last year, 8,718 clients received services at the training centers (an increase of seven percent from the previous year) and 3,413 became competitively employed after receiving these services (an increase of 10 percent). Remaining clients continued to receive services.

	<b>FY 1997</b>	<b>FY 1998</b>	<b>FY 1999</b>	<b>FY 2000</b>
Revenues from outsource work for business & industry	\$14,300,225	\$16,334,137	\$15,585,829	\$16,327,474
Wages earned by SCVRD clients at the centers	\$5,760,323	\$5,853,475	\$5,551,801	\$5,872,838

The remainder of the centers' revenues were used for raw materials, supplies and other operating costs of the centers.

## Return on the Taxpayer Investment

The department's clients continue to show a very high rate of return on the taxpayer's investment. Successfully rehabilitated clients become contributors to our state's economy rather than relying on benefits funded by taxes.

For instance, clients who become employed realize an increase in their earnings by **\$13.07** for every \$1 of Vocational Rehabilitation Department funds invested in their rehabilitation.

They return an estimated **\$2.81** in taxes for every dollar spent on their vocational rehabilitation.

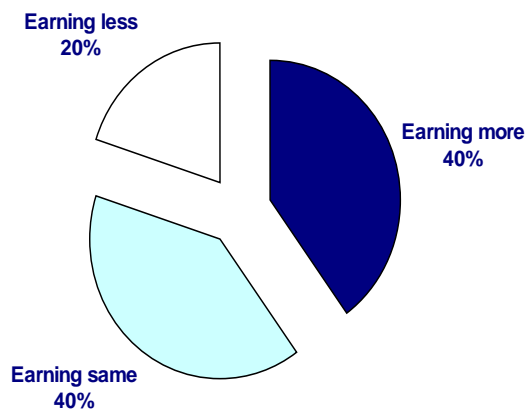
They repay the cost of their vocational rehabilitation in an average of only **4.9** years.

## Customer Satisfaction

Follow-up surveys of successfully rehabilitated clients showed a highly favorable assessment of SCVRD services. The department surveyed a random sample of clients one year after their cases closed.

	<b>FY 1996</b>	<b>FY 1997</b>	<b>FY 1998</b>	<b>FY 1999</b>
Employed one year after closure	72%	76%	78%	77%
Counselor willingness to listen to client's ideas and suggestions in developing service plan	99%	99%	98%	98%
Satisfied with adequacy of information about their disabilities	98%	99%	98%	97%
Satisfied with promptness of service delivery	98%	99%	98%	97%
Satisfied with kind of training received	90%	93%	93%	93%
Satisfied with benefits of training received	94%	92%	96%	97%
Satisfied with assistance in seeking job and finding employment	94%	92%	93%	95%
Satisfied with results of physical restoration services	93%	96%	95%	96%
Would recommend SCVRD to others with disabilities	99%	99%	98%	99%

## Salary comparison one year after closure



***Program Name***

Disability Determination Program

***Program Cost***

<b>Federal</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
\$ 23,403,126	\$ 0	\$ 2,808,375	\$ 26,211,501

***Program Goal***

The goal of the department’s Disability Determination Division is to strengthen the services provided by SCVRD through effective and efficient evaluation of claims for total and permanent disability benefits. Provisions for program operations are outlined in state and federal law and in agreements with other state agencies.

The Disability Determination Division serves individuals seeking assistance under provisions of the Social Security and Supplemental Security Income disability programs, South Carolina Retirement System disability program, total and permanent disability provisions of the Medicaid program and disability provisions of the South Carolina Homestead Exemption Act.

As part of the disability evaluation process, applicants are evaluated to determine if they will benefit from vocational rehabilitation services and, if so, they are referred to the Basic Service Program.

Disability Determination Division case processing operations for federal claims are governed by Social Security regulations and, in the case of non-federal programs, by specific provisions of South Carolina statues and regulations.

In carrying out its goals, the Disability Determination Division strives to process all claims with the highest possible level of quality (by careful adherence to all applicable laws, regulations and policies), in the shortest possible processing time (in keeping with sound documentation and evaluation), and at the lowest reasonable cost (consistent with evidentiary requirements and sound program administration).

***Program Objectives***

During the 2000-2001 fiscal year, the Disability Determination Division will receive, develop and adjudicate more than 86,800 claims on more than 70,569 individual applicants for Social Security or SSI benefits. (Some individuals will apply for both programs at the same time.) In addition, approximately 7,500 Medicaid claims, 2,000 claims for disability benefits under the South Carolina Retirement System and approximately 100 applications under the disability provisions of the Homestead Exemption Act will be processed. This will result more than 1,850 determinations per week with decisions reached in an average of 90 days or less.

***Key Results/Performance Indicators:***

The Disability Determination Division strives to achieve performance levels that are equal to or greater than the national average in the areas of: productivity (number of claims produced for each FTE); cost per case; and medical cost per case. The goal for claim processing time is 90 days or less and the target for documentation accuracy is more than 90 percent.

<b>Effectiveness and Efficiency Measures</b>	<b>South Carolina 1999-2000</b>	<b>Atlanta Region 1999-2000</b>	<b>National Avg. 1999-2000</b>
Cost per case	\$327	\$334	\$383
Medical cost per case	\$87.46	\$99.02	\$94.89
Production per work year	274.3	271.3	263.9
Processing time	87 days	82 days	85 days
Documentation accuracy	95.1%	94%	94.2%