

**2007**  
**Hawai'i Vocational Rehabilitation**  
**and Services for the Blind and**  
**State Rehabilitation Council**  
**Comprehensive Statewide Division**  
**Needs Assessment Pilot and**  
**Results**

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**September 2007**

# Acknowledgements

This process was developed and implemented under the direction, and with the assistance of, the Hawai'i Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind staff and the State Rehabilitation Council Planning and Evaluation Committee.

Mahalo nui loa to all the individuals and agency representatives who participated in this information gathering activity and process pilot. These individuals are not specifically listed in this report but their input and sharing is greatly appreciated.

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# Executive Summary

## Purpose

The Hawai'i Vocational Rehabilitation and Services to the Blind Division (HVRSD) in cooperation with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is required to conduct a comprehensive statewide assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities. The State Rehabilitation Council Planning and Evaluation Committee was given the responsibility of evaluation and needs assessment duties for the full Council and participated in all stages of the development, implementation and reporting of this needs assessment.

## Background

Hawai'i is an archipelago state with four counties and seven major islands with a population of about 1.2 million. Hawai'i ranks first in a comparison of the fifty states in terms of share of the population that is nonwhite or Hispanic, share of the population that is Asian and share of the population that is two or more races. The prevalence of working age individuals reporting a disability was 9.7%, lower than the national median. The employment rate was higher, 43.3% for persons with disabilities in Hawai'i of working age, compared to 29.3% for persons without disabilities. Twenty-four percent of the working age people with disabilities working full-time/full-year. The median annual labor earnings of working age people with disabilities working full-time/full-year was \$33,100, slightly higher than the U.S. median. About twenty-two percent (21.6%) of this population lived in poverty.

## Needs Assessment Method

This needs assessment piloted a teleconferenced focus group needs assessment. A series of four teleconferenced focus groups allowed persons to participate from their island of residence or work, without the time and expense to travel to a meeting site or another island to meet face-to-face. The Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment teleconference blog provided information on the questions that would be asked in the focus groups, reported results "instantly" from each focus group discussion and, allowed additional comment via the blog after the conversation had been completed. About 21 individuals participated in the four focus groups.

## Results

Participants in the teleconferenced focus groups were asked to participate by considering questions to be addressed specific to the Rehabilitation Act. The questions and summarized results are provided below.

### *Who is Unserved?*

- "504" Students and those in transition
- Young Adults in transition and less than 30 years of age with behavior issues
- Persons with developmental disabilities including mental retardation
- Persons with TBI
- Persons who are homeless

- Persons with visual disabilities
- Adult Mental Health Division Consumers
- Persons with dual diagnosis
- Persons with multiple disabilities
- Veterans coming out of the service

### ***Who is Underserved?***

- “504” Students and students who have been “mainstreamed”
- Young male adult (20s-30s), specifically those who have been involved in substance abuse / drug treatment, anger management or released from a correctional facility
- Veterans
- Individuals with invisible disability (i.e., traumatic brain injury or attention deficit disabilities)
- Some members of minority or ethnic groups (see below)
- Persons with dual diagnosis
- Persons with mental or physical disabilities, including psychiatric disabilities, psycho-social disorders, or persons who are middle aged (50s - 60s)

### ***Minority or ethnic groups receiving inadequate service***

- Immigrants
- Pacific Islanders and Polynesians, specifically Tongans, Fijians, Guamanians, Samoans, and Micronesians
- Hawaiians who are older, non-traditional students and those who are homeless
- Mexicans that are new immigrants to the islands but may not have green cards

### ***Community Rehabilitation Programs and Needs***

- More programs dispersed across the islands and in the rural areas
- CRPs to provide more services, including:
  - Assistive technology program training
  - Job readiness training
  - Social Skills Training
  - Workshop Training for food service or janitorial
  - Supported employment and summer youth programs for students with disabilities
  - Setting up and running a business or self employment
- CRP must improve and provide staff training in areas such as understanding contract with Vocational Rehabilitation agency, client benefits, advocacy, assistive technology, or other disability resources
- Consider using the Medicaid infrastructure grant as a model to promote conversation and cooperation

### *Needs of persons with “most severe disabilities*

- Assistive technology and training (e.g., initial and retraining to keep up with advancements) in its use in the home, school and work environments
- Funds to upgrade and maintain equipment
- Visible role models
- Other services and needs including: adaptive equipment, job coaching, personal assistance on the job, reliable transportation, housing, and time to process information and internalize training
- Service provider education: greater choices about occupations
- Employer and public education on the value of hiring someone with a disability.
- Educate employers on the types of accommodations they can provide to persons with disabilities.
- New types of opportunities to show employers that they can do the job.

### *Persons not adequately served by Workforce Investment System*

- Several groups including those who reside in the Waianae and Waialua area, Honolulu Veterans Administration office, residents of the Hawai‘i neighbor islands
- Overall many clients with disabilities are not served because the One Stop staff feel that they cannot question the persons who come to the One Stops about disability
- Other reasons the Workforce Investment System is not fully utilized or accessible is due to:
  - Each Workforce Investment System office is run by a different government agency so staffing, services, equipment, policy, and standards vary from office to office, island to island
  - Limited advertisement about services
  - Physical access is lacking
  - Persons with disability must self identify
  - Staff shortage
  - Staff lack assistive technology training (and this is associated with staff downsizing)

### **Limitations of the Data**

Although the group attending the focus groups works with or represents a diverse group of people with disabilities served, there should be caution in generalizing the results due to the small number of participants.