Department of Rehabilitation Services

Agency Description

Public Act 12-1 created the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS). DORS provides a range of services to help Connecticut citizens with disabilities live and learn independently and work competitively.

In support of its mission, the department provides a wide range of services to individuals with disabilities, children, families or who need assistance in maintaining or achieving their full potential for self-direction, self-reliance and independent living. These programs, policies and practices are designed to promote employment, independence, equal access and self-sufficiency.

DORS administers legislatively authorized programs, as well as a number of federal programs and other grants. These programs are consolidated into three bureaus: Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Bureau of Education Services for the Blind and the Bureau of Organizational Support.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

***Statutory Reference***

C.G.S. Sections 17b-612 and 17b-750a through 17b-666;

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

The agency administers the federal Rehabilitation Act for eligible clients by directly providing and coordinating a broad scope of services to enable the achievement and maintenance of integrated, competitive employment.

***Program Description***

The agency administers the federal Title I Vocational Rehabilitation and Title VI Supported Employment programs of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The program serves eligible consumers by assisting them to prepare for, obtain and retain integrated, competitive employment. The program directly provides and coordinates a broad scope of services including but not limited to vocational counseling, community based rehabilitation services, adaptive home and vehicle modifications, prosthetics and assisted listening devices and various forms of educational and vocational training. This program also assists employers seeking qualified candidates for employment.

Rehabilitation Support ProgramS

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Sections 17b-655 and 17-650a through 17b-666.

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

The rehabilitation support program is a compilation of federal grants and a legislatively authorized program that provide services and resources that complement other core programs in the department. Through collaboration and coordination of efforts and funding, this program offers a technical assistance center that strives to reduce barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities by assisting key stakeholders and employers in navigating Connecticut’s employment system.

Program Description

TheConnect-Ability program continues to strengthen and market Connect-Ability, an initiative designed to bring Connecticut employers together with job seekers with disabilities. The cornerstone of the initiative is a technical assistance center designed to meet the needs of employers and job seekers. A toll-free number (1-866-844-1903) provides assistance in navigating the service delivery system and a website ([www.connect-ability.com](http://www.connect-ability.com)) organizes information on a variety of topics relative to disability and workplace diversity. The Connect-Ability program also created a distance learning platform with a variety of online training modules. The modules are comprised of various topics to help job seekers with disabilities. It is fully accessible and free of charge.

The Connect to Work Program provides a single access point for information about the impact of wages on federal and state benefits. Benefits specialists provide comprehensive benefits analysis summaries to assist individuals with disabilities to maximize income by working and using federal, state and community resources appropriately to enable sustained employment and increased self-sufficiency. Counseling is offered directly to individuals through workshops designed for Social Security beneficiaries and professional staff who serve them.

TheEmployment Opportunities Program enables individuals with the most significant disabilities to engage in competitive employment by providing funding for long-term supports in order to maintain competitive employment. These long-term supports are provided on a contractual basis by community rehabilitation providers.

Disability Determination Services

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Sections 17b-650a(b) and 17b-651a.

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

The Disability Determination Services program works in cooperation with the Social Security Administration to determine whether the state’s applicants for Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income meet the federal disability requirements.

Program Description

This program is responsible for making timely and accurate determinations about whether an individual meets the federal criteria for disability or blindness. Disability examiners obtain medical and psychological information, arrange for consultative examinations to obtain additional information, analyze medical and non-medical information and make disability determinations for individuals applying for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

Independent Living Program

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Sections 17b-613 through 17b-615 and 17b-657;

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

This program supports centers for independent living that are designed and operated within a local community by individuals with disabilities. The centers provide an array of independent living services including information and referral, independent living skills training, peer counseling, and individual and systems advocacy designed to promote independence, productivity, and quality of life.

Program Description

In additional to the legislatively authorized Independent Living Program, DORS administers Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 for persons with significant disabilities through contracts with Connecticut’s five community-based independent living centers. The centers also oversee the administration and delivery of the federally-mandated state plan for independent living.

Assistive TechnologY Program

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Sections 17b-661 and 17b-650a through 17b-666.

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

Assistive technology (AT) helps individuals with disabilities increase or maintain independence. The statewide Assistive Technology Act program (known as the Connecticut Tech Act project), helps ensure that individuals with disabilities have informed choice about which AT device and/or service is right for them, provides information on funding sources and helps to maximize funds for individuals and entities through the use of AT lending and recycling programs.

Program Description

This programincreases independence and improves the lives of individuals with disabilities by increasing access to assistive technology devices and services for use at work, school or community living. Services include guidance and consultation; resource and information services; an alternative financing program to help individuals and families purchase equipment; four AT device demonstration sites across the state; AT recycling and reutilization programs; AT device lending as well as training and technical assistance.

Driver Training Program for PERSONS with Disabilities

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Section 14-11b.

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

This program provides training services to any qualified permanent Connecticut resident who requires special equipment to operate a motor vehicle.

Program Description

This program provides driver training and determines special equipment requirements for individuals with physical disabilities who wish to obtain a Connecticut driver's license.

Counseling Unit for Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Sections 17b-650a and 46a-27 through 46a -33.

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

To increase self-sufficiency, employability and independence of individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing through the provision of counseling services.

Program Description

A counseling unit provides special language, communication, and socio-economic assistance unique to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families. The program seeks to collaborate with other state and local community agencies to create team approaches in service provision.

CHILDREN’S SERVICES

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Section 10-295(a) and (b).

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

The agency provides specialized training, adaptive materials and services to children who are legally blind, visually impaired or deaf and blind to promote successful integration into educational, social, recreational and vocational settings.

Program Description

Certified teachers of the visually impaired provide specialized training and consultation to classroom and special education teachers, parents, paraprofessionals and local school district staff. Mobility instructors provide training in safe travel techniques in school and the community. Rehabilitation staff provide training in activities of daily living and utilization of adaptive technology devices. The program maintains a full-scope lending library of Braille and large print textbooks and materials and provides adaptive aids for the vision-related educational needs of the children served by the bureau. Direct services to students include Braille instruction, independent living skills training and transition school-to-work activities.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Sections 10-297 and 10-306 through 10-309.

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

The agency administers the federal Rehabilitation Act for eligible clients who are legally blind by directly providing and coordinating a broad scope of services to enable the achievement and maintenance of integrated, competitive employment.

Program Description

Clients of the program work with vocational rehabilitation counselors to develop individualized employment plans that identify career goals and the services necessary to achieve these goals. Through services such as post-secondary education, skills training, rehabilitation technology, low vision and independent living training, clients acquire marketable vocational skills. Specialized job retention services such as specialized training and adapted equipment for individuals employed at the time of vision loss enable successful continuation of employment.

Adult Services

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Sections 10-295(c) through 10-295(e), 10-297 and 10-298.

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

The agency provides specialized social, educational and rehabilitation services that enable eligible clients of the agency to achieve and maintain the highest level of independence and productivity in daily living activities. This program also serves as the single point of intake for all agency services and coordinates a volunteer services program for clients in support of activities performed by the bureau.

Program Description

Social workers issue certificates of legal blindness for property/income tax purposes and provide counseling and referral to support services within the bureau and to community-based organizations. Rehabilitation Teachers assist clients to increase personal and home management independence, leisure time activities and communications. Orientation and mobility instructors teach safe community travel techniques and provide long white canes for use and identification. The program also coordinates volunteer services to assist clients with activities of daily living. The deaf blind program, which is also administered through the Adult Services program, provides for specialized community inclusion activities. Public education programs are offered to senior centers and other community providers to increase awareness and access to agency services.

business enterprises

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Section 10-303.

***Statement of Need and Program Objectives***

The agency provides entrepreneurial opportunities for adults who are legally blind to operate businesses on federal, state and municipal properties.

Program Description

DORS is responsible for the development of high-quality business ventures for participants who desire to become entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurs derive full profits from the operation of businesses that range from gift shops to full service cafeterias in federal, state and municipal locations. Entrepreneurs receive training in business management and follow-up services. The program is funded entirely through revenues from vending machines installed in municipal, state and federal locations.

Worker’s Rehabilitation Program

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Chapter 568, Sections 31-275 through 31-355.

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

Worker’s Rehabilitation Services offer employment retraining to permanently injured workers who are unable to return to former employment.

Program Description

This program provides rehabilitation services for individuals injured on the job and are eligible for workers’ compensation. Services are intended to help individuals return to gainful employment and might include evaluation, aptitude testing, vocational counseling, job seeking skills training, on-the-job training or formal training.

ADMINISTRATION

Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Sections 17b-650e, 46a-33a and 46a-33b.

Statement of Need and Program Objectives

The Bureau of Organizational Support provides an administrative infrastructure that supports all programs administered by the department and administers a sign language interpreter services program to increase access for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Program Description

This program provides administrative support to the agency including certified interpreting services for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing in situations involving legal and constitutional rights, health, safety, employment, education and personal needs. Numerous state and municipal agencies, employers, private institutions and other individuals contract for the services of interpreters