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Report Highlights

Oversight of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services - Louisiana Workforce Commission

Audit Control # 40130052

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Why We Conducted This Audit

We conducted this audit to evaluate Louisiana Rehabilitation Services' (LRS) oversight of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program to ensure that counselors and service providers comply with all program requirements and provide quality services to individuals in a cost-effective manner. LRS administers the Vocational Rehabilitation Program to assist individuals with disabilities to obtain or maintain employment.

What We Found

Overall, we found that while LRS implemented a quality assurance process in 2005 to ensure counselors comply with LRS policies, it needs to strengthen its oversight to ensure service providers comply with LRS requirements and to ensure that consumers receive quality vocational rehabilitation services in a cost-effective manner. Specifically, we found the following:

- **LRS needs to develop risk-based criteria for selecting service providers to site review.** During fiscal years 2011 through 2014, LRS paid \$80.2 million (42%) of its \$189.1 total budget to vocational rehabilitation service providers. LRS has an internal goal to conduct 30 site reviews of service providers each year. However, according to LRS, it was not able to meet its goal for any year during fiscal years 2011 through 2014 due to staffing changes and budget cuts. Developing risk-based criteria on how to select providers for site reviews would help LRS ensure that resources are devoted to providers that pose the highest risk.
- **LRS needs to ensure that service providers submit all required annual renewal documentation, including proof of accreditation status and staff qualifications.** We reviewed a total of 46 files of the approximately 114 service providers that were active each year during fiscal years 2011 through 2013 and found that 34 (74%) of the 46 files did not include all annual renewal documentation for at least one year after they were initially approved by LRS to provide services. As a result, LRS cannot ensure that these providers met all requirements to provide vocational rehabilitation services.
- **LRS needs to implement a report card system to provide consumers with more comprehensive information for selecting service providers.** LRS policy requires that counselors provide information to assist consumers in making choices from options based on accurate information and knowledge, as required by federal law, when selecting service providers. LRS counselors provide consumers with a list of all available service providers so that consumers can choose a provider for vocational rehabilitation services. However, LRS needs to provide consumers with more comprehensive information regarding providers, such as specific services offered, disabilities served, and job placement rates, so consumers can select providers that best fit their needs.

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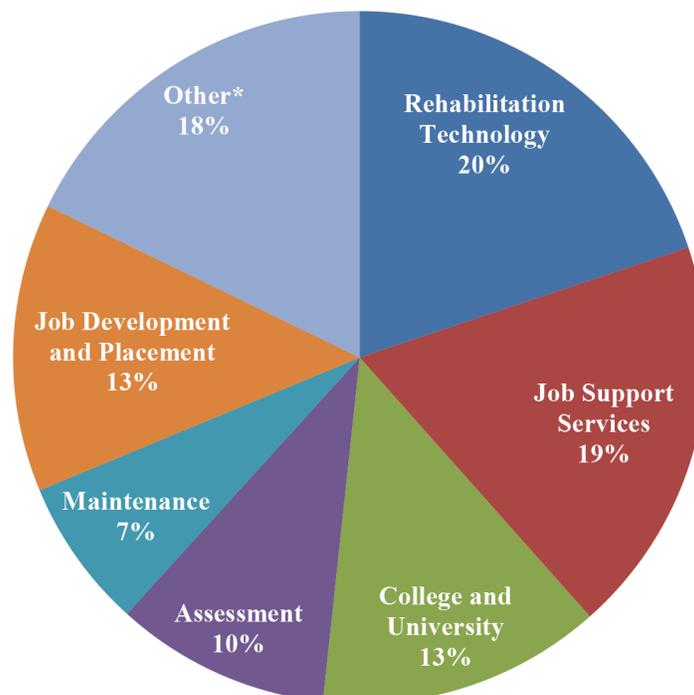
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What We Found (Cont.)

- **LRS needs to improve its current process for analyzing consumer satisfaction so that it receives sufficient feedback that is representative of all consumers using vocational rehabilitation services.** The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires LRS to review and analyze the satisfaction of consumers that have received vocational rehabilitation services. The Louisiana Rehabilitation Council sends satisfaction surveys to consumers every three years in conjunction with LRS. In 2013, the Council sent out 1,875 surveys and received only 98 (5.2%) responses. More comprehensive feedback would allow LRS to better analyze consumers' satisfaction with vocational rehabilitation counselors and services.
- **LRS should consider conducting financial needs assessments on consumers receiving rehabilitation technology services to determine if they are financially able to contribute to service costs.** LRS's policy states that the program must provide vocational rehabilitation services in a cost-effective manner. Counselors are required to assess the financial need of consumers to determine their ability to financially contribute to the cost of various vocational rehabilitation services, such as tuition assistance and hearing aids. However, LRS does not require counselors to conduct these assessments on consumers receiving rehabilitation technology services, which can include vision aids, prostheses, wheelchairs, and vehicle modifications. LRS spent \$3.9 million (20%) of its vocational rehabilitation budget of \$19.6 million on rehabilitative technology services for 771 consumers in fiscal year 2014, as shown below.

Vocational Rehabilitation Expenditures, by Service Category Fiscal Year 2014



*Other includes Occupational and Vocational Training, Books and Supplies, Physical and Mental Restoration, Training, Special Services, Transportation, Childcare, and Small Business Enterprise expenditures.

Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by LRS.

View the full report, including management's response, at www.lla.la.gov.