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## N E W S   R E L E A S E

### **More People to Receive Vocational Rehab Services in 2014-15**

BATON ROUGE — The Louisiana Workforce Commission will provide employment services to more people with disabilities in the coming year as a result of stable funding and more efficient operations.

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services, the LWC's division that serves job seekers with disabilities, will immediately begin serving 716 eligible clients who have been on a waiting list. Others also will be able to receive services as they are determined to be eligible and to the extent that funding is available.

LRS determines eligibility of job seekers with disabilities and assigns them each to one of five priority groups based on the severity of their disabilities and impediments to employment. Individuals with the most significant disabilities are assigned to group one and, according to federal law, have priority for services if funding is insufficient to serve everyone who is eligible. For several years, Louisiana has had funding to serve only the job seekers in group one. Beginning this week, individuals in groups two and three also will be served.

LRS clients typically receive services for three years, and more than 2,200 clients find permanent jobs each year. Services provided include training, assistive technology, vocational guidance and counseling, job readiness and job placement.

Clients' income typically increases from about \$3,305 per year before they receive LRS services to about \$21,155 a year afterwards.

"LRS has been successful with limited funding because of the hard work and commitment of the staff and also because of the great value their clients offer employers across the state," said Curt Eysink, executive director of the LWC. "The expansion of services comes at a critical time, just as Louisiana is beginning a rapid expansion in manufacturing and other fields that will require a larger, better trained workforce."

LRS is funded with 21.3 percent state funds and 78.7 percent federal matching dollars. This is the first year since 2009 that the program has not experienced budget reductions.

Efficiencies achieved in the program in the past few years have lowered the average cost of services per participant from \$1,866 in 2010 to \$1,566 today. Those efficiencies include simplifying and streamlining the eligibility and case management processes.

“Louisiana Rehabilitation Services is excited about this opportunity to serve the individuals who’ve had to wait for services, and to help find new clients who will be able to pursue new and better careers,” said Mark Martin, LRS director. “The people we serve will strengthen an already thriving workforce and help to meet employers’ critical hiring needs.”

Only rehabilitation counselors are authorized to determine eligibility and to assign clients to the five groups.

Individuals with disabilities who want assistance obtaining or maintaining employment should contact the LRS office serving their geographical area. For a list of regional LRS offices, visit [http://www.laworks.net/WorkforceDev/LRS/LRS\\_RegionalOffices.asp](http://www.laworks.net/WorkforceDev/LRS/LRS_RegionalOffices.asp).

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