

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Performance Report

Performance Results for State Fiscal Year 2006

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Introduction

This report will present the accomplishments of Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services, a division of the Iowa Department of Education, for the state fiscal year ending June 30, 2006. Accomplishments include those related to core functions identified in the IVRS SFY 2006 performance plan as well as progress toward the IVRS strategic plan goals. Information in this report is provided in accordance with the Accountable Government Act to improve decision-making and increase accountability to Iowa stakeholders and citizens.

Key services of the agency are essentially separated into **two major program areas**: **1.** Services that assist Iowans with disabilities to become employed in the competitive labor market or to live independently in their homes through provision of various supports. **2.** Services involving the evaluation of Iowa citizens' disabilities to determine eligibility for economic support via Social Security disability benefits.

IVRS has managed a waiting list of potentially eligible clients seeking vocational rehabilitation services since May, 2002 and must balance the need for VR services against inadequacy of funding to meet all needs identified. At the same time, IVRS staffing has been under review to ensure that its human resources are used in the most cost effective manner, which has meant greater use of "para" professional job classes in rehabilitation services delivery. State funding for IVRS has not been sufficient to generate all federal funds available for vocational rehabilitation services in Iowa. In spite of this reality, IVRS has been able to meet or exceed all but one of the federal standards and indicators that are crucial to continued federal funding. The Disability Determination Services bureau has met the requirements set out by the Social Security Administration for accuracy and timeliness associated with determinations on disability claims.

This report will provide a brief update on progress toward the IVRS strategic plan goals as well as information on performance of the three identified core functions of the agency:

- Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Independent Living
- Economic Supports
- Agency Resource Management.

Information for the two major program areas named above will be presented using the "**Key Results Template**". These continue to be the most crucial indicators of this agency's success in providing services to its customers.

Agency Overview

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) exists to serve individuals with disabilities under Title II and Title XVI of the federal Social Security Act and Title IV of the Workforce Investment Act. IVRS serves people with disabilities by: 1) providing vocationally related assistance to achieve economic independence; or 2) providing disability determinations that result in appropriate financial benefits per Social Security Administration guidelines. Other services and financial assistance are provided to enable persons with disabilities to maintain independent functioning as long as possible within their communities and to prevent institutionalization. IVRS is an integral part of the statewide disability community.

The mission and vision of IVRS was collaboratively developed by employees, consumers and stakeholders in 1993 and is a reflection of the agency's culture. The two statements are reinforced through agency policy as well as in recruitment, hiring and orientation of all new employees.

MISSION

The mission of Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services is to work for and with individuals who have disabilities to achieve their employment, independence and economic goals.

CORE FUNCTIONS

Provide VR services to eligible lowans with disabilities seeking employment.

Determine eligibility of lowans who apply for disability benefits administered by the federal Social Security Administration

VISION

lowans with disabilities will have equal opportunity to participate in their communities. IVRS will assist individuals with disabilities to explore resources and develop skills and confidence to achieve their employment, independence and economic goals.

Services will be provided on an individualized basis. Caring and qualified staff will work with the individual to create innovative, flexible plans for services to achieve his/her goals.

In order that individuals with disabilities may achieve their goals, a comprehensive network of resources and services must be available. IVRS will actively encourage and participate in such local and state partnerships. IVRS will continually strive to improve the resources and services, which contribute to achievement of the goals of individuals with disabilities.

Background:

IVRS is the largest division of the Department of Education and functions with considerable autonomy. The division employs nearly 400 people in Des Moines and 43 locations throughout the state. Employees work within three Bureaus and a Planning and Development Team. For vocational rehabilitation services, IVRS received \$26.9 million in federal funds and another \$4.8 million in non-federal funds; for disability determination services, IVRS received all federal funds totaling \$18.2 million from the Social Security Administration.

The majority of staff is professionally trained rehabilitation counselors and disability examiners. Almost 91% of the counselors have master's degrees in counseling or a closely related field. IVRS is mandated by its federal funding agency, the Rehabilitation Services Administration, to have qualified rehabilitation counselors – i.e., possession of an appropriate graduate degree. All disability examiners have at least a bachelor's degree or its equivalent. In addition, DDSB has 34 professional consultants who are licensed as physicians, clinical psychologists, or speech pathologist. Most IVRS employees are covered under collective bargaining agreements negotiated with Iowa United Professionals and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

All employees of the Planning and Development Team, Administrative Services and Disability Determination Services bureaus work in the Des Moines facility. With the exception of a few administrative personnel and the Polk County area office, most of the Rehabilitation Services Bureau employees are geographically disbursed outside of Des Moines to cover all 99 counties and every high school in the state. They are housed in every community college, regent's institution, and in most mental health institutes in the state. In addition, staff co-locates or has itinerant offices in some Iowa Workforce Development Centers.

The Rehabilitation Services Bureau (RSB) has the primary responsibility for the statewide program of quality vocational rehabilitation services to all eligible disabled Iowans through direct and purchased services from a network of providers. The Disability Determination Services Bureau (DDSB) is responsible for determining the eligibility of Iowa residents who apply for Social Security Disability Insurance (Title II), and Supplemental Security Income (Title XVI) or the Department of Human Services Medicaid waiver programs. DDSB makes the initial determination of eligibility and any subsequent determination of continuing eligibility and handles first-level appeals of unfavorable decisions. The Administrative Services Bureau (ASB) provides fiscal, personnel, information services and building maintenance support to the other Bureaus. The Planning and Development Team (PDT) is responsible for planning, budgeting, staff development, program evaluation and outreach.

IVRS customers are individuals with disabilities who need vocational or other assistance to help meet their goals for independence or who need financial benefits due to their disabilities. Vocational rehabilitation and disability determination programs are eligibility rather than entitlement programs. Applicants must meet federally determined criteria. Customers of both RSB and DDSB may apply on multiple occasions during their lifetime. Customers of the vocational rehabilitation program expect professional and accurate career planning information and involvement in planning to achieve their goals for either employment or independence. DDSB Claimants require accurate and timely decisions on their claims.

Competitive success is determined at the federal level by performance standards and indicators. In DDS that translates to timeliness and accuracy of case processing; on the vocational rehabilitation side, success relates to employment outcomes and equal access to services.

Strategic Challenges

The Rehabilitation Services Bureau experienced an unprecedented increase in new client referrals and average case costs starting in SFY02 and continuing to the present. Funding resources have not matched the increase in demands. State appropriations have not increased at the same rate as the increase in federal allocations for vocational rehabilitation. This has made it difficult for IVRS to earn all federal funds available. Due to the lack of financial resources, staff capacity, and in accordance with federal mandates, waiting lists for vocational services are being maintained.

The dilemma for IVRS in the future is achieving the same high rate of outcomes with fewer cases entering the caseload due to limited state funding. As fewer cases move into active services due to the waiting list, outcomes may be impacted. 36% of the active caseload in '06 was in college which results in clients remaining in a service status and unemployed beyond a three year period of time. This challenge has been recognized and the IVRS administration has taken proactive steps to increase agency efficiency through re-organization and process redesign.

Recent federal legislation has sought to reduce duplication in the provision of employment and training services through the development of one-stop service centers. Expansion of consumer choice in providers is the focus of the development of employment networks. Some service providers and advocacy organizations believe that the federal dollars should go directly to them, rather than through one state agency. While there are no direct competitors for Disability Determination Services, there is competition for funding with other Social Security Administration entities and other states.

IVRS application of technology is changing the nature of work in the division. Completion of an information system with capability for electronic case management and financial management functions is anticipated within SFY 07. When fully implemented and coupled with organization re-design, this technology should positively impact productivity in client services through increased efficiency in case management, administrative and financial processing. The implementation of the Social Security Administration's fully electronic case processing system has been completed in DDSB and the bureau is certified to process cases electronically.

New Developments

Effective partnerships between Vocational Rehabilitation and business have existed for many years. Recently there has been a call to action to for public VR agencies to coordinate efforts in strengthening and leveraging new relationships between VR and employers at a multiple levels (National, Regional, State and Local).

The **National VR-Business Network** is an initiative supported by the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) to actively work with business, consumers and VR State agencies to develop strengthen VR- business relationships. The vision of the network is to create a coordinated approach to serving business customers through a national VR team that specializes in employer development, business consulting and corporate relations.

In Iowa, IVRS has launched **the Iowa Business Network** which is our state initiative that compliments the work of the National Network through strategic planning and actions steps that:

- Recognize employers as a valued customer of the agency;
- Identify the business customer's needs as it relates to the recruitment and retention of qualified employees with disabilities in the workplace;
- Builds agency capacity to address the identified needs.

Results

Strategic Plan:

The IVRS strategic plan was revised in December, 2004 and includes four major goals listed below.

Goal # 1: To maximize every client's opportunity to reach their economic, independence and employment goals.

Employment in quality jobs is the desired outcome for each IVRS client. Data on the Federal Standards and Indicators show that IVRS has exceeded 6 of the 7 federal indicators. Efforts to focus on providing quality services have been effective. For example, during FFY 2003 case reviews were conducted in each area office to develop a baseline of quality services. Each office used this data to develop an improvement plan. Case reviews for the second year were completed and the data demonstrated that offices improved on 93% (68 of 73) of the requirements and agency quality assurance indicators. Of the five agency quality assurance indicators that did not improve, only two declined at a significant level (10% confidence level). Staff was given one year without reviews to implement their strategies in FY 06. In FY 07 the Quality Assurance process has resumed with staff reporting and analyzing their strategies and progress. The Quality Assurance process incorporated an educational and monitoring component, which has ensured 100% accuracy in eligibility compliance -- thus relieving any concern of future errors on this financially critical indicator. Staff is engaged in designing services and processes that stimulate quality, regulatory compliance and that will ultimately lead to an increase in outcomes.

The agency is attempting to expand relationships with employers to meet their need for qualified employees while offering quality opportunities for our clients. IVRS has begun planning and participation with the National Business Network which emanated from the Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation. A full time IVRS staff person has been an integral part of the planning efforts and will be critical to effective implementation of the Iowa Business Network Action Plan.

Goal # 2: Increase advocacy and support for rights of individuals with disabilities.

Attainment of this goal will be measured to a great extent by success in expanding the number of formal external partnerships. IVRS has taken an active role in expanding its collaboration with other bodies in an effort to strengthen employment related services for lowans with disabilities. This has included various partnering initiatives with other state agencies (e.g., IWD, Department for the Blind, DHS), one of which resulted in submittal of a joint budget offer intended to improve services leading to greater self-sufficiency for lowans with disabilities.

Goal # 3: Increase capacity to serve all VR clients.

The goal of IVRS is to match 100% of its federal appropriation. To achieve this requires generation of sufficient non-federal funds for matching purposes.

IVRS has developed internal financial tools to better predict and manage services and case expenditures given the ongoing waiting list of clients. This has been particularly important insofar as the state appropriation has not been sufficient to match (receive) all of the federal

funds available to IVRS. Additionally, a statistical model has been created to determine the number of clients to remove from the waiting list and then project that in the financial status of IVRS.

Goal # 4: Increase interest and satisfaction in VR careers.

IVRS has undertaken a work force planning initiative to address recruitment and retention of IVRS employees as well as other elements of human resource management. Included in this initiative is a focus on: future work force needs; increasing diversity of employees; re-structuring how work is done to maximize resources and best utilize FTEs; and identifying ways to ensure knowledge transfer when experienced employees leave. Plans are underway to administer an all-employee survey to help understand and determine the level of “engagement” in the work of the agency and to identify issues that need management’s attention.

Performance Plan Results

See enclosed templates for **Key Results** and **Agency Performance Plan Report**

Resource Reallocations

By late SFY 06, the renovation of the Parker Building was completed, and other agencies designated to re-locate there had moved into their new quarters. IVRS used its special state appropriation for remodeling of the South Building, where virtually all of Des Moines based staff are located. The remodeling work was completed well within the allotted budget.

“Ownership” of the Jessie Parker Building now officially rests with the Department of Administrative Services (DAS). IVRS entered into a memorandum of agreement with DAS to provide specified building maintenance services using IVRS building operations staff that has been on the IVRS payroll for years. At the same time, IVRS now pays the prescribed association fee to DAS (as do other inhabitants of the Parker Building) for the space occupied.

Other resource reallocations in IVRS relate primarily to human resource management as management continues to analyze the most effective staffing particularly in rehabilitation service delivery. The agency continues to operate at a level exceeding the standard for span of control – approximately 1:14 ratio of supervisor to employees (vs. 1:12 expectation). Instead of automatically filling vacant Rehabilitation Counselor jobs in the Rehabilitation Services Bureau, new staffing patterns have been applied which provide alternatives to the traditional type of staffing without diminishing the professional level of service required for IVRS clients.

KEY RESULTS 1 of 2

CORE FUNCTION

Name: Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Independent Living

Description: Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) provides a wide variety of services for persons with disabilities that lead to the attainment of their employment, independence and economic goals. The desired outcome is fulltime or part time competitive employment in the integrated labor market. Services include: assessment, diagnosis and treatment of physical and mental impairments, training, personal assistance services, placement, rehabilitation technology services, maintenance, transportation, small business enterprise assistance, and post-employment services.

Why we are doing this: IVRS provides services to help persons with disabilities find and maintain employment, or to help them live independently (not in a group home or other care facility). This greatly enhances their quality of life and adds to the Iowa economy through reduced dependence on public support and through the payment of taxes.

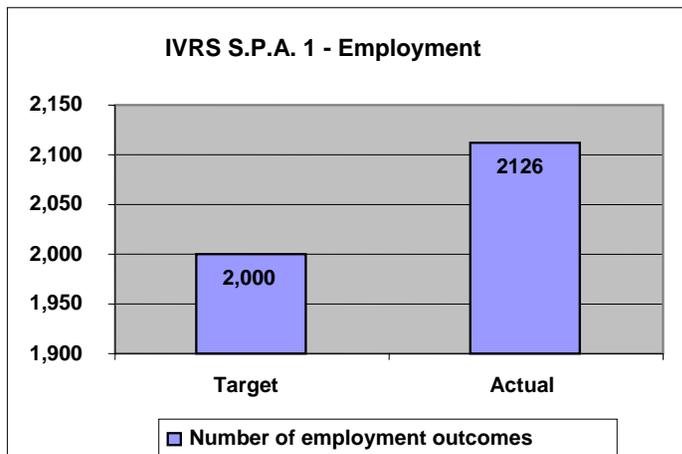
What we're doing to achieve results: IVRS staff includes master's degreed rehabilitation counselors who are strategically located throughout the state. IVRS partners with nearly 100 organizations to provide comprehensive rehabilitation services. The Iowa Rehabilitation Services System (IRSS) is being developed and implemented to enhance internal operating efficiency.

Results

Performance Measure:

Number of Employment Outcomes

Performance Target:
2000

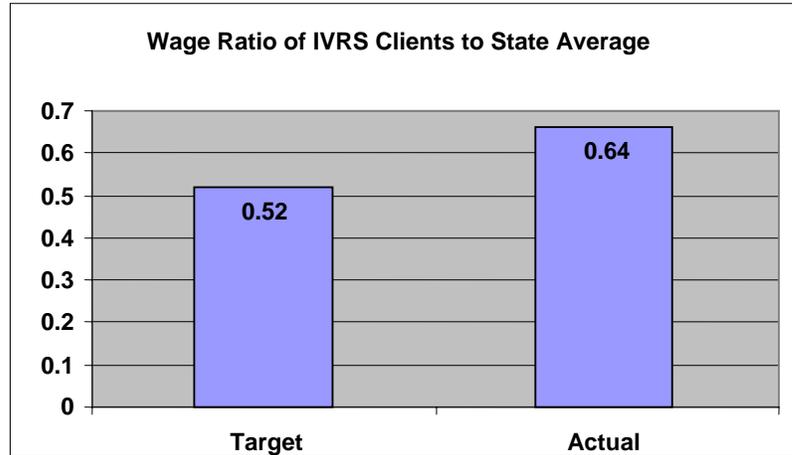


Performance Measure:

Wage ratio of IVRS clients to state average

Performance Target:

0.52



What was achieved: IVRS has met or exceeded both the quantity and quality performance measures even though IVRS has been challenged by insufficient non-federal matching funds. We have a federal mandate to serve the most significantly disabled individuals first when resources are limited.

The focus upon vocational placement and the action planning done in each area office contributed to the number of individuals placed into competitive employment.. Through the expertise of the counseling staff , collaboration with clients and other services and resources, IVRS has been increasing the number of clients placed in competitive employment. Every employed client becomes a tax payer and a consumer thereby increasing Iowa's economy and tax base while also saving the State's support dollars.

Data Sources: Case Service Records

KEY RESULTS 2

CORE FUNCTION

Name: Economic Supports

Description: The IVRS provides disability determination services to claimants for Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income in Iowa through a grant with the Social Security Administration (SSA).

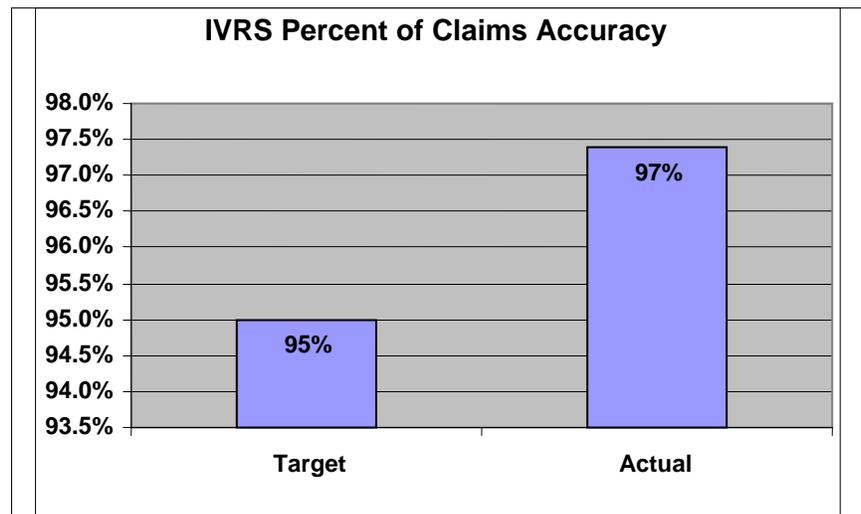
Why we are doing this: To enhance economic independence for disabled Iowans through cash benefits and healthier Iowans through access to Medicare and Medicaid.

What we're doing to achieve results: The IVRS has successfully implemented a paperless process to determine claimant eligibility for social security benefits and the new system is operating effectively. However, it is too early to determine if it will appreciably affect the time required to determine eligibility.

Results

Performance Measure:
Percent of claims accurately determined per SSA standards

Performance Target:
95%



What was achieved: Iowa IVRS exceeded Federal SSA target goal of 95% with 97.3% accuracy rate.

Data Sources: Social Security Administration Office of Quality Assurance and Performance Assessment.

AGENCY PERFORMANCE PLAN REPORT FY 2005

Name of Agency: Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services			
Agency Mission: To work for and with individuals who have disabilities to achieve their employment, independence and economic goals.			
Core Functions: Vocational Rehabilitation Services (Employment) and Independent Living			
Performance Measure (Outcome)	Performance Target	Performance Actual	Performance Comments & Analysis
1. Wage ratio of IVRS clients to State Average	0.52	0.64	<p>What Occurred: IVRS has met this standard repeatedly due to the fact that IVRS is committed to the spirit of the Rehabilitation Act so that clients' are encouraged to focus upon employment that maximizes their potential. Dedication to this principle is critical to narrow the unemployment gap of individuals with disabilities as well as realize employment that leads to self sufficiency.</p> <p>Data Source: Case Service Records and Iowa Workforce Wage Data.</p>
2. Per cent of claims accurately determined per SSA standards (initial net accuracy)	95%	97.3%.	<p>What Occurred: Iowa IVRS exceeded Federal SSA target. Documentation accuracy has increased steadily. More end-of-line QA review this past year than previously done and the backlog of initial cases was eliminated.</p> <p>Data Source: SSA Monthly Performance Report</p>
Service, Product or Activity: . Employment (Vocational Rehabilitation) Full time, or if appropriate part time competitive employment in the integrated labor market.			
Performance Measure	Performance Target	Performance Actual	Performance Comments & Analysis
1. Number of Employment Outcomes (Federal reporting)	2000	2126	<p>What Occurred: The target was met as planned by IVRS through funding limits and waiting list control. Funding and the waiting list mandates have limited our abilities to serve all the clients found eligible for services</p> <p>Data Source: Case Service Records</p>
2. Percent Employed (federal reporting)	55.8%	61.3%	<p>What Occurred: IVRS has met or exceeded both the target performance measures even though IVRS has been challenged by insufficient non-federal matching funds. The focus upon vocational placement and the action planning done in each area office contributed to the number of individuals placed into competitive employment.. Through the expertise of the counseling staff, collaboration with clients and other services and resources, IVRS has been increasing the number of clients placed in competitive employment.</p> <p>Data Source: Case Service Records</p>
3. Access to services ratio of minority to non-minority clients (federal reporting)	0.80	0.74	<p>What Occurred: The 2.1 performance measure (Ratio of Minorities Served in comparison to rate of non-minorities served) was at 0.74 this year and the federally required standard is 0.80. The total percentage of individuals on the waiting list from a minority background is 10.1% while the percentage of individuals from a minority background receiving services is 7.6%. While increased resources would allow IVRS to serve more minorities, IVRS has taken proactive steps on this measure by developing a partnership with the Center for Capacity Building on Diversity in Chicago, Illinois. The goal is to develop strategies to improve performance on this measure.</p>

			Data Source: Case Service Records
Service, Product or Activity: . Employment (Vocational Rehabilitation)			
Performance Measure	Performance Target	Performance Actual	Performance Comments & Analysis
1. Per cent of internal customer satisfaction with key support services	85%	90%	What Occurred: The Administrative Services Bureau administered a brief survey regarding three key support functions – Information Technology, Financial Processing and Human Resource Management to gauge level of internal customer satisfaction with these services. The survey was focused on field offices of IVRS as they have the most frequent contact with the aforementioned services.. Data Source: Results compiled from survey forms.
2. Per cent of time IT network services are available to staff	95%	100%	What Occurred: The IVRS network was up 100% of the time, even with ICN/ITE down time. Data Source: Information was recorded using Help Desk software.
Service, Product or Activity: CORE FUNCTION Agency Resource Management			
Performance Measure	Performance Target	Performance Actual	Performance Comments & Analysis
1. % of required match generated	100%	96.8%	What Occurred: Federal appropriation requires non-federal match to secure all available funds for IVRS. State appropriation was not sufficient to match all federal funds. Although IVRS continued to obtain other sources of match, it was still not sufficient to draw 100% of the federal funds. Data Source: IVRS financial management records and appropriation documents.
2. Ratio of employees to supervisors	No less than 1:12	1:14.2	What Occurred: The IVRS total number of supervisors continues to reflect a reduction from previous years, due to either not filling supervisory positions upon vacancy or reclassifying them to non-supervisory classifications. Data Source: IVRS Table of Organization and DAS span of control criteria
3. Inspection results re: safety and health of Parker Building facilities	No major deficiencies	None reported	What Occurred: Building facilities /equipment were inspected for safety and proper operation of elevators, boilers, fire alarm panel, fire suppression system, fire extinguishers, and smoke detectors. Data Source: Reports of inspection results, and/or certificates indicating acceptance of equipment.
Service, Product or Activity: Infrastructure (Resource Mgmt.) : Infrastructure (Resource Mgmt.) Resources are sufficient to provide services per IVRS mission and federal guidelines for Vocational Rehabilitation and Disability Determination.			
Performance Measure	Performance Target	Performance Actual	Performance Comments & Analysis
1. Initial claim processing time	85 days	80.2 days	What Occurred: The processing time continued to show that DDSB performance is well within the expectation of SSA. Data Source: SSA Monthly Performance Report

Performance Measure	Performance Target	Performance Actual	Performance Comments & Analysis
1. Percentage of persons meeting their goals	45%	73%	<p>What Occurred: Approximately 73% of IL clients were able to get that help in order preventing many of them from entering institutional care.</p> <p>Data Source: IL Clients records and annual 704 report.</p>
Service, Product or Activity: . Independent Living (Vocational Rehabilitation)			

AGENCY CONTACTS

- Stephen A. Wooderson, IVRS Administrator
- Keith Hyland, Chief, Administrative Services Bureau
- Jan Warwick, Statistical Analyst