

# **Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

## **Performance Report**

**Performance Results for State Fiscal Year 2007**

## **Table of Contents**

- **Introduction**
- **Agency Overview**
- **Results**
  - Strategic Plan goals
  - Key Results of Core Functions – Vocational Rehabilitation and Disability Determination
  - Agency Performance Plan Results
- **Resource Reallocations**
- **Agency Contacts**
- **Agency Performance Plan Results**

## **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, 2007. Accomplishments include those related to core functions identified in the IVRS SFY 2007 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 for several years thereafter had to balance the need for VR services against inadequacy of funding to meet all needs identified. However, due to an increase in state funds that generated more federal funding in SFY 07, considerable progress has been made resulting in a drastic reduction in the number of persons on the waiting list. 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. IVRS matched all available federal funding for the first time since 2003. Prior to FY 07, state funding for IVRS was not sufficient to generate all federal funds available for vocational rehabilitation services in Iowa. Regardless, 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 Iowans with disabilities seeking employment.

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

### **VISION**

Iowans 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 over 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 \$25.6 million in federal funds and another \$5.2 million in non-federal funds; for disability determination services, IVRS received all federal funds totaling \$18.5 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 35 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 improved but have not entirely matched the increase in service demands. State appropriations were increased but not enough to keep pace with the increase in federal allocations for vocational rehabilitation. This has made it difficult for IVRS to earn all federal funds available and provide the extent of services to meet the demands. As a result, there continues to be a waiting list for VR services – even though the number waiting is much lower than in SFY 06 due to the change in the service delivery model implemented by the Rehabilitation Services Bureau management team in FFY 07.

The change in service delivery transformed from a case management model to a direct service delivery model thereby utilizing state resources much more effectively and efficiently to produce more timely services and move more cases into an active status. During the prime time of the waiting list when the numbers waiting for services was around 6000, IVRS had 40% of the caseload in college. However that number is misleading since the numbers on the waiting list are not included in the calculations. As of September 30, 2007, IVRS had 29.9% of the caseload in college services and the decrease in numbers is due to more individuals in a planning status and not remaining on the waiting list. IVRS anticipates that the percentage in college will increase as plans are developed with individuals to prepare for an occupation. The ability to serve more individuals has been significantly impacted by the amount of additional state dollars received during fiscal year 07 and the change in the service delivery model. These proactive steps of re-organization and process design will positively move IVRS into the future so that state government is working at its finest and tax dollars are used efficiently.

Federal Legislation that sought to reduce duplication in the provision of employment and training services through the development of one stop service centers resulted in IVRS being co-located with many Iowa Workforce Development Centers. In SFY07 IVRS and IWD entered into an agreement that identifies the state IWD system as an employment network and allows IVRS and IWD to share in the Ticket To Work program that works to achieve employment for individuals on social security benefits. This joint agreement allows IVRS to be reimbursed for all expenditures on a client who is dependent upon benefits but becomes employed, and allows IWD to receive milestone payments from Social Security after IVRS is reimbursed.. There have been some private community rehabilitation programs (CRP) that advocated for their organizations to receive the federal appropriation directly rather than through IVRS under a purchase of service model. However only 2% of the population that IVRS serves actually participates in services through a CRP, and the majority of the population served by IVRS is college educated or injured workers returning to employment after recovery. This population of clients served would not receive the level of service or expertise from the CRPs. One CRP in particular was successful in advocating for direct state appropriation from the Iowa Legislature. The Easter Seals Community Rehabilitation Program advocated and received a direct appropriation of \$135,000 for their farm program, and this continued into FY 08. However the state legislature did not place any restrictions on the funding and so IVRS has not been successful in separating that out. 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 08. 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 is in its second year in DDSB and the bureau is certified to process cases electronically.

## **New Developments**

### **The IVRS Business Network:**

Workforce development and retention of workers at all skill levels are two of the major issues facing small and large business today. Nationally, public VR agencies have developed a National Network of 80 state agencies engaged in a coordinated effort to develop relationships that add value to both the business and to individuals with disabilities.

These national efforts compliment and support Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation's statewide commitment to the vision of "*assisting business and industry to meet their human capital needs by establishing mutually reciprocal relationships to place/retain qualified individuals in employment.*" Throughout local and state strategic planning efforts IVRS recognizes business and industry as a valued customer and has committed agency resources to identify and respond to human capital needs now and in the future. Examples of value-added services that IVRS offers Iowa business include:

- 1) **Pre-employment** services to respond to future employment needs and provide college and other related training to prepare future workers. IVRS can also connect these future employees with companies through internships, mentoring opportunities and customized (or on-the-job) training.
- 2) **Recruitment** and referral of qualified applicants.
- 3) **Retention** resources to support current employees who develop or acquire a disability.
- 4) **Staff training** on disability awareness, customer service or other topics related to disabilities in the workplace.
- 5) **Consulting, technical assistance and support.**
  - a) Workplace accommodations and assistive technology.
  - b) Financial incentives including access to tax credits and/or deductions available for hiring or accommodating people with disabilities.

## **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.**

The Quality Assurance Process continues in IVRS with each caseload being reviewed for accuracy, efficiency, and effectiveness. One component that is beginning to be assessed is the Direct Service Delivery model recently implemented. The QA process will evaluate the methods employed by the team to serve the client in a comprehensive manner to achieve success. While the federal requirements continue to be evaluated, they take on less importance as IRSS is developed and implemented as those data points where human error was most likely to produce a federal comment are being incorporated into the computer system for compliance. 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 Plans.

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

Attainment of this goal will be measured to a great extent by the success IVRS has in working with local school districts in assisting them in understanding the future needs of business and industry so that students are well prepared for the future workforce. Additional partnerships with the Department of Human Services and other state agencies will impact the outcomes for individuals with disabilities as we jointly strive to maximize resources and minimize duplication. Once such example is the joint collaboration of the Medicaid Waiver supported employment services with IVRS supported employment services. Together with CRPs and counties we have developed a funding model that utilizes resources most efficiently.

#### **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. An all-employee survey was administered in SFY 07 to help understand and determine the level of “engagement” in the work of the agency and to identify issues that need management’s attention. Follow up on the results of this survey has been planned and specific actions for SFY 08 are underway.

### **Performance Plan Results**

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

## **Resource Reallocations**

“Ownership” of the Jessie Parker Building continues to be with the Department of Administrative Services (DAS). IVRS entered into a second memorandum of agreement with DAS to provide specified building maintenance services using IVRS building operations staff that have been on the IVRS payroll for years. At the same time, IVRS 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 in relation to rehabilitation service delivery. The agency continues to operate at a level exceeding the standard for span of control – approximately 1:13 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. IVRS has met or exceeded both the quantity and quality performance measures, going back several years when there was insufficient non-federal funding. IVRS has 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.

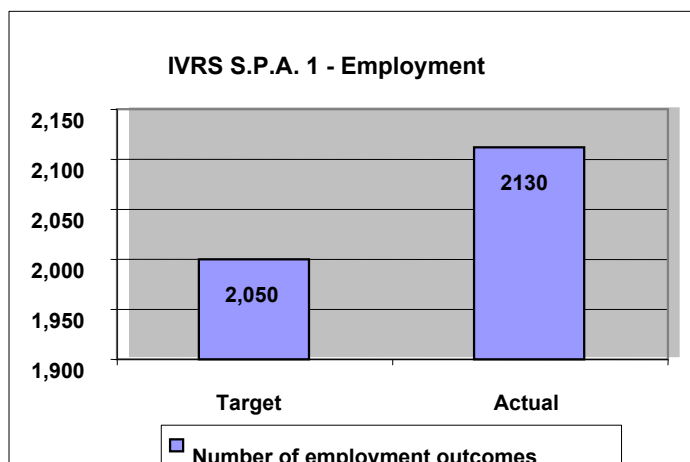
**Resources Used:** Combination of 78.7% federal funds with 21.3% non-federal funds required to generate the federal funding. State appropriation for FY 07 was \$5.2 million. Total of 226 FTEs involved (out of budgeted 273).

## Results

*Performance Measure:*

**Number of Employment Outcomes**

*Performance Target:*  
**2050**

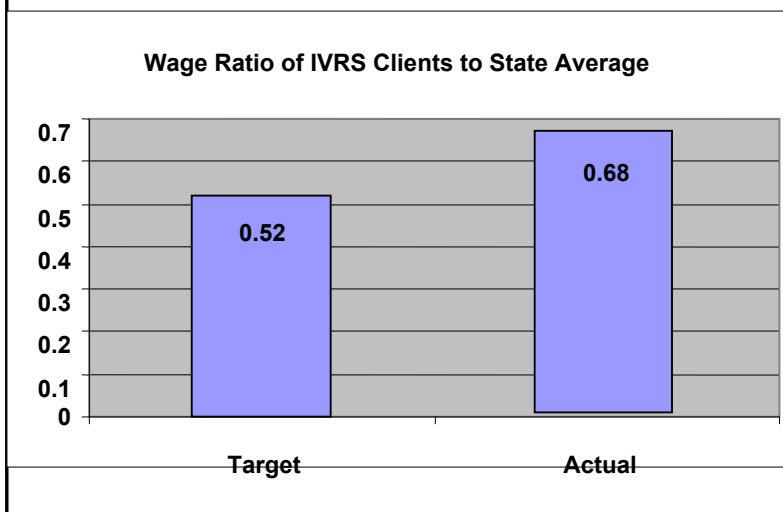


**What was achieved:** IVRS exceeded target by placing 2130 clients into competitive employment.

*Performance Measure:*

**Wage ratio of IVRS clients to state average**

*Performance Target:*  
**0.52**



**What was achieved:** IVRS exceeded target by placing clients in positions paying an hourly rate of 68% of the average state hourly wage rate.

## 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 relationship with the Social Security Administration (SSA) – per federal regulations.

**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.

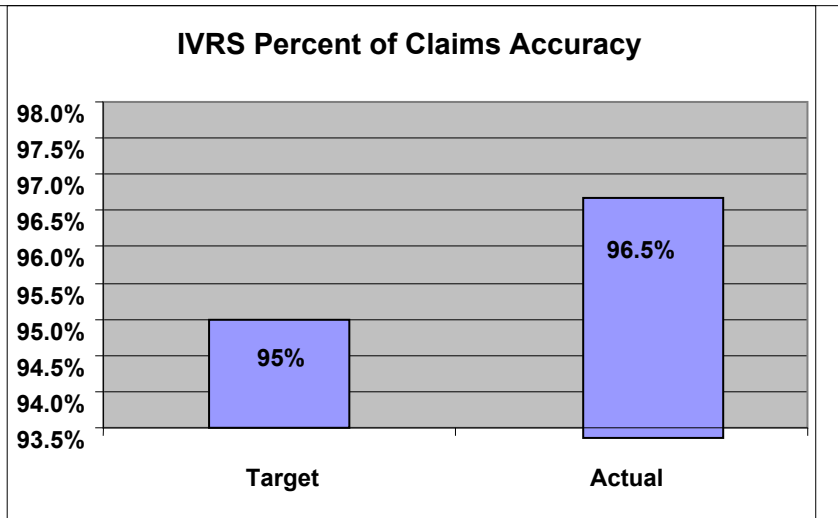
**Data Sources:** Social Security Administration Office of Quality Assurance and Performance Assessment

**Resources Used:** 100% federal funding of \$18.5 million from the Social Security Administration. Total of 131 FTEs involved (out of budgeted 142).

### Results

*Performance Measure:*  
**Percent of claims accurately determined per SSA standards**

*Performance Target:*  
**95%**



**What was achieved:** Iowa IVRS exceeded the goal of 95% with 96.5% accuracy rate.

## **AGENCY CONTACTS**

- Stephen A. Wooderson, IVRS Administrator
- Keith Hyland, Chief, Administrative Services Bureau
- Matt Coulter, Chief Financial Officer

## AGENCY PERFORMANCE PLAN RESULTS FY 2007

<b>Name of Agency:</b> Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services			
<b>Agency Mission:</b> To work for and with individuals with disabilities to achieve their employment, independence and economic goals.			
<b>Core Function:</b> Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Independent Living			
Performance Measure (Outcome)	Performance Target	Performance Actual	Performance Comments & Analysis
1. Wage Ratio of IVRS clients to state average.	0.52	0.68	<p>What Occurred: IVRS achieved a ration of .68 by placing clients at average wages of \$10.73/hour in relation to the state hourly average of \$15.68.</p> <p>Data Source: Case Service Records.</p>
<b>Service, Product or Activity:</b> Employment			
Performance Measure	Performance Target	Performance Actual	Performance Comments & Analysis
1. Number of Employment Outcomes	2050	2130	<p>What Occurred: IVRS achieved placement of 2130 clients into competitive employment. This number includes individuals where the case was closed as a self employment business owner. The target was exceeded.</p> <p>Data Source: Case Service Records.</p>
2. Percent employed (successful outcomes)	55.8%	59%	<p>What Occurred: IVRS exceeded the goal of 55.8% successful outcomes with 59% of clients placed in competitive employment in accord with their rehabilitation plans and vocational objectives.</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: This target was not met. The percentage of individuals from a minority background receiving services is 34% versus 45% for individuals from a non-minority background. IVRS has a partnership with the Center for Capacity Building in Chicago to develop strategies that will improve performance on this measure.</p> <p>Data Source: Case Service Records</p>
4. Number of Entrepreneurs with Disabilities that achieve start up or expansion of a business.	30	49	<p>What Occurred: This number reflects the number of business starts and business expansions. This target was exceeded.</p> <p>Data Source: Records from "Abilities Fund" regarding entrepreneurs with disabilities.</p>

<b>Service, Product or Activity: Independent Living</b>			
<b>1. Percentage of persons meeting their goals under Independent Living program</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<p><b>What Occurred:</b> 146 of 204 clients (71%) were successful in achieving their goals under the Independent Living program. The target was exceeded.</p> <p><b>Data Source:</b> Independent Living client records and annual report.</p>
<b>2. Number of persons able to continue to live independently in their homes.</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>204</b>	<p><b>What Occurred:</b> There were 204 closures which reflects persons who were able to independently live in their homes, with the assistance provided through the Independent Living program. The target was exceeded.</p> <p><b>Data Source:</b> Internal records regarding use of Independent Living funds.</p>



## AGENCY PERFORMANCE PLAN RESULTS FY 2007

<b>Name of Agency: Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services</b>			
<b>Agency Mission: To work for and with individuals to achieve their employment, independence and economic goals.</b>			
<b>Core Function: Economic Supports</b>			
Performance Measure (Outcome)	Performance Target	Performance Actual	Performance Comments & Analysis
Percent of claims accurately determined per SSA standards (initial net accuracy)	95%	96.5%	<p>What Occurred: DDS monitors and analyzes federal quality returns to look for patterns that can be corrected through training. Additionally, DDS utilizes in-line and end of line quality assurance reviews to improve quality.</p> <p>Data Source: SSA Office of Quality Performance</p>
<b>Service, Product or Activity: Claims processing</b>			
Performance Measure	Performance Target	Performance Actual	Performance Comments & Analysis
1. Initial claim processing time	85 days	83.7 days	<p>What Occurred: DDS mitigated bottlenecks in the cases waiting for medical review by training disability examiners to help write mental assessments, using QA and Hearing Officer staff to write assessments, and using SSA Regional office medical consultants to help review cases. Supervisors routinely review old cases to be sure appropriate actions are taken.</p> <p>Data Source: SSA Office of Disability Programs</p>
2. Percent of budgeted CDRs completed	100%	106%	<p>What Occurred: DDS worked with SSA to be sure the flow of CDR cases was sufficiently and timely enough to achieve the goal.</p> <p>Data Source: SSA State Agency Operations Report</p>

## AGENCY PERFORMANCE PLAN RESULTS FY 2007

<b>Name of Agency: Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services</b>			
<b>Agency Mission: To work for and with individuals with disabilities to achieve their employment, independence and economic goals.</b>			
<b>Core Function: Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Independent Living</b>			
Performance Measure (Outcome)	Performance Target	Performance Actual	Performance Comments & Analysis
Agency Resource Management – internal customer satisfaction and percent of time IT network services available to staff.	85%	85%	<b>What Occurred: Survey of internal customers regarding services from Administrative Services revealed that 85% of staff surveyed were satisfied with such services. ITS tracks outages to determine extent of availability of network.</b>  <b>Data Source: Internal customer survey; IT Help Desk database.</b>
	95%	95%	
<b>Service, Product or Activity: Infrastructure (Resource Management)</b>			
Performance Measure	Performance Target	Performance Actual	Performance Comments & Analysis
1. Percent of non-federal match	100%	100%	<b>What Occurred: All available federal funds were accessed and used. No federal funds were returned for reallocation.</b>  <b>Data Source: Internal financial records and reports.</b>
2. Ratio of employees to supervisors	1:12	1:13	<b>What Occurred: Number of supervisors remained static.</b>  <b>Data Source: Internal personnel data/table of organization.</b>
3. Inspection results on safety and health of Parker Building facilities	No major deficiencies	No major deficiencies	<b>What Occurred: DAS/GSE now has primary control of building. Regular inspections of Jessie Parker Building complex revealed no significant issues needing attention. Air handling system was repaired to ensure efficient operation.</b>  <b>Data Source: Inspection reports.</b>