



Louisiana Rehabilitation Services

Program Year 2025

(July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026)

4th Quarter Report

Vocational Rehabilitation

Legislative Update

In the SFY 2027 budget funded through HB1, ACT 3 of the 2026 Regular Legislative Session, LRS received an additional \$2 million of State General Fund dollars. These funds will be used as a match for the federal VR award, resulting in a total of approximately \$9.38 million when federal funds are drawn.

To help meet the increased demand for services, LRS will use the additional \$18.7 million received in SFY 2026 and recurring in SFY 2027, along with the additional \$9.38 million, to target hiring 16 Job Appointment positions throughout the state. These positions include 11 Rehabilitation Counselors and 5 Rehabilitation Counselor Associates. Total served is projected to expand past 21,700, and if this estimate is reached, it will be the highest total served in a state fiscal year since SFY 2017 (10 years). Once all Job Appointment Rehabilitation Counselor positions are filled, LRS will have 93 counselors. LRS has not had this many counselors since SFY 2016.

For the 2026 Performance Year LRS finished with 5,333 applications and 4,812 eligibilities. These totals were the highest amount of production achieved statewide for these categories since 2019. LRS also completed 3,106 plans and 1,375 successfully rehabilitated cases marking the highest totals in these categories since 2020.

The Special Entrance Rate (SER) policy for all Rehabilitation positions within Louisiana Rehabilitation Services will also be used to support these targeted positions. This approval allows selected candidates for Rehabilitation Counselor-Entry level positions to be offered a starting salary of \$21.04 an hour (increased from \$17.52) and the Rehabilitation Counselor Associate positions will start at \$17.17 an hour (increased from \$14.30).

The SER approval in March 2026 was intended to assist with addressing recruitment, retention, and market competition challenges experienced by LRS. Since its approval, LRS has been able to fill classified state employee vacancies, and the current vacancy numbers are the lowest in many years. Additionally, the number of resignations in SFY 2026 was the lowest since SFY 2021. LRS finished the 2026 Performance Year with 73 counselors and 168 total employees. Both staffing numbers are highs for the agency since 2020 showing the effectiveness of the Special Entrance Rate and mirroring the improved production statewide.



Budget

Expenditures for Vocational Rehabilitation participant purchased services for Program Year (PY) 2025 through June totaled \$35.7M. This is an increase (20.13%) as compared to PY 2024 through June where total expenditures were \$29.7 million. PY 2025's \$35.7M was the highest year-end participant expenditure total which surpassed PY 2007, which incurred \$33.7 million in expenditures. We project this expenditure trend to continue in PY 2026, and we anticipate that it will be one of the highest years on record. The highest percentage of payments this year are for training services. Pre-Employment Transition Services expenditures totaled over \$5 million through June, which is the highest total since PY 2016 and 2nd highest on record. The total amount of Social Security collections LRS has received through June for PY 2025 is \$2 million.

Community Rehabilitation Programs

The Community Rehabilitation Program Bureau is responsible for processing applications from training programs, medical providers, CRPs providing career services applying to become approved LRS Vendors. Once vendors have been approved, continuous monitoring is conducted to ensure adherence to the LRS Vendorship Procedures and Community Rehabilitation Program Standards. As part of the continuous monitoring process, programmatic reviews are conducted. Programmatic reviews include a desk review and an on-site review.

The CRP Program Coordinators responsible for career services, training and medical providers have devoted the first two quarters of the year to programmatic reviews. New vendor applications are processed throughout the year as the applications are received. To date a total of 42 vendor applications have been processed consisting of 23 training providers, 11 CRPs, 4 medical providers and 4 miscellaneous vendor applications. There were more out-of-state colleges and universities added likely due to the prevalence of on-line training programs.

Since January the CRP Program Coordinators have conducted a total of 22 programmatic reviews of CRPs providing career services across all 8 regions. One CRP from Baton Rouge refused the on-site review and requested to terminate the vendor status, however a desk review was completed. Seven (7) CRPs have passed satisfactorily, 9 have been placed on corrective action plans, six (6) of which for job placement rates under 55.8%. Five (5) on-site reviews have been completed with reports pending. Two (2) desk reviews are in progress.

Pre-Employment Transition Services

LRS provided services to over 5,200 students statewide in PY 2025. LRS currently has 17 active Third Party Cooperative Arrangements (TPCAs) with local education providers to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), including the addition of Lincoln Parish. LRS continues to pursue additional TPCAs.

LRS is also in the process of obtaining approval for a Pre-ETS staffing contract to serve the Baton Rouge Region, which will further expand service capacity and access for students with disabilities.



Sara

LRS continues to work towards implementation. The groundwork has been laid to allow Sara to fit seamlessly into the LRS system and procedures. Once we have an approved amendment to the AWARE contract, SARA and AWARE can be integrated and the testing of these systems and procedures can begin. Simultaneously, we will schedule and prepare statewide training on the platform.

Randolph-Sheppard

Randolph-Sheppard program staff have undertaken efforts to improve accountability for blind vendors running Randolph-Sheppard vending locations. These efforts include both the use of a new and more detailed monthly inspection form, along with the use of a customer satisfaction survey to be accessed via QR code.

A card containing the licensed blind vendor contact information and a QR code linking to a satisfaction survey was developed and affixed to vending machines and placed in prominent locations at snack bars and cafeterias being run by licensed blind vendors across the state. All survey results are being shared with the Randolph-Sheppard program manager, and any survey that contains comments is being immediately shared with the blind vendor assigned to the associated location.

LRS staff have been working with the Louisiana Department of Corrections to assume control of the vending machines at all of the state prisons. We currently have a presence at Allen Correctional Center, B.B. Rayburn Correctional Center, Elayn Hunt Correctional Center, and Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women. We are working to assume the vending at Angola, Raymond Laborde Correctional Center, Dixon Correctional Institute, and David Wade Correctional Center.

Independent Living

The LRS contracts with the three Louisiana Centers for Independent Living (CILs) – New Horizons Independent Living Center, Southwest Louisiana Independence Center, and Resources for Independent Living – provide Independent Living (IL) Part B Services, as outlined in the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL). The second grant award was received from the Administration for Community Living (or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) for the remainder of the FFY 2026 funding. All invoices were processed through May 2026. The CILs expended \$183,936.00 of the \$348,060.00 total current contract year funds and continue to provide excellent IL Part B Services.

Independent Living – Older Blind

LRS contracts to provide Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) services. Louisiana's four (4) contractors—Affiliated Blind of Louisiana, Lighthouse Louisiana, Louisiana Association for the Blind, and Louisiana Center for the Blind—coordinate statewide services. All four contracts were approved for renewal through September 2028 ensuring services continue to be provided to qualifying aging residents. According to our Grant Award Notification (GAN), LRS is set to receive a total of \$401,385.00 in funding to provide services to individuals who are Older Blind in FFY 2026. This is a



reduction of \$4,212 from FFY2025. During SFY 2026, services were provided to a total of 1,931 individuals under this program.

Tribal VR Programs

The Program Coordinator for the Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Programs' Memorandum of Understanding collaborated with the United Houma Nation (UHN) VR on their Disability Awareness Pow Wow held June 27 – 28, 2026, at the Houma Terrebonne Civic Center. The LRS Houma Regional Office staff and other Louisiana Works teams were connected with the UHN VR Pow Wow Committee to participate. Besides LRS, the Louisiana Works Mobile Unit and SNAP Employment and Training teams participated in the event on June 27, 2026.