



Louisiana Rehabilitation Services

Program Year 2026

(July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027)

1st Quarter Report

Vocational Rehabilitation

Legislative Update

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) staff were detailed to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on September 10th. VR still follows the rules and regulations of the U.S. Department of Education.

Human Resources

LRS previously received approval to hire 16 Job Appointment positions to include 11 Rehabilitation Counselors and 5 Rehabilitation Counselor Associates (RCAs). Due to the rapid growth in individuals being served and active cases, an additional 12 Job Appointment positions were approved which includes 6 more Rehabilitation Counselors and 6 Administrative Coordinators.

Including the 12 newly approved positions, LRS will have 202 full-time employees once all vacant positions are filled.

The LRS New Orleans Regional Office has relocated to 201 Evans Road, Suite 420, New Orleans, LA, 70123. All other contact information for this office (phones, fax) remains the same.

Budget

Expenditures for Vocational Rehabilitation participant purchased services for Program Year (PY) 2026 through September totaled \$8.4 million. This is an increase (33.51%) as compared to PY 2025 through September where total expenditures were \$6.3M. PY 2025's \$35.7M was the highest year-end participant expenditure total which surpassed PY 2007, which incurred \$33.7 million in expenditures. LRS projects this expenditure trend to continue in PY 2026 and anticipates 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 \$685K, which outpaced last year through September by 51%. The total amount of Social Security collections LRS has received for PY 2026 through September is \$272K, which is significantly lower than last year's pace, as \$527K had been received through this same month last year.

Policy and Procedure Updates

LRS published an updated Technical Assistance and Guidance Manual, LRS Fee Schedule, and LRS Policy Manual on October 1, 2026. Substantial changes in these materials include the following:



- Documentation to verify applicants' identity and establish their legal authorization to work in the United States must be received prior to an eligibility determination. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has updated their lists of allowable items to use for this validation.
- Currently, the application of a financial need analysis is required for certain services. When allowed to be suspended by the LRS Director, individuals shall not be required to undergo a financial need analysis, and services subject to financial need shall be provided without financial participation.
- Counselors now only need to obtain documentation of income (including public assistance) and disability related expenses (if not already deducted from the taxable income on the individual's latest 1040 tax form) to use in the calculation for determining if financial participation in the cost of services will be required. This change removed the amount of a participant's assets to be included in those calculations.
- The provision of Orthotic and Prosthetic devices is now considered a Physical Restoration service instead of Rehabilitation Technology. Orthotic and Prosthetic devices will remain on the list of services that do not require a financial need analysis to be applied.
- The maximum amount payable for Assistive Technology assessments has been increased to \$650. This amount includes inspections, review of fittings, and any needed follow-up visits.
- LRS will provide modifications to allow safe entry and exit from the home and modifications to the bedroom and one bathroom to support personal hygiene and preparation for work.
- LRS will not pay to remodel, renovate, repair, or provide significant structural modifications and/or additions to an existing structure. For example, the following are considered significant structural modifications/additions and are NOT permitted:
 - Extending an existing house by building a new room, such as a bedroom or bathroom, and converting a window to a door.
 - Cutting into walls to create doorways or remodel closets.
 - Adding or rerouting plumbing, electrical, etc.
 - Enclosing and renovating an existing open structure, such as a carport.
 - Pouring concrete parking pads for multiple vehicles or sidewalks around the home outside of the main pathway to the home entrance that has been modified for access.NOTE: A wheelchair ramp may be constructed and attached to an existing home; this is not considered a significant addition.
- For Pre-ETS students, the maximum participation in Work-Based Learning Experiences has been reduced and cannot exceed 240 hours for one (1) placement.
- The maximum amount of Pre-ETS classroom activity sessions has been increased to 105 and unused sessions can be carried over to the next academic year.
- Orientation and Mobility rates for Assessments and Instruction have increased to \$450.00 and \$90.00/hour respectively.
- All 16 prorated amounts for Orientation and Adjustment residential and non-residential training have been increased.



Community Rehabilitation Programs

The Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Bureau has completed its full-scale statewide programmatic review period for 2026. Reviews in recent years have been conducted only when there was a need to investigate cases of potential fraud, gross misconduct, or mismanagement. The resurgence of this programmatic monitoring has generally been well received by the CRPs with many having expressed their appreciation for the technical assistance and guidance received. This process has reinforced open lines of communication with increased responsiveness, and a mutual awareness between the CRPs and the LRS CRP Bureau staff.

CRPs are reviewed for compliance with established CRP standards, vendorship procedures, LRS service procedures related to the specific services provided by the CRP, and the required minimum job placement rate of 55.8%. Additionally, customers served are interviewed regarding their experience with the CRP. Whenever significant deficiencies are found, or when the vendor has failed to meet the minimum required job placement rate, a corrective action plan is warranted. The most common deficiency noted was failure to meet the job placement rate. The 2014 passing of Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) removed the required 55.8% as a performance indicator for VR agencies. However, LRS chose not to remove this rate as a production goal for CRPs as it is necessary for job retention and directly impacts the “Employment Rate Second Quarter after Exit” and the “Employment Rate Fourth Quarter after Exit” performance indicators, both of which are now separate federal performance indicators required to be reported by VR agencies. Therefore, LRS will continue to monitor its vendors’ job placement rate while prioritizing successful case closures and job retention.

To better align with current federal performance reporting, LRS created “Job Search Assistance” and “Job Placement Assistance” as separate services while doing away with what was formerly “Job Development/Placement” where payment for job search assistance was incorporated into the fee. Recent reviews revealed that there was inconsistency among vendors as to the time periods used on their self-reported job placement reports. Regardless of the period used or whether the data reported reflected when the customer was hired or when the customer’s case was closed as successful, the job placement rate was calculated using the same numerator and denominator; the number of referrals reported with IPEs for job search assistance services divided by the number of job placements reported. The results of this year’s reviews led to 15 out of 24 CRPs being placed on corrective action plans, 10 of which did not meet the required minimum 55.8% job placement rate, and 3 failed to meet other CRP standards. There were 2 that did not meet the minimum required job placement rate in addition to failing to meet other CRP standards.

As of the end of this quarter, LRS has a statewide total of 87 career services vendors and 58 Supported Employment services vendors.



Pre-Employment Transition Services

LRS provided services to over 5,434 students statewide in the first quarter of PY 2026. 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 has obtained approval for a Pre-ETS staffing contract with Arc of Louisiana to serve the Baton Rouge region which will further expand service capacity and access for students with disabilities.

Employment First

The LRS Director hosted a meeting on October 13th to discuss an Employment First initiative with potential partners. Employment First is a framework and nationwide movement stating that competitive integrated employment should be the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities.

Sara

Alliance has completed the work necessary to allow Sara and AWARE to interface and share data. LRS will work with Sara and Alliance over the next month to test the platform and ensure it is working as intended. LRS staff will be trained on the LRS processes to implement Sara between November 16th - November 30th, with a “Go-Live” target date of December 7, 2026.

Randolph-Sheppard

After receiving approval by Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and upon the completion of the promulgation process on August 20, 2026, several revisions were made to the Business Enterprises Program (BEP) manual. Because of these changes, updates were also necessary in the LRS Technical Assistance and Guidance (TAG) manual to match the revised information pertaining to the BEP. LRS staff are actively providing training to all Randolph-Sheppard staff and vendors on the new manual. Training began by providing a series of six optional virtual opportunities. Staff and vendors will also be required to attend one of four in-person training sessions which will be held at various locations across the state during the month of October.

Independent Living

LRS contracts with the three Centers for Independent Living (CILs) – New Horizons Independent Living Center, Southwest Louisiana Independence Center, and Resources for Independent Living – to provide Independent Living (IL) Part B Services in Louisiana, as outlined in the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL). The Notice of Award received from the Administration for Community Living (or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) for FFY 2026 IL Part B funding was \$348,060.00, with each CIL receiving \$116,020.00 this contract year. Performance monitoring began



this reporting period, and the contract monitor has received positive customer feedback regarding the ILB services received.

During the August 2026 Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) meeting, it was discovered that there was a disconnect between the CILs and Tribal VR programs in the state. Outreach efforts have since been made between the Directors of the CILs and Tribal VR programs to collaborate on serving American Indians with disabilities.

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. LRS received 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 this quarter, services were provided to 366 individuals under this program.

Success Story

LRS received the following testimonial from a satisfied customer:

“On September 8, 2025, I began working with Laurence Williams, Region 2 Rehabilitation Employment Development Specialist. Laurence helped me with my resume, job search strategies, interview preparation, and assisting in networking with potential employers on my behalf. Ms. Angela Smith (Rehabilitation District Supervisor) updated my IPE in a timely manner and assisted me with computer equipment and home office modifications.

Laurence helped me obtain employment as a Remote Customer Service Representative within 2 weeks, and within 6 months, employment as a Remote Member Engagement Coordinator with one of the top 10 Fortune 100 companies.

I would like to thank Angela Smith and Laurence Williams for all of their support and assistance!!!

Sincerely,
Yolanda Walker”



LOUISIANAWORKS

Vocational Rehabilitation Statistics

All Order of Selection Groups have been open since August 15, 2022.

To date for Program Year 2026 (since July 1, 2026):

- There have been no individuals placed in delayed status for any of our 3 Order of Selection Groups.
- LRS has served 16,603 individuals with disabilities.

Vocational Rehabilitation Customer Statistics	
	YTD Total for PY 2026
Number of Applications	1,449
Number of Eligibility/Delayed	1,195
Number of New IPEs	907
Number of Closed Rehab (Successful Closures)	224
Total Open VR cases as of September 30, 2026	10,245
Total Open Pre-ETS cases as of September 30, 2026	4,751

Statewide 60 and 90-day Performance Measure*	
% of Eligibilities determined within 60 days	98.5%
% of New IPE's approved within 90 days	99.6%
* Data is from the 4 th Quarter (April through June of 2026) RSA Data Dashboard	



Open VR Cases by Disability Type*

Disability Type	Primary
Blindness	268
Other Visual Impairments	249
Deafness, Primary Communication Visual	52
Deafness, Primary Communication Auditory	102
Hearing Loss, Primary Communication Visual	18
Hearing Loss, Primary Communication Auditory	563
Other Hearing Impairments	23
Deaf-Blindness	19
Communicative Impairments (expressive/receptive)	75
Mobility Orthopedic/Neurological Impairments	317
Manipulation/Dexterity Orthopedic/Neurological Impairments	139
Both Mobility and Manipulation/Dexterity Orthopedic/Neurological Impairments	261
Other Orthopedic Impairments	116
Respiratory Impairments	49
General Physical Debilitation	203
Other Physical Impairments (not listed above)	609
Cognitive Impairments	1,917
Psychosocial Impairments	2,612
Other Mental Impairments	176

** Data is from the 4th Quarter (April through June of 2026) RSA Data Dashboard*

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services

Customers Served from July 1, 2026 – September 30, 2026



Combined Total Served

VR – 11,100
Pre-ETS – 5,503

Total – 16,603