



Vocational Rehabilitation Needs Assessment Final Report

**SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE
NATIONAL CONSORTIUM OF INTERPRETER EDUCATION CENTERS (#H160A&B)
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Foreword

The National Consortium of Interpreting Education Centers (NCIEC) is authorized and funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), U.S. Department of Education. Through grants awarded by the Department, the National Interpreter Education Center (NIEC) and five Regional Interpreter Education Centers (RIECs) that comprise the Consortium are working collaboratively to increase the number of qualified interpreters nationwide and ensure that quality interpreter education opportunities and products are available across the country.

A primary requirement of the NCIEC grants is to conduct ongoing activities to identify needs in the field of interpreter education. This Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Needs Assessment Final Report has been prepared based on the findings and conclusions of a national needs assessment specifically designed and carried out to assess interpreting needs in VR settings. This Final Report is submitted by the NCIEC on behalf of the NIEC and the five RIECs. The report provides an overview of the needs assessment process and a detailed discussion of the primary assessment findings.

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Vocational Rehabilitation Needs Assessment Final Report

Survey of the State Coordinators for the Deaf

Executive Summary

The National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC) is authorized and funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), U.S. Department of Education. The Consortium is comprised of the National Interpreter Education Center and five Regional Interpreter Education Centers. Since its inception, the NCIEC has been working on a number of national initiatives, one of which has been the design, development and implementation of needs assessment activities. The objectives of the needs assessment activities are to identify current and future needs of interpreter education programs, interpreter educators, interpreters and consumers of interpreter services. Further, federal priorities established by RSA for the grant mandate that the Consortium ensure a specific focus on interpreting for consumers of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services throughout the projects and activities it conducts, including needs assessment activities. In response to the intensive federal focus on VR, a number of the NCIEC needs assessment activities have sought to gather information related to interpreting for VR consumers, and to assess the training and education needs of the interpreters that work in VR-related settings.

This report, the **VR Needs Assessment Final Report**, represents the culmination of a targeted needs assessment activity designed and carried out to identify and assess the interpreting needs of state VR agencies. However, several earlier NCIEC data collection and needs assessment activities have also sought to gather information that would assist the Consortium in understanding VR interpreting needs. For example, a number of the cross-cutting teams established by NCIEC have conducted surveys, focus groups or other structured activities designed to collect information from consumers, stakeholders and experts in the field. Those work-team activities included numerous opportunities for gathering input specifically related to interpreting in VR. In addition, the NCIEC has completed a number of other targeted needs assessment initiatives over the course of the grant. These efforts have been national in scope and have been most commonly carried out through the development and dissemination of on-line survey instruments. Each of those efforts included survey design characteristics that contributed to the base of information being collected by NCIEC that relates to interpreting in VR.

As an example, the Interpreter Practitioner Needs Assessment collected information related to the amount of time interpreters work in VR settings in comparison to the time spent interpreting in other settings, as well as interpreter practitioner input regarding training and education needs for interpreting across the spectrum of interpreting settings, including VR-related settings. The Phase I and Phase II Deaf Consumer Needs Assessment efforts also gathered VR-related data. In those efforts, input was obtained from current and past VR consumers, and data was collected in a number of key topic areas, including: consumer characteristic and demographic data; information

related to interpreter availability and frequency of interpreter use; perceptions regarding interpreter knowledge and ethics, and overall consumer satisfaction with the interpreting services received. Because VR consumers participated in the efforts, the information gathered provides a useful inroad to understanding the issues and challenges facing VR consumers with regard to interpreting services.

The Interpreter Referral Agency Needs Assessment gathered information about interpreter pay and benefits, most and least frequently requested interpreting services, and data related to requests received and filled by interpreting setting, including VR settings. Finally, the Interpreter Education Program Needs Assessment pulled together an array of information about interpreter education and coursework; data regarding faculty qualifications, retention and retirement, and student enrollment and graduation rates. Data resulting from each of these independent needs assessment efforts, again, all national in scope, have contributed to the development of a framework for understanding and beginning to quantify issues related to the interpreter shortage, interpreter education and qualifications, and the competition for services across the array of interpreting settings, including VR.

While each of these activities and initiatives contribute to the stockpile of information being collected by the Consortium and have resulted in the development of data and findings related specifically to interpreting in VR, an earlier data collection effort focused wholly on the issue. In that effort, over 20 in-depth interviews were conducted with key VR stakeholders. Specifically, interviews were conducted with Department of Education professionals, state VR agency leadership and staff, State Coordinators for the Deaf (SCDs), state VR agency Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCDs), interpreters that work in VR, and VR consumers. The information gathered through the interviews was used to develop a baseline set of issues and challenges related to interpreting in VR, and to frame the questions and establish the focus for this effort.

The VR Needs Assessment was carried out through development and implementation of a nationwide electronic survey of SCDs. These individuals are employed by the state VR agency and charged with overseeing and coordinating the provision of services to deaf and hoh consumers, including interpreting services. While state VR agency leadership and managers may possess important information and insights regarding the interpreting needs of the consumers they serve, those individuals have job responsibility for all individuals with disabilities being served by the agency, and do not focus just on the deaf and hoh VR consumer population. By contrast, it is the role and primary responsibility of the SCD to oversee and coordinate services for the deaf or hard of hearing VR consumer, thereby making that level professional an important source of input from the state VR agency regarding interpreter-related issues and challenges.

The survey instrument utilized in the VR Needs Assessment was largely based on input received during the stakeholder interview process described above. Development of the survey included extensive opportunities for input and feedback on the part of Department of Education and RSA personnel; state VR agency leadership and staff,

and individuals serving in the role of SCD. Survey instruments were disseminated to SCDs nationwide, utilizing an electronic listserv provided by RSA as the basis for invitation to participate in the effort. The survey resulted in completed survey instruments representing the input of 34 state VR agencies, as provided by the individual SCDs employed by them.

This report is organized in two primary sections. The first section of the report, Section I – Survey Findings, provides a detailed description of findings that emerged through analysis of the completed surveys. A final section of the report, Section II – Consultant Recommendations, includes specific suggestions, or recommendations, to the Consortium that are based on the consultant’s analysis of the SCD survey data.

I. Survey Findings

This first section of the report provides a detailed description of findings that are based on an analysis of the SCD responses to each question posed by the survey instrument. Within this section, survey findings are organized into two primary categories of information. The first includes information about the state VR agencies the SCD respondents work for and the consumers those agencies serve. The second set of findings is based on the wide range of information collected through the survey that relates to the interpreters state VR agencies employ. Within each category of findings, an array of information and data is presented in a series of clearly identified sub-categories, each with a table arraying the actual data collected in the survey, followed by a narrative discussion or analysis of the findings related to that particular data set.

A. Information about State VR Agencies and the Consumers they Serve

This first category of findings presents broad information related to the state VR agencies the individual SCD respondents work for, and a significant level of detailed information about the deaf, hard of hearing (hoh), deaf-blind and late-deafened VR consumers those agencies provide services to.

1. State VR Agency Type

Under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, states receive federal grants to operate a comprehensive VR program. These funds are awarded to designated state VR agencies within each state. There are 80 state VR agencies nationwide. Of the 80 state VR agencies, 56 of the agencies are identified as General or Combined agencies. The General state VR agencies serve all individuals with disabilities in the state except those who are blind or visually impaired. Combined state VR agencies serve all individuals with disabilities in the state. In addition, there are 24 state VR agencies for the blind, which provide services only to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Of the total 80 state VR agencies nationwide, surveys were completed by SCDs representing 34 individual state VR agencies, thereby comprising a

43% sample of the nation's VR agencies. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the 34 state VR agencies by agency type.

State VR Agency Type		
Table 1		
Type of Agency	# of Responses	% of Respondents
General	18	53%
Combined	5	15%
Blind/Visually Impaired	11	32%
Total	34	100%

The ratio of state VR agencies that participated in the survey (as represented by the SCD respondent) is equitable to the national ratio of General/Combined state VR agencies as compared to state VR agencies serving the Blind. Specifically, of the nation's total 80 VR agencies, 70% are General or Combined agencies; in the survey 68% of the respondents work for General or Combined agencies. Likewise, the state VR agencies for the Blind represent 30% of the total 80 VR agencies nationwide, and in the survey, those agencies serving the Blind account for 32% of survey respondents. It is fair to say survey respondents provide an equitable distribution between the General or Combined state VR agencies and those state VR agencies serving the Blind.

2. Order of Selection

Federal regulations require the establishment of an Order of Selection if VR services cannot be provided to all eligible individuals who apply for services, due to financial or economic limitations on the part of the state VR agency. At any time that it is determined that VR services cannot be provided to all individuals expected to be determined eligible for services, the Director of the particular state VR agency may implement an Order of Selection. Under an Order of Selection, eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities are served first, followed by individuals with significant disabilities, and finally, individuals with non-significant disabilities. Survey respondents were asked to report whether or not their state VR agency was operating under an Order of Selection in fiscal year 2008. Table 2 provides responses to that question.

State VR Agencies Operating Under an Order of Selection		
Table 2		
Order of Selection	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Yes	18	53%
No	16	47%
Total	34	100%

In fiscal year 2008, 36 of the 80 state VR agencies were operating under an Order of Selection, or 45% of the nation's agencies. In the survey, more than half of the SCD respondents, or 53%, reported that the state VR agency they work for was operating

under an Order of Selection in fiscal year 2008, once again providing a fairly accurate representation of state VR agencies nationwide. As discussed above, state VR agencies operating under an Order of Selection are required to provide services to individuals with the most significant disabilities first. Because more than half of the respondent agencies reported their state VR agency was operating under an Order of Selection at the time of the survey, the profile of deaf and hoh consumers served by those agencies may indicate an increase in the number of consumers that have a secondary disability or disabilities, including mental health related disabilities, and/or consumers who are identified as low-functioning deaf (LFD) or deaf-blind.

3. Characteristics of the VR Consumers Served

In order to understand the training and education needs of those interpreters that provide services to deaf and hoh VR consumers, it is critical to learn more about that consumer population. An initial question in the survey was designed to confirm that survey respondents work with state VR agencies providing services to deaf and hoh consumers. Specifically, respondents were asked to indicate if their state VR agency serves deaf, hoh, deaf-blind or late-deafened consumers. Responses are presented on Table 3 below.

Does the State VR Agency Serve Deaf, Hoh, Deaf-blind or Late-deafened Consumers		
Table 3		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Yes	34	100%
No	0	0%
Total	34	100%

As expected, all SCD survey respondents confirmed that the state VR agency they work for provides services to individuals that are deaf, hoh, deaf-blind and/or late-deafened.

In the design of the SCD survey instrument, RSA requested that the survey seek to collect information related to the characteristics and numbers of deaf, hoh, deaf-blind and late-deafened consumers served by state VR agencies. This information is not currently collected through RSA's monitoring or reporting systems. It was understood by RSA and NCIEC at the outset of the Phase II VR Needs Assessment effort that this information would not likely be easily accessible to the SCDs participating in the survey. However, it was agreed that the survey would attempt to collect and quantify the information to the extent it could. During the period of time the survey was open on-line, a number of respondents directly contacted RSA and/or NCIEC to report that this information was not available, or too difficult and/or time-consuming to manually compile. However, the majority of respondents were able to provide a response.

Deaf Consumer Sub-groups

Survey respondents were first asked to select a percentage range that would most accurately represent, ***of the total population of VR consumers served by their state VR agency in the previous two years***, the percentage of consumers that were identified as 1) deaf; 2) LFD, and 3) deaf consumers from culturally or ethnically diverse backgrounds. Responses are presented on Table 4.

Percentage Breakdown of Population of Deaf VR Consumers Served						
Table 4						
Deaf Consumers	0-10% of Consumers	10-25% of Consumers	25-50% of Consumers	50-75% of Consumers	75-100% of Consumers	Don't know
Consumers identified as deaf	12 35%	7 21%	7 21%	2 6%	1 3%	5 15%
Deaf consumers identified as LFD	8 24%	5 15%	4 12%	2 6%	1 3%	14 41%
Deaf consumers from diverse backgrounds	12 35%	4 12%	4 12%	4 12%	1 3%	9 26%
Note: Top # is the count of respondents selecting option; bottom is % of respondents selecting option						

There are several points of interest on Table 4. To begin with, it is worth noting the relatively high numbers of respondents that selected the “Don’t know” survey option. As discussed above, a number of respondents sent e-mails to RSA and/or NCIEC during the period of time the survey instrument was being completed on-line indicating that counts of deaf consumers by the various sub-groups identifiers were unavailable, or too difficult to compile manually. However, it is interesting that so many respondents could not provide an approximation: the survey question directed respondents to select, “as best they can,” a percentage range for each sub-group. Additionally, respondents were provided percentage ranges to select from, versus tasked to provide a hard number. While this data is of great interest to RSA, it appears it will not be readily available from state VR agencies. In addition, several respondents reported in their e-mails, or through a comment field provided in the actual survey form, that their state VR agency did not use a LFD code or other means of categorizing consumers as low-functioning, and therefore were unable to provide percentage ranges for that population sub-group.

The “Don’t know” column of data aside, it is interesting to assess those respondents that did assign a percentage range. It is not surprising to see that most respondents selected either the 0-10% or 10-25% percentage range option. After all, deafness is considered a relatively low incidence disability in comparison to other types of disabilities. It would be expected, therefore, that ‘deaf’ VR consumers would comprise a relatively low percentage of the total VR consumers served by the state VR agency. What is more surprising, and perhaps makes some of the responses suspect, are the survey responses in the 25-50% percentage range, and most particularly, the responses in the 50-75% and 75-100% percentage ranges. Based on the assumption that deafness is a low incidence disability, it is puzzling that respondents assigned a percentage range higher than 50% to any of the three sub-group options listed on Table 4 above.

Because of the high level of RSA interest in the consumer characteristic data, further analysis of the survey raw data was conducted to determine if there was anything additional to be learned by understanding more about the respondents that selected the 25-50% percentage range or higher. On Table 4a below, two additional pieces of data were considered: type of state VR agency, and whether or not the respondent reported their state VR agency was operating under an Order of Selection.

Data on Respondents Selecting Deaf Consumer Range of 25% or Higher				
Table 4a				
Consumer sub-group	State VR Agency Type		Order of Selection	
Consumers identified as deaf	General/Combined	Blind	Yes	No
25-50% of all consumers served	7	0	6	1
50-75% of all consumers served	2	0	1	1
75-100% of all consumers served	1	0	0	1
Deaf consumers identified as LFD	General/Combined	Blind	Yes	No
25-50% of all consumers served	4	0	2	2
50-75% of all consumers served	2	0	1	1
75-100% of all consumers served	0	1	0	1
Deaf consumers from diverse backgrounds	General/Combined	Blind	Yes	No
25-50% of all consumers served	4	0	1	3
50-75% of all consumers served	3	1	2	2
75-100% of all consumers served	1	0	1	0

In reviewing Table 4a, it is probable that a number of the respondents did not understand the intent of the survey question, which was to assign a percentage range that would approximate the particular sub-group's portion of the state VR agency's total VR consumer population. For example, in analyzing the responses related to the two VR agencies serving the Blind, it is extremely unlikely that a state VR agency that only serves blind and visually impaired consumers would have as a percentage of total consumers served, 75-100% that were 'deaf consumers identified as LFD', or 50-75% of consumers served being 'deaf consumers from diverse backgrounds'. Because they are state VR agencies serving the Blind, those consumers would have to fall into the deaf-blind category. It is also unlikely that any General or Combined state VR agency would accurately identify more than 50% of their consumer base as deaf, LFD, or deaf from diverse backgrounds. Once again, because of the overall low incidence of deafness, these numbers seem exceedingly high when considering those agencies serve other higher incidence disability groups. The analysis further looked at whether or not the respondent state VR agency was operating under an Order of Selection. This factor was assessed because a state agency under an Order of Selection serves individuals with the most significant disabilities first and therefore might have higher numbers of consumers with a secondary or other disability, possibly related to hearing loss. However, those respondents assigning a percentage range above 25% on Table 4a were mixed – some were under an Order of Selection; some were not.

The next six tables provide consumer characteristic data for hoh, deaf-blind and late-deafened related sub-groups (Tables 5, 6, and 7). In a review of those tables, for each population sub-group there were respondents that assigned a 50% or higher

percentage range, as they did on Table 4. On those later tables as well, the high percentage ranges do not seem to be accurate. To explore this issue further, the analysis of the survey raw data looked at specific respondent identifier information to determine if it was always the same few respondents that selected the high percentage ranges, thereby suggesting that just those few survey respondents misunderstood the intent of the question. It was discovered that one respondent selected a percentage range of 50% or higher about half of the time on Tables 4-7, suggesting that particular respondent did not understand the intended use of the percentage ranges. However, another 12 respondents selected a percentage range of 50% or higher only one or two times. Other than those few times, those respondents consistently selected percentage ranges below 50%, in fact, usually in the 0-10% or 10-25% ranges, which would appear to be accurate assignments. It is not clear or readily understandable why those respondents would have assigned such a high percentage range in those few instances with regard to any of the identified sub-groups as all would typically be considered low incidence disability groups.

Hard of Hearing Consumer Sub-groups

Survey respondents were also asked to assign a percentage range that would most accurately represent, ***of the total population of VR consumers served by their state VR agency over the previous two years***, the percentage of consumers identified as: 1) hoh; 2) hoh consumers identified as low-functioning, and 3) hoh consumers from culturally or ethnically diverse backgrounds. Responses are presented on Table 5.

Percentage Breakdown of Population of Hard of Hearing VR Consumers Served						
Table 5						
Hoh Consumers	0-10% of Consumers	10-25% of Consumers	25-50% of Consumers	50-75% of Consumers	75-100% of Consumers	Don't know
Consumers identified as hoh	15 44%	2 6%	6 18%	3 9%	4 12%	4 12%
Hoh consumers identified as low functioning	15 44%	2 6%	0 0%	2 6%	0 0%	15 44%
Hoh consumers from diverse backgrounds	14 41%	3 9%	6 18%	2 6%	0 0%	9 26%
Note: Top # is count of respondents selecting option; bottom is % of total respondents selecting option						

Once again, a surprisingly high number of respondents were unable to select a percentage range: those respondents that selected the “Don’t know” option. Of those respondents that did assign a percentage range, most selected the 0-10% category, which seems to be consistent with the three hoh sub-groups being relatively low incidence disabilities. As noted with regard to Table 4, there were again several respondents that assigned a high percentage range to the hoh sub-groups. Specifically, with regard to those respondents that selected percentage range of 50% or higher it is assumed that the selections are indicative of respondent misunderstanding of the question. For example, it seems unlikely that hoh consumers identified as low-functioning, or hoh consumers from diverse ethnic backgrounds would comprise more than 50% of a state VR agency’s caseload, yet four discrete respondents made those

selections. An additional analysis of the survey raw data was conducted that assessed what type of state VR agency made the higher than 25% range selection, and whether or not the respondents making those selections work for state VR agencies under an Order of Selection. That information is presented on Table 5a below.

Data on Respondents Selecting Hoh Consumer Range of 25% or Higher				
Table 5a				
Consumer Characteristics	State VR Agency Type		Order of Selection	
Consumers identified as Hoh	General/Combined	Blind	Yes	No
25-50% of all consumers served	6	0	4	2
50-75% of all consumers served	3	0	2	1
75-100% of all consumers served	4	0	2	2
Hoh consumers identified as low functioning	General/Combined	Blind	Yes	No
50-75% of all consumers served	2	0	2	0
Hoh consumers from diverse backgrounds	General/Combined	Blind	Yes	No
25-50% of all consumers served	6	0	3	3
50-75% of all consumers served	2	0	1	1

Perhaps the six respondents that reported 25-50% of their state VR agency's total consumer caseload is comprised of consumers identified as hoh are reporting accurately – particularly considering all six respondents work for General/Combined VR agencies and not VR agencies serving the blind. In addition, four of those six respondents reported their state VR agency is operating under an Order of Selection, thereby serving individuals with the most significant disabilities, which are often individuals with secondary disabilities which might include hearing loss. However, that data aside, it is still somewhat surprising that three respondents assigned the 50-75% range for consumers identified as hoh, and another four respondents assigned the 75-100% range to the same consumer sub-group.

Also worth noting are the two respondents that assigned the 50-75% range to hoh consumers identified as low functioning. However, upon closer analysis, one of those respondents is the same respondent discussed under Table 4a that consistently assigned high percentage ranges to about 50% of the consumer sub-groups on Tables 4-7. That same respondent also selected the 50-75% range for hoh consumers from diverse backgrounds. That particular respondent aside, there is no commonality across the other respondents that selected a range higher than 25% for any of the sub-groups. In fact, those respondents also consistently made selections in the lower percentage ranges, which based on the incidence of hearing loss, may be accurate. Therefore, it might be assumed that those respondents that occasionally made the higher percentage range assignments did in fact understand the intent of the question and that the higher ranges (particularly the 25-50% range) may have some validity.

Deaf-blind Consumer Sub-groups

Survey respondents were also asked to select a percentage range that would most accurately represent, ***of the total population of VR consumers served by their state VR agency over the previous two years***, the percentage of consumers that were

identified as: 1) deaf-blind; 2) deaf-blind consumers identified as low-functioning (or LFD), and 3) deaf-blind consumers from culturally or ethnically diverse backgrounds. Responses are presented on Table 6 below.

Percentage Breakdown of Population of Deaf-blind VR Consumers Served						
Table 6						
Type of Deaf-blind Consumer	0-10% of Consumers	10-25% of Consumers	25-50% of Consumers	50-75% of Consumers	75-100% of Consumers	Don't know
Consumers identified as deaf-blind	23	2	0	2	1	6
	68%	6%	0%	6%	3%	18%
Deaf-blind consumers identified as low functioning	14	1	2	2	0	15
	41%	3%	6%	6%	0%	44%
Deaf-blind consumers from diverse backgrounds	15	0	3	3	0	13
	44%	0%	9%	9%	0%	38%

Note: Top # is count of respondents selecting the option; bottom is % of total respondents selecting the option

Once again, a number of respondents reported they did not have this information and therefore did not make a percentage range selection. Those respondents aside, as expected, most of the respondents that made a selection assigned the 0-10% percentage range to each of the deaf-blind sub-groups. There were again a few respondents that selected a percentage range higher than 25%, which seems to be extremely unlikely considering the very low disability incidence rate of individuals identified as deaf-blind. As in Tables 4 and 5, an additional level of analysis was conducted on the raw data.

Data on Respondents Selecting Deaf-blind Consumer Range of 25% or Higher				
Table 6a				
Consumer Characteristics	State VR Agency Type		Order of Selection	
Consumers identified as Deaf-blind	General/Combined	Blind	Yes	No
50-75% of all consumers served	1	1	1	1
75-100% of all consumers served	1	0	0	1
Deaf-blind consumers identified as LFD	General/Combined	Blind	Yes	No
25-50% of all consumers served	2	0	0	2
50-75% of all consumers served	2	0	1	1
Deaf-blind consumers from diverse backgrounds	General/Combined	Blind	Yes	No
25-50% of all consumers served	3	0	1	2
50-75% of all consumers served	2	1	2	1

The individual respondent already discussed under Tables 4 and 5 accounts for one of the respondent entries in each of the three sub-group categories; that respondent selected a range higher than 50% for each of the sub-groups, supporting the assumption that respondent misunderstood the intent of the survey question. However, the other respondents that selected a range higher than 25% are puzzling. It seems unlikely that a state VR agency, General/Combined or Blind, would have a deaf-blind consumer population that comprises more than 10% of their total VR caseload. But once again, these respondents most consistently made low percentage selections that appear to be accurate with regard to the other sub-groups. It is not clear or easy to

understand why they made the high percentage selection in the sub-group categories of deaf-blind consumers identified as LFD, or deaf-blind consumers from diverse backgrounds.

Late-deafened Consumer Sub-groups

Survey respondents were also asked to select a percentage range that would most accurately represent, **of the total population of VR consumers served by their state VR agency over the past two years**, the percentage of consumers that were identified as: 1) late-deafened; 2) late-deafened consumers identified as low-functioning (or LFD), and 3) late-deafened consumers from culturally or ethnically diverse backgrounds. Responses are presented on Table 7.

Percentage Breakdown of Population of Late-deafened VR Consumers Served						
Table 7						
Late-deafened Consumer	0-10% of Consumers	10-25% of Consumers	25-50% of Consumers	50-75% of Consumers	75-100% of Consumers	Don't know
Consumers identified as late-deafened	13 38%	2 6%	2 6%	3 9%	0 0%	14 41%
Late-deafened consumers identified as low functioning	13 38%	2 6%	0 0%	1 3%	0 0%	18 53%
Late-deafened consumers from diverse backgrounds	11 32%	2 6%	1 3%	1 3%	0 0%	19 56%
Note: Top # is count of respondents selecting the option; bottom is % of total respondents selecting the option						

Again, the number of respondents that selected the survey option “Don’t know” is relatively high, in fact, slightly higher than in any of the three previously discussed consumer groups (deaf, hoh and deaf-blind). It would be interesting to know if those respondents, or state VR agencies, use late-deafened as a consumer identifier, or capture information from the consumer regarding the onset of their hearing loss. Those respondents that did assign a percentage range, once again, fell for the most part in the 0-10% percentage range. While no single respondent made a selection in the 75-100% percentage range, several did make a selection in the 25-50% or 50-75% range. Those selections were assessed in more detail on Table 7a.

Data on Respondents Selecting Late-Deafened Consumer Range of 25% or Higher				
Table 7a				
Consumer Characteristics	State VR Agency Type		Order of Selection	
Consumers identified as Late-deafened	General/Combined	Blind	Yes	No
25-50% of all consumers served	2	0	1	1
50-75% of all consumers served	2	1	1	2
Late-deafened consumers identified as LFD	General/Combined	Blind	Yes	No
50-75% of all consumers served	1	0	1	0
Late-deafened consumers from diverse backgrounds	General/Combined	Blind	Yes	No
25-50% of all consumers served	1	0	0	1
50-75% of all consumers served	1	0	1	0

Not surprisingly, the same respondent previously identified as having consistently made high percentage range selections on Tables 4, 5 and 6, again is counted among those few respondents that selected a range higher than 25% for the late-deafened sub-groups. Another piece of information discovered in the analysis of the survey raw data, is that the other respondents on Table 7a that made a selection higher than 25% for any of the three late-deafened sub-groups also made high percentage range selections on Table 4, which reported on the consumer characteristics of the three 'deaf' sub-groups. It may be possible that the late-deafened sub-groups reported on in Table 7 and 7a are a subset of the deaf consumer sub-groups reported on by those same respondents in Tables 4 and 4a.

4. Consumer Outcomes

The survey also sought to gather information related to employment outcomes, specifically employment outcomes of state VR agency consumers identified as deaf, hoh, deaf-blind or late-deafened. In response to a survey question in that regard, respondents assigned an approximate percentage range to three types of VR outcomes: supported employment, competitive employment, or consumer case closed after services were provided, but without an employment outcome. Survey responses are provided on Table 8.

Type of Deaf, Hoh, Deaf-blind and Late-deafened VR Consumer Outcome						
Table 8						
% of consumers achieving type of outcome FY2008	0-10%	10-25%	25-50%	50-75%	75-100%	Don't know
Supported employment	17	6	1	2	1	7
	50%	18%	3%	6%	3%	21%
Competitive employment	4	2	7	11	6	4
	12%	6%	21%	32%	18%	12%
Closed after services w/o employment outcome	10	9	6	1	1	7
	29%	26%	18%	3%	3%	21%
Note: Top # is count of respondents selecting the option; bottom is % of total respondents selecting the option						

While there are fewer respondents that selected the "Don't know" survey option than in the previous questions regarding consumer characteristics, there are still a number of SCD respondents that were unable to make an approximation regarding the outcomes of the deaf and hoh consumers their state VR agency serves. It is not clear whether this information is not easily available to the SCD, or whether it is not tracked at this level of detail (by disability-type) by the state VR agency. That selection option aside, there are several areas of interest on Table 8.

Looking first at supported employment outcomes, it is positive that most respondents that assigned a percentage range selected the 0-10% range for this type of outcome. However, three respondents did report that deaf and hoh consumers achieving a supported employment outcome fell above the 50% range. With regard to competitive employment outcomes, it is again positive that 17 of the respondents that assigned a percentage range reported that deaf and hoh consumers achieving competitive

employment fell above the 50% range; another seven respondents assigned the 25-50% range for competitive employment outcomes. Finally, with regard to those consumers closed without an employment outcome, most respondents selected the 0-10% range, although a few did make assignments above the 50% range.

5. Interpreting Needs of Deaf Consumer Population Sub-groups

The survey also included three questions specifically designed to assist NCIEC in understanding the extent of need for interpreter services by deaf/hoh consumer population sub-group; the extent to which the respondent SCD's state VR agency is able to provide interpreting services to meet those needs, and the extent to which those needs are met by a qualified interpreter. Responses collected through the survey in each of those categories follows below.

Extent of Need for Interpreter Services by Consumer Sub-group

In the first question, related to VR consumer need for interpreter services, respondents were provided a scale from 1 (no need) to 5 (great need), and asked to rate the extent of need (both met and unmet need) for interpreter services for each of the consumer population sub-groups listed on the table below. Respondents were advised to try to use as many of the scale points as possible to illustrate the relative level of need for each consumer sub-group. Table 9 provides a mean rating of extent of need (both met and unmet) for each consumer sub-group.

Note on Mean Rating: Throughout this section, the mean rating is derived based on the 1 to 5 rating weight and the actual number of respondents that provided a response to the question. Therefore, while the mean rating does assist in developing a ranking from highest to lowest, it is also necessary to consider the percentage of respondents that actually responded to the question when analyzing overall responses.

Need for Interpreting Services (Both Met and Unmet) By Consumer Population Sub-group Table 9			
Consumer Sub-group	# of Responses	% of Respondents	Mean Rating
Deaf consumers	31	91%	4.52
Deaf/hoh consumers in remote rural locations	29	85%	4.45
Low functioning deaf/hoh consumers	30	88%	4.43
Deaf/hoh consumers with little or no work history	29	85%	4.34
Deaf-blind consumers	28	82%	4.29
Deaf/hoh consumers w/limited English	29	85%	4.24
Transition age deaf/hoh consumers	29	85%	3.97
Racial/ethnic minority deaf/hoh consumers	27	79%	3.96
Deaf/hoh consumers using assistive technology	28	82%	3.46
Deaf/hoh consumers with cochlear implants	27	79%	3.04
Hoh consumers	29	85%	2.97
Deaf/hoh consumers that are returning veterans	18	53%	2.22
Note: Mean rating scale of 1 = no need for interpreting service and 5 = great need			

As Table 9 indicates, mean ratings were generally high on this question (above the midpoint on the scale), with the exception of the returning veteran consumer sub-group. However, it should be noted that returning veterans that may have lost hearing may not be in need of interpreting services, but might more likely need training in ASL. In addition, it might also be expected that returning veterans would receive services through Veteran's Services rather than through a state VR agency.

It is not surprising to note the highest mean rating was assigned to the deaf consumer sub-group, and it might be assumed that this sub-group would serve as an umbrella identifier for most of the other listed sub-groups. What are of most interest are the next three highest mean ratings: deaf/hoh consumers in rural locations, low-functioning deaf/hoh consumers, and deaf/hoh consumers with little or no work history. It is not surprising that deaf/hoh consumers in rural locations would be ranked high with regard to need for interpreter services, as typically, those services are hard to come by in a rural or remote location. However, it is somewhat surprising that the interpreting needs of the LFD consumer are ranked so high, as this is a very low incidence disability group. However, it is known in the field that finding qualified interpreters to effectively meet the needs of the LFD consumer can be problematic. The LFD consumer typically has a number of unique needs and requires an interpreter with specialized knowledge and experience working with LFD consumers. It is also interesting to note the high ranking of the LFD consumer's need for interpreting when considering the data reported earlier on Tables 4-7 regarding percentages of VR consumers that could be identified as low-functioning. On those tables, a number of respondents reported that low-functioning deaf, hoh, deaf-blind and/or late deafened VR consumers comprise 25% or more of their state VR agency's caseload. However, as already discussed in that section, some of the percentage range assignments (above the 50% range), may be a result of the respondent misunderstanding the intent of the survey question.

With regard to deaf/hoh consumers with little or no work history, a myriad of services may be required across multiple educational, vocational or other settings in preparation for employment. The deaf/hoh consumer moving through those settings would likely require the services of an interpreter throughout the process of preparing for employment.

Extent Interpreter Service Provided

In the next related question, respondents were again provided a scale from 1 (no interpreter service provided) to 5 (interpreter service provided), and asked to rate the extent to which their state VR agency has been able to provide an interpreter in response to the interpreting need of each of consumer sub-groups. Respondents were again advised to use as many of the scale points as possible to illustrate the relative extent to which an interpreter service was provided.

Extent Interpreter Service Provided by Consumer Population Sub-group
Table 10

Consumer Sub-group	# of Responses	% of Respondents	Mean Rating
Deaf consumers	31	91%	4.19
Transition age deaf/hoh consumers	30	88%	4.03
Deaf/hoh consumers with little or no work history	29	85%	3.79
Racial/ethnic minority deaf/hoh consumers	28	82%	3.75
Deaf-blind consumers	25	74%	3.64
Deaf/hoh consumers with limited English	29	85%	3.59
Deaf/hoh consumers that use assistive technology	25	74%	3.56
Low-functioning deaf/hoh consumers	29	85%	3.52
Hard of hearing (hoh) consumers	28	82%	3.46
Deaf/hoh consumers with cochlear implants	26	76%	3.23
Deaf/hoh consumers in remote rural locations	28	82%	3.00
Deaf/hoh consumers that are returning veterans	18	53%	2.56
Note: Mean rating scale of 1 = no interpreter service provided and 5 = interpreter service provided			

As Table 10 indicates, mean ratings were again generally high on this question (above the midpoint on the scale). However, it is very interesting to note the ranking order of the mean ratings. On the previous table (Table 9), respondents rated the four highest level of need (met and unmet) consumer population sub-groups as: deaf consumers, deaf/hoh consumers in rural locations, low-functioning deaf/hoh consumers, and deaf/hoh consumers with little or no work history. By comparison, in rating the level to which their state VR agency has met the need of the particular consumer sub-groups, the ranking order is a bit different. The four highest mean ratings on Table 10 are: deaf consumers, transition age deaf/hoh consumers, deaf/hoh consumers with little or no work history, and racial/ethnic minority deaf/hoh consumers. With regard to transition age deaf/hoh consumers, it may be the state VR agency is able to partner with the K-12 or postsecondary educational provider to meet the interpreting needs of this age group. It is more surprising that the interpreting needs of the racial/ethnic minority deaf/hoh consumer are ranked high with regard to having been met by the state VR agency. It would have been expected that meeting the needs of the diverse consumer might be difficult in an environment of scarce interpreters, and even scarcer, interpreters from diverse ethnic backgrounds, or interpreters with the qualifications to provide interpreting to consumers from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Further, it appears on Table 10 that state VR agencies have difficulty meeting the needs of deaf/hoh consumers in rural locations and the low-functioning deaf/hoh consumers, both sub-groups of which were rated on Table 9 as having a high level of need (met and unmet) for interpreter services.

Extent Service Provided by Qualified Versus Unqualified Interpreter

In the final related question, respondents were again provided a scale from 1 (unqualified interpreter) to 5 (qualified interpreter), and asked to rate the extent to which their state VR agency has been able to meet the interpreting needs of the consumer

population sub-groups with a qualified interpreter versus an unqualified interpreter. For purposes of this question, 'qualified' was defined as an interpreter who is credentialed at the state or national level.

Need for Interpreting Services Met by Qualified Versus Unqualified Interpreter By Consumer Population Sub-group Table 11			
Consumer Sub-group	# of Responses	% of Respondents	Mean Rating
Deaf consumers	30	88%	4.43
Hard of hearing (hoh) consumers	29	85%	4.34
Deaf/hoh consumers with little/no work history	26	76%	4.19
Transition age deaf/hoh consumers	30	88%	4.17
Racial/ethnic minority deaf/hoh consumers	27	79%	4.00
Deaf/hoh consumers using assistive technology	25	74%	3.96
Deaf-blind consumers	27	79%	3.89
Deaf/hoh consumers with limited English	25	74%	3.84
Low-functioning deaf/hoh consumers	27	79%	3.81
Deaf/hoh consumers with cochlear implants	24	71%	3.75
Deaf/hoh consumers in remote rural locations	27	79%	3.41
Deaf/hoh consumers that are returning veterans	17	50%	2.94
Note: Mean rating of 1 = need not met with qualified interpreter and 5 = need met with qualified interpreter			

On Table 11, it is perhaps most interesting to note the consumer sub-groups that received relatively lower mean ratings with regard to their needs being met with the services of a qualified interpreter, specifically, the low-functioning deaf/hoh consumers and deaf/hoh consumers in remote rural locations. Both of these sub-groups' need for interpreter services (unmet and met) were rated among the highest on Table 9. Another point of comparison between Tables 9 and 11 has to do with the hoh consumer sub-group. On Table 9, the need (unmet and met) of that particular consumer sub-group was rated the second lowest, yet on Table 11 respondents report meeting the needs of that particular consumer sub-group with a qualified interpreter as the second highest.

6. Consumer Needs for Interpreter Services in Specific VR Settings

State VR agencies provide a wide variety of services to help people with disabilities return to work. These services are designed to provide the client with the training and other services that are needed to return to work, to enter a new line of work, or to enter the workforce for the first time. Because of the wide array of services offered through the state VR agency, consumers typically move through a number of different settings as they receive services and navigate their way through the VR service delivery system in preparation for employment. To understand more about interpreting needs across those various settings, the survey included three questions designed to assess the need for interpreter services in each sub-setting; the extent to which state VR agencies are able to provide interpreting services in each sub-setting, and the degree to which interpreter services are provided by a qualified versus unqualified interpreter.

Extent of Need for Interpreting Service by VR Sub-setting

Respondents were first asked to rate the extent of need (includes both unmet and met need) for interpreter services in specific VR settings using a scale from 1 (no need) to 5 (great need). Again, respondents were advised to use as many of the scale points as possible to illustrate the relative level of need for interpreting services in each setting.

Extent of Need (Met and Unmet) for Interpreter Services In Specific VR Sub-settings			
Table 12			
VR Sub-settings	# of Responses	% of Respondents	Mean Rating
Postsecondary/vocational settings	31	91%	4.52
Medical settings	30	88%	4.47
Employment placement settings	31	91%	4.42
Legal settings	24	71%	4.42
Mental health settings	28	82%	4.32
Employment preparation settings	32	94%	4.28
Career assessment	31	91%	4.19
Intake and eligibility determination	32	94%	3.84
Independent living settings	31	91%	3.84
K-12 transition-related settings	30	88%	3.73
Note: Mean rating scale of 1 = no need for interpreting services and 5 = great need for interpreting services			

As demonstrated on Table 12, the need (both unmet and met) for interpreter services in particular VR sub-settings is high across the board (well above the midpoint), with the four highest rated sub-settings being: postsecondary/vocational, medical, employment placement and legal sub-settings. With regard to the legal sub-setting, it should be noted that while the mean rating is high, there was a lower percentage of respondents that provided a response related to that sub-setting, which should be considered in the overall review of the rankings.

Extent Interpreter Service Provided in Specific VR Sub-settings

In a second related question, respondents were provided the scale of 1 (no interpreting service provided) to 5 (interpreting service provided) and asked to indicate the extent to which their state VR agency has been able to provide interpreting services in specific VR sub-settings.

**Extent of Need for Interpreter Services Met By State VR Agency
In Specific VR Sub-settings**

Table 13

VR Sub-settings	# of Responses	% of Respondents	Mean Rating
Career assessment	32	94%	4.25
Employment placement settings	31	91%	4.23
Intake and eligibility determination	32	94%	4.22
Employment preparation settings	32	94%	4.19
Postsecondary/vocational settings	28	82%	3.96
Medical settings	26	76%	3.65
Mental health settings	22	65%	2.95
K-12 transition-related settings	26	76%	2.77
Independent living settings	25	74%	2.68
Legal settings	20	59%	2.45
Note: Mean rating scale of 1 = interpreter service provided and 5 = no interpreter service provided			

On Table 13 it is interesting to note that the three highest ranked VR sub-settings are career assessment, employment placement, and intake and eligibility determination, settings typically internal to the state VR agency. The sub-settings that received relatively lower mean rating scores were in all cases sub-settings external to the state VR agency in which services are typically outsourced to an external provider. In those settings, the interpreter service is sometimes provided by the external provider, although the state VR agency often pays for those interpreting services. It is not clear in reviewing the data on Table 13, whether the relatively lower rankings indicate that interpreter services are less available and more difficult to provide in those external settings, or that the state VR agency does not actually provide the interpreter in those settings, the external provider does.

Extent Service Provided by Qualified Versus Unqualified Interpreter

In a third related question, respondents were provided a scale of 1 (unqualified interpreter) to 5 (qualified interpreter) and asked to indicate the extent to which their state VR agency has been able to provide a qualified interpreter versus an unqualified interpreter to meet its consumer needs in specific VR sub-settings. Once again, for purposes of this question, 'qualified' was defined as an interpreter who is credentialed at the state or national level.

**Extent Interpreter Services Provided by Qualified Versus Unqualified Interpreter
In Specific VR Sub-settings**

Table 14

VR Sub-settings	# of Responses	% of Respondents	Mean Rating
Consumer intake and eligibility determination	30	88%	4.53
Career assessment	30	88%	4.43
Employment placement settings	30	88%	4.40
Employment preparation settings	30	88%	4.40
Postsecondary/vocational settings	27	79%	4.22
K-12 transition-related settings	23	68%	3.91
Independent living settings	23	68%	3.65
Medical settings	24	71%	3.54
Mental health settings	22	65%	3.36
Legal settings	16	47%	2.63

Note: Mean rating 1 = service provided by unqualified interpreter and 5 = service provided by qualified interpreter

On Table 14, it is perhaps most interesting to note those VR sub-settings that received a relatively lower mean ranking with regard to the provision of services by a qualified interpreter. Specifically, K-12 transition-related sub-settings, independent living, medical, mental health and legal sub-settings received lower mean rating scores than other sub-settings. These are settings in which services are typically outsourced or external to the VR agency. The higher ranked sub-settings, in comparison, are typically services that are provided within the VR agency. Again, in assessing the mean rating scores, attention should also be placed on the actual percentage of respondents that responded to the question; for several of the sub-settings, a number of respondents did not provide a response (medical, K-12 transition-related, independent living, mental health and legal sub-settings). However, looking at those responses that were provided, it is not surprising that medical, mental health and legal sub-settings all received relatively lower rankings. It is already known by the field that there is a national interpreter shortage. The shortage crisis is compounded by the fact that many of the interpreters that are available to work in these sub-settings do not have the specialized education, knowledge or experience to successfully interpret in them.

B. Information about the Interpreters State VR Agencies Employ

This second primary category of findings provides a wide range of information and data about the interpreters state VR agencies employ. Within this section, data and findings relate to the utilization of full-time staff interpreters and part-time contract interpreters; interpreter qualification requirements; interpreter pay and benefits, and opportunities for interpreter training and professional development. Findings related to state VR agency use of Video Relay Services (VRS) and Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) are also presented.

1. Interpreter Utilization

The survey sought to collect information to assess state VR agency practices regarding the utilization of full-time staff interpreters versus reliance on part-time, or contract, interpreters, as well as the extent to which state VR agencies are able to fill positions and/or find interpreters.

Full-time versus Part-time Interpreter Utilization

Survey respondents were first asked to report on their state VR agency's current utilization of full-time staff interpreters and/or part-time contract interpreters. Responses to that question are presented on Table 15 below.

Full-time Versus Part-time Interpreter Utilization		
Table 15		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Full-time staff interpreters	1	3%
Part-time contract interpreters	23	72%
Both staff and contract interpreters	10	25%
Total	34	100%

It is clear that the majority of state VR agencies represented by the SCDs participating in the survey rely more on part-time contract interpreters than full-time interpreting staff. Looking at the reported data for those state VR agencies that employ just part-time contract interpreters (72% of respondents) and those respondents that reported they employ both full-time staff interpreters and part-time contract interpreters (25% of respondents), it can be stated that of the survey respondents, 97% rely in whole or in part on part-time contract interpreters. By comparison, only one state VR agency reported they do not utilize part-time contract interpreters, although ten additional state VR agencies reported they utilize both full-time staff interpreters and part-time contract interpreters.

Full-time Staff Interpreter Utilization

As identified on Table 15 above, 11 of the total 34 survey respondents reported their state VR agency utilizes full-time staff interpreters. The survey asked those 11 respondents how many full-time staff interpreters their state VR agency currently employed. Responses are presented on Table 16.

Current Numbers of Full-time Interpreters		
Table 16		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
1-2 staff interpreters	5	46%
3-5 staff interpreters	2	18%
6-9 staff interpreters	1	9%
10 or more staff interpreters	1	9%
Do not know	2	18%
Total	11	100%

As noted on Table 16, five respondents reported their state VR agency employs 1 or 2 full-time staff interpreters. Those same five agencies reported in the raw survey data that their state VR agency also utilizes part-time contract interpreters. An additional two respondents reported their state VR agency employs between 3-5 full-time staff interpreters; those two respondents also utilize part-time contract interpreters. It is interesting to note that one respondent reported their state VR agency employs between 6-9 staff interpreters, and another respondent reported their state VR agency employs ten or more full-time staff interpreters. The respondent that reported they employ between 6-9 full-time staff interpreters is the same sole respondent that reported on Table 15 they only employ full-time staff interpreters. The respondent that reported they employ 10 or more full-time staff interpreters is a General state VR agency. That respondent reported on Table 15 that they employ both full-time staff interpreters and part-time contract interpreters.

Respondents were also asked to report of their current full-time interpreters, how many are ASL/English interpreters, Deaf interpreters and/or ASL/Other language interpreters. Respondents were not limited to one selection option. Responses are presented below on Table 17.

Breakdown of Full-time Interpreters		
Table 17		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
ASL/English interpreters	10	91%
Deaf interpreters	1*	9%
ASL/Other language interpreter	1*	9%
Note: * respondents reported only occasional utilization		

It is not surprising that the 11 respondents that utilize full-time staff interpreters further reported those interpreters are ASL/English interpreters.

Respondents were asked who their full-time staff interpreters provide interpreting services for: VR agency staff, VR consumers, or both agency staff and VR consumers. Responses are presented on Table 18.

Who Full-time Staff Interpreters Provide Service To		
Table 18		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
VR agency staff	1	9%
VR consumers	1	9%
Both	8	73%
No response	1	9%
Total	11	100%

As indicated on Table 18, the majority of respondents, or 73%, reported their full-time staff interpreters provide interpreting services to both state VR agency staff and VR consumers.

Utilization of Part-time Contract Interpreters

As a reminder, on Table 15, 33 survey respondents reported that their state VR agency utilizes part-time contract interpreters. The survey asked those 33 respondents how many part-time contract interpreters their state VR agency currently employed. Responses are presented on Table 19.

Numbers of Part-time Contract Interpreters Employed by Agency		
Table 19		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
1-2 part-time contract interpreters	7	21%
3-5 part-time contract interpreters	3	9%
6-9 part-time contract interpreters	2	6%
10 or more part-time contract interpreters	15	45%
Do not know	6	19%
Total	33	100%

It is interesting to note that 45% of those respondents that employ part-time contract interpreters reported they employ ten or more of such individuals. This data may relate to the overall interpreter shortage and point to situations wherein state VR agencies do not have a stable or set group of interpreters they routinely utilize, but instead tap into a larger pool of interpreters on an ‘as needed’ basis.

Respondents were also asked to report of their current part-time contract interpreters, how many are ASL/English interpreters, Deaf interpreters and/or ASL/Other language interpreters. That information is presented on Table 20.

Breakdown of Part-time Contract Interpreters		
Table 20		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
ASL/English interpreters	8	24%
Deaf interpreters	2	6%
ASL/Other language interpreter	2	6%
No response	21	64%
Total	33	100%

It is not clear through a closer analysis of the raw data why such a high number of respondents were unable to provide information related to the types of part-time contract interpreters their state VR agency employs. Specifically, 64% of the respondents were unable to provide this data about their part-time contract interpreters.

The 33 respondents employing part-time contract interpreters were also asked who those interpreters provide services to: VR agency staff, VR consumers, or both state VR agency staff and VR consumers. Responses are presented on Table 21.

Who Part-time, Contracted Interpreters Provide Service To		
Table 21		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
VR agency staff	0	0%
VR consumers	3	9%
Both	29	88%
Don't know	1	3%
Total	33	100%

It is not surprising that part-time contract interpreters are hired to work with both state VR agency staff and VR consumers, and not exclusively state VR agency staff.

2. Interpreter Availability

The survey included several questions designed to assess interpreter availability, both with regard to a state VR agency’s capacity to find interpreters and fill positions, as well as information related to any changes in interpreter availability in more recent years.

Filling Full-time Staff Interpreter Positions

The survey asked respondents to report whether or not their state VR agency is able to fill its full-time staff interpreter positions. Responses are presented below on Table 22.

Filling Full-time Staff Interpreter Positions		
Table 22		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Yes	8	24%
No	15	44%
Do not know	11	32%
Total	34	100%

Once again it is worth recalling that on Table 15, only 11 survey respondents reported their state VR agency utilizes full-time interpreters. However, on Table 22, eight respondents reported they are able to fill their full-time staff interpreter positions and another 15 respondents reported they are unable to fill their full-time staff interpreter positions. This data seems to suggest that a higher number of state VR agencies might actually employ full-time staff interpreters if those interpreters were available. In addition, of the 11 respondents on Table 15 that reported they did currently have full-time staff interpreter positions, only 8 reported on Table 22 they are able to fill those positions.

Finding Sufficient Part-time, Contract Interpreters

The survey also sought to assess the extent to which state VR agencies are able to find sufficient part-time contract interpreters. Responses are presented below on Table 23.

Finding Part-time Contract Interpreters		
Table 23		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Yes	20	61%
No	13	39%
Total	33	100%

As a reminder, on Table 15, 72% of the survey respondents reported they only employ part-time contract interpreters, and an additional 25% of the respondents reported they utilize both full-time staff interpreters and part-time contract interpreters. It is concerning that on Table 23, 39% of those respondents reported they are unable to find sufficient part-time contract interpreters. When this information is coupled with the information reported on Table 22 regarding state VR agencies’ ability to fill full-time staff contract interpreter positions, it becomes evident that state VR agencies are significantly impacted by the national interpreter shortage.

Changes in Interpreter Availability in the Past Five Years

To further assess and validate issues related to interpreter shortage, the survey included a very specific question that asked SCD respondents to report on their perceptions regarding whether interpreters have become more or less available to their

VR agency in the last five years. Responses from all 34 survey respondents are presented on Table 24.

Interpreter Availability Over Last Five Years		
Table 24		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
More available	2	6%
Less available	28	82%
No change in availability	4	12%
Total	34	100%

Factoring in the responses related to state VR agency ability to fill full-time staff interpreter positions and find sufficient part-time contract interpreters, it is no surprise that the majority of respondents, or 82%, reported that they believe interpreters have become less available to their state VR agency over the past five years.

Perceived Factors Affecting Interpreter Availability

In order to understand issues that contribute to the interpreter shortage as it impacts state VR agencies specifically, the survey provided respondents with a list of potential factors that may influence interpreter availability. Respondents were permitted to select multiple factors. Responses are presented on Table 25.

Factors Affecting Interpreter Availability		
Table 25		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Increase in interpreters working for VRS centers	24	70%
Shortage of interpreters in the state	21	62%
Times interpreter needed unpredictable making it difficult to schedule	18	53%
Not able to offer competitive compensation	7	21%
Do not know	3	9%
Other, please specify	6	18%

It is interesting to note the high percentage of respondents, or 70% that reported the increase in interpreters working for VRS centers has affected interpreter availability in their state VR agency. The second highest response related to an overall ‘shortage of interpreters in the state’, with 62% of respondents reporting this as a contributing factor, and the third ranked factor had to do with the ‘unpredictability related to VR consumer needs for interpreter services’, with 53% of respondents selecting this option. All three highly ranked factors are outside the control of the state VR agency.

With regard to a few of the comments in the “Other” category, one respondent reported that while their state VR agency requires national certification, they are unable to find interpreters in their state that have achieved that level of qualification, and two respondents reported that it is difficult to find interpreters in their state that have the

qualifications and/or experience to work effectively with their deaf-blind and LFD consumers.

3. State VR Agency Qualification Requirements for Interpreters

The survey included a number of questions designed to assess state VR agency requirements for the interpreters they hire or contract with, specifically: state-level licensure requirements; state VR agency requirements for local credentials and national certification, and minimum education requirements.

Interpreter Licensure

The first of the related questions asked respondents to report whether or not their state requires interpreter licensure. Responses are provided below.

State Requirements for Interpreter Licensure Table 26		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Yes	15	44%
No	17	51%
Do not know	2	5%
Total	34	100%

It is concerning that more than 50% of the survey respondents reported that their state does not require interpreter licensure.

Local Credentials and/or National Certification

Another related question in the survey asked SCD respondents whether their state VR agency requires local credentials, national certification, or both local credentials and national certification of the interpreters they hire or contract with. Responses are presented on Table 27.

State VR Agency Requirements for Local Credentials or National Certification Table 27		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Local credentials	2	6%
National certification	7	22%
Both local credentials and national certification	19	56%
Neither	4	12%
Do not know	2	4%
Total	34	100%

It is startling that 12% of the respondents reported that their state VR agency does not require either local credentials or national certification. Another 6% of respondents reported their state VR agency only requires local credentials. It is also interesting to

note that two SCD respondents did not know what their state VR agency requirements are.

Qualification Requirements for Full-time Versus Part-time Interpreters

In order to best assess differences and similarities related to the hiring and utilization of full-time staff interpreters versus part-time contract interpreters, the survey broke out the question related to local credentials and national certification by type of interpreter utilized, or full-time staff interpreters versus part-time contract interpreters.

Those 11 respondents who reported their state VR agency employs full-time staff interpreters on Table 15 were asked to report on the minimum credentials their state VR agency requires of those interpreters. Responses are presented on Table 28.

Minimum Credential Requirements for Full-time Staff Interpreters		
Table 28		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Local credentials	3	27%
National certification	2	19%
Both	5	45%
Do not know	1	9%
Total	11	100%

As reported on Table 28, 64% of the survey respondents that employ full-time staff interpreter positions require either national certification, or both national certification and local credentials. Three of the respondent state VR agencies require only local credentials.

Likewise, the 33 respondents reporting their state VR agency employs part-time contract interpreters were also asked to report on the minimum credentials their state VR agency requires. Responses are presented on Table 29.

Minimum Credential Requirements for Part-time Contract Interpreters		
Table 29		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
None	2	6%
Local credentials	8	24%
National certification	10	30%
Both	11	33%
Do not know	2	6%
Total	33	100%

The minimum credential qualification requirements state VR agencies have for their part-time contract interpreters appear to be are very similar to the requirements they

have for their full-time staff interpreters (see Table 28). Of those respondents that reported their state VR agency employs part-time contract interpreters, 63% reported their state VR agency requires national certification, or both national certification and local credentials. However, it is concerning to note that eight respondents reported their state VR agency only requires local credentials, and another two respondents reported their state VR agency has no requirement for either local credentials or national certification.

Education Requirements

In 2012, RID will require that interpreters have at least a BA/BS degree to sit for national certification. The survey sought to assess the extent to which state VR agencies have a similar educational requirement of the interpreters they employ. The question asked all respondents, whether they employ full-time staff interpreters, utilize part-time contract interpreters, or both, to indicate the minimum education requirements their state VR agency has for interpreters. Responses are presented on Table 30.

State VR Agency Minimum Requirements for Educational Achievement		
Table 30		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
None	19	56%
Non-degree certificate	3	9%
AA/AS degree	7	22%
BA/BS degree	1	2%
MA degree	1	2%
Do not know	3	9%
Total	34	100%

It is concerning to note that 56% of the SCD survey respondents reported that their state VR agency has no minimum educational requirement for the interpreters they hire and/or contract with. In addition, of the 34 respondents, only 4% reported requiring a BA/BS degree or higher, another concerning set of data when considering the RID 2012 requirement. If looked at in aggregate, those agencies that have less than a BA/BS degree minimum education requirement represent 87% of the total 34 survey respondents.

4. Interpreter Pay and Benefits

In today's environment, consumer demand for interpreter services exceeds the number of interpreters available, in particular, interpreters that have achieved national certification. In such an environment, pay, benefits and other forms of compensation can have a significant impact on the career choices interpreters make. To understand more about interpreter pay, benefits and other forms of compensation available through state VR agencies, the survey asked SCD respondents a number of related questions.

Starting Annual Pay for Full-time Staff Interpreters

The 11 respondents reporting their state VR agency has full-time staff interpreter positions were asked to select a starting pay range from among a number of pay ranges provided in the survey. Responses to that question are provided on Table 31.

State VR Agency Starting Pay for Full-time Staff Interpreters		
Table 31		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
\$15-20K annually	0	0%
\$21-30K annually	5	45%
\$31-40K annually	3	27%
\$41-50K annually	2	18%
\$51-60K annually	0	0%
\$61-70K annually	0	0%
\$71-80K annually	0	0%
\$81-90K annually	0	0%
More than \$90K annually	0	0%
Do not know	1	9%
Total	11	100%

It is concerning to note the low annual pay state VR agencies offer their full-time staff interpreters. The majority of responses fell between the \$21-30K annually, with nearly half of the respondents selecting that pay range option. For the purposes of comparing the annual starting pay offered by state VR agencies to the hourly starting wages paid to part-time contract interpreters, (Table 32), a mathematic formula was employed. Looking specifically at the \$21-30K annual pay range, which the highest number of respondents selected, each end point of the annual pay range was divided by 2,080 hours (derived from multiplying a 40 hour work week by 52 weeks in a year, acknowledging that state employees have two weeks of paid vacation within those 52 weeks). Based on this formula, it can be broadly stated that the \$21-30K annual pay range would translate to approximately \$10-14.50 per hour, plus benefits. This hourly wage appears to be exceedingly low, particularly when considering that as of July 24, 2009, the federal minimum wage in the United States was \$7.25 per hour. Employing the same mathematic formula, the second highest starting annual pay range reported by respondents, the \$31-40K range, translates to an hourly pay range of approximately \$15-19 per hour plus benefits. Two other respondents reported they offer their full-time staff interpreters a starting annual pay in the \$41-50K range, or again employing the same formula, \$20-24 per hour plus benefits.

It is interesting to consider the starting pay information reported on Table 31 in conjunction with information reported earlier in the report regarding state VR agency requirements for interpreter credentials and/or certification, in addition to the information reported by respondents regarding minimum educational requirements. Considering the overall low starting pay state VR agencies offer their full-time staff interpreters, it is not surprising requirements for credentials/certification and educational achievement are also low.

Starting Hourly Pay for Part-time Contract Interpreters

The 33 survey respondents that reported they employ part-time contract interpreters were also asked to report on starting pay for those interpreters. In this survey question, respondents were provided a set of hourly pay ranges to select from. Responses are presented on Table 32.

Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
\$10-20 per hour	0	0%
\$21-30 per hour	2	6%
\$31-40 per hour	10	31%
\$41-50 per hour	7	21%
\$51-60 per hour	5	15%
\$61-70 per hour	2	6%
\$71-80 per hour	0	0%
\$81-90 per hour	0	0%
Do not know	1	3%
Other, please specify	6	18%
Total	33	100%

It is startling to compare the starting hourly pay state VR agencies offer their part-time contract interpreters to the starting annual pay, (calculated as an hourly range), offered to full-time staff interpreters. As discussed previously under Table 31, it was reported that five of the state VR agencies pay their full-time staff interpreters between \$21-30K annually, or \$10-14.50 per hour; three pay between \$31-40K annually, or an hourly pay range of \$15-19 per hour, and two reported they offer full-time staff interpreters \$41-50K annually, or \$20-24 per hour. These wage ranges are significantly lower than the starting hourly pay ranges respondents reported for part-time contract interpreters on Table 32 above. Just looking at the two highest response sets on Table 31, (the calculated \$10-14.50 per hour range), and on Table 32, (the reported \$31-40 per hour range), it appears that part-time contract interpreters can earn up to three times more an hour than full-time staff interpreters.

Taking the data one step further, it is interesting to consider what a part-time interpreter earning between \$31-40 per hour might make annually if they were to work 30 hours per week. To that end, each end point of the \$31-40 hourly pay range was multiplied by 1,560 hours (derived from multiplying a 30 hour work week by 52 weeks in a year), resulting in approximately \$48-65K annually (without benefits). This estimated annual earning is significant when considering that the highest number of respondents in Table 31 selected a starting annual pay range of \$21-30K (with benefits). The provision of benefits aside, the pay available to part-time contract interpreters appears to far exceed that available to full-time staff interpreters. In fact, based on the calculation above, it appears that a part-time contract interpreter can earn twice as much annually as a full-time staff interpreter – even if they only work 30 hours per week. And as a reminder, ten out of the 11 respondents that reported their state VR agency employs full-time staff

interpreters also reported their state VR agency employs part-time contract interpreters. Therefore, even within a particular state VR agency, there might likely be a significant difference between what is paid a full-time staff interpreter versus a part-time contract interpreter.

This information begs the question why an interpreter would elect to work full-time for a state VR agency at such a low salary wage, particularly when they can earn a higher hourly wage working for the state VR agency as a part-time contract interpreter. In addition, there is a national shortage of interpreters. It is already accepted by the field that the demand for interpreting services exceeds the pool of interpreters available. In that environment, a part-time contract interpreter has the potential to take on as much part-time interpreting work as they desire in the interpreting settings they prefer to work in, which may or may not include VR.

Part-time Contract Interpreter Benefits

It was assumed that state VR agencies provide their full-time staff interpreters with benefits commensurate to those provided to its other state employees. However, the survey sought to collect information related to the availability and provision of benefits to part-time contract interpreters. Respondents were instructed to select as many benefits as applied to their state VR agency.

Provision of Benefits to Contract Interpreters		
Table 33		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Health	0	0%
Dental	0	0%
Retirement	0	0%
Professional development/CEUs	1	3%
Education	1	3%
None	28	82%
Do not know	1	3%
No response	3	9%
Total	33	100%

It is not surprising that respondents reported their state VR agency does not provide health, dental or retirement benefits to their part-time contract interpreters. However, it is somewhat surprising to note that only two respondents reported their state VR agency offers its part-time contract interpreters professional development/CEUs or educational opportunities.

5. Opportunities for Continuing Education and Mentoring

Shrinking budgets across state government have impacted state employee training and development opportunities, most particularly, training and education that is offered out of state. Recognizing this challenge, the survey sought to collect information related to

other forms of interpreter professional development, specifically mentoring, internships and continuing education.

Opportunities for Mentoring

Respondents were asked if their state VR agency offers its full-time staff interpreters mentoring opportunities. Responses are presented on Table 34.

Full-time Staff Interpreter Mentoring Opportunities		
Table 34		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Yes	3	27%
No	6	55%
Sometimes	1	9%
Do not know	1	9%
Total	11	100%

More than half of the survey respondents, or 55%, reported their state VR agency does not offer its full-time staff interpreters mentoring opportunities.

As a follow-up to that question, the survey asked those state VR agencies that employ full-time staff interpreters if they would like to be able to offer mentoring opportunities. Table 35 provides responses to that question.

Interest in Offering Mentoring to Full-time Staff Interpreters		
Table 35		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Yes	8	73%
No	1	9%
Do not know	2	18%
Total	11	100%

While on Table 34, 55% of respondents reported their state VR agency did not offer mentoring to their full-time staff interpreters, on Table 35, 73% reported they would like to be able to offer such opportunities.

The survey also asked respondents that work for state VR agencies that employ full-time staff interpreters whether their agency offers any type of internship in preparation for employment.

Internships as Preparation for Employment		
Table 36		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Yes	1	%
No	6	%
Sometimes	2	%
Do not know	2	%
Total	11	100%

Only one respondent reported their state VR agency offers an internship in preparation for employment. Six respondents reported their state VR agency does not offer internships, and another two respondents reported their state VR agency only 'sometimes' offers such opportunities.

The 33 survey respondents that reported earlier in the survey that their state VR agency employs part-time contract interpreters were also asked to report whether their state VR agency provides mentoring in preparation for employment by their state agency. Responses are provided on Table 37.

Mentoring Opportunities for Part-time Contract Interpreters		
Table 37		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Yes	6	18%
No	23	70%
Do not know	4	12%
Total	33	100%

Of those respondents that reported their state VR agency employs part-time contract interpreters, 70% reported their state agency does not offer mentoring in preparation for employment.

Those same respondents were asked to report whether or not their state VR agency would like to be able to offer mentoring to its part-time contract interpreters in preparation for employment. Responses are presented on Table 38.

Interest in Offering Mentoring Opportunities for Contract Interpreters		
Table 38		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Yes	14	42%
No	7	21%
Do not know	12	36%
Total	33	100%

Of respondents, only 42% reported they believe their state VR agency would like to be able to offer mentoring to its part-time contract interpreters. It is interesting that 36% of

the respondents selected the “Do not know” option, suggesting perhaps that this group of survey respondents are unfamiliar with the provision of mentoring as preparation for employment, or perhaps they do not understand how mentoring would be provided in the absence of full-time staff interpreters to serve as mentors.

State VR Agency Support of Full-time Staff Interpreter Pursuit of CEUs

Respondents were asked to report whether or not their state VR agency supports full-time staff interpreter pursuit of CEUs. Responses are presented on Table 39.

State VR Agency Support for Interpreter Pursuit of CEUs		
Table 39		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Yes	6	55%
No	0	0%
Sometimes	4	36%
Do not know	1	9%
Total	11	100%

It is concerning that only 55% of the respondents reported their state agency does support interpreter pursuit of CEUs. Another 36% of the respondents reported their state VR agency only ‘sometimes’ supports this form of professional development. No single respondent reported that their state VR agency would not support full-time interpreting staff pursuit of CEUs.

6. Interpreter Training Needs

A primary responsibility of the NCIEC is to develop and assess effective practices in interpreter training, with a particular focus on interpreting for VR consumers and in VR settings. In order to better understand interpreter training needs as perceived by state VR agencies that employ interpreters to work with their deaf and hoh consumers, the survey asked respondents to report information related to the need for interpreter training, both unmet and met. Respondents were provided a scale from 1 (no need) to 5 (great need), and asked to rate the extent of need for interpreter training in the identified topic areas and specialized settings listed on the following table. Respondents were advised to try to use as many of the scale points as possible to illustrate the relative level of need for each area of training. Table 40 provides a mean rating of extent of need (both met and unmet) for interpreter training in each identified topic area and/or interpreting setting.

Note on Mean Rating: In this section, the mean rating is derived based on the 1 to 5 rating weight and the actual number of respondents that provided a response to the question. Therefore, while the mean rating does assist in developing a ranking from highest to lowest, it is also necessary to consider the percentage of respondents that actually responded to the question when analyzing overall responses.

**Extent of Need for Interpreter Training
Table 40**

Identified Training Topics and Specialized Settings	# of Responses	% of Respondents	Mean Rating
Interpreting in mental health settings	26	76%	4.38
Interpreting for LFD consumers	27	79%	4.37
Interpreting for diverse populations	27	79%	4.33
Mentoring training for interpreters	29	85%	4.24
Training for VR staff/counselors that work with interpreters	29	85%	4.24
Interpreting in substance abuse settings	26	76%	4.23
Interpreting in employment related settings	29	85%	4.21
Interpreting in medical settings	26	76%	4.08
Interpreting in legal settings	24	71%	3.92
Interpreting in domestic violence settings	26	76%	3.92
Related to VR service delivery, core operational concepts and basic terminology	29	85%	3.79
Ethical training for interpreters	28	82%	3.75
Interpreting for consumers with cochlear implants or using assistive technology	27	79%	3.67
Training for deaf VR counselors that work with hearing consumers	26	76%	3.62
Introductory training related to role and mission of VR	29	85%	3.52
Note: Mean rating scale of 1 = no need for interpreter training and 5 = great need for interpreter training			

On Table 40, it is clear that all areas of potential interpreter training are considered important by respondents. Each of the topic areas listed received a mean rating above the mid-point scale. However, it is not surprising, and is in fact consistent with information learned through the VR stakeholder interviews, that the most highly ranked areas of interpreter training are: interpreting in mental health settings; interpreting for LFD consumers; interpreting for consumers from diverse populations, and mentoring.

Perceived Effectiveness of Training Delivery Options

Respondents were provided a list of training delivery options and asked to use a scale of one (not effective) to five (very effective) to indicate their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of each option. Table 41 provides responses to that question.

**Effectiveness of Training Delivery Options
Table 41**

Training Delivery Options	# of Responses	% of Respondents	Mean Rating
Specialized conferences (e.g., RID, NAD)	30	88%	4.43
Training provided at the VR agency	29	85%	4.38
Courses taken at an IEP	25	75%	3.88
Videoconferences	28	82%	3.43
Webcasts	26	77%	3.42
Website resources	29	85%	3.40
General conferences (e.g., CSAVR)	25	75%	3.36
Web-based training	28	82%	3.21
Listservs	28	82%	3.21
Information on CDs	29	85%	3.17
Teleconferences	28	82%	2.93
Information circulars or bulletins	29	85%	2.45
Note: Mean rating scale of 1 = not effective form of training and 5 = very effective form of training			

On Table 41, the three highest mean ratings were assigned to: specialized conferences; training provided at the VR agency, and courses taken at an interpreter education program (IEP). Each of these training delivery mechanisms is somewhat traditional in nature. It is interesting that some of the more innovative, technology-based training delivery options did not receive a higher mean rating, particularly in light of an environment in which states are facing budget constraints that limit training, particularly when out-of-state travel is required.

7. State VR Agency Utilization of VRS and VRI

Both Video Relay Services and Video Remote Interpreting technologies have had an impact on the availability and utilization of interpreters across the spectrum of interpreting settings, including VR settings. The survey included a number of questions designed to better understand state VR agency utilization of these technologies, and/or potential barriers to their use.

Use of Video Relay Services

Use of Video Relay Services (VRS) technology enables deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals to place video relay calls through an interpreter to a hearing individual who is in another location. An initial question asked survey respondents whether or not their state VR agency utilizes VRS.

Agency Use of VRS Table 42		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Yes	24	70%
No	5	15%
Sometimes	3	9%
No response	2	6%
Total	34	100%

Of the 34 survey respondents, 70% reported that their state VR agency utilizes VRS technology, and 9% reported their state VR agency sometimes uses the technology. It is interesting that 15% of respondents reported their state VR agency does not use VRS technology at all.

A follow-up question in the survey was designed to assess how VRS technology is utilized by the state VR agency. Responses are provided below on Table 43.

How VRS is Used by the State VR Agency Table 43		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
For internal state VR agency staff meetings and communication	2	6%
In provision of VR consumer services	6	18%
Both	17	50%
Do not know	2	6%
No response	7	20%
Total	34	100%

The majority of respondents reported that VRS is used both for internal staff meetings and communication and in the actual provision of services to the VR consumer.

For those respondents that reported their state VR agency does not utilize VRS technology, a follow-up question in the survey asked them to identify perceived barriers to its use. Respondents were permitted to select as many perceived barriers as they thought applied.

Perceived Barriers to the Use of VRS by the State VR Agency Table 44		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Cost	5	15%
Technical purchase and support	5	15%
Technical expertise to utilize	6	18%
Staff training requirements	4	12%
Bureaucratic issues related to obtaining and implementing the equipment	6	18%

As noted on Table 44, 18% of respondents reported that the technical expertise required to effectively utilize VRS was a barrier to its use in their state VR agency, and another 18% of respondents identified bureaucratic-related issues as a barrier. In addition, 15% of respondents reported the cost of VRS was a barrier, and another 15% reported the technical purchase cost and technical support required to implement and maintain the technology was a barrier.

Use of Video Remote Interpreting Services

Video Remote Interpreting services (VRI) services are used when both hearing and deaf individuals are at the same location, for example, at a business meeting. In that case, an interpreter at a remote location is accessed via a video connection. Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not their state VR agency utilizes VRI services. Responses are presented on Table 45.

State VR Agency Use of VRI		
Table 45		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Yes	5	15%
No	22	65%
Sometimes	5	15%
No response	2	6%
Total	34	100%

Of the total survey respondents, only 15% reported their state VR agency utilizes VRI services; another 15% reported their agency sometimes uses the technology. By and large, most respondents reported their state VR agency does not use VRI services, or 65% of the total respondent pool.

Those 10 respondents that reported their state VR agency utilizes VRI services were asked to report how those services are utilized in their state VR agency. Responses are provided on Table 46.

How VRI is Used by the State VR Agency		
Table 46		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
For internal state VR agency staff meetings and communication	4	40%
In provision of VR consumer services	4	40%
Both	2	20%
Total	10	100%

Of the survey respondents that reported their state VR agency uses VRI services, 40% reported VRI is used for internal staff meetings and internal agency communication; another 40% reported that VRI is utilized in the provision of services to VR consumers. Two respondents reported that VRI is used for both internal communication and in the provision of services to VR consumers.

For those respondents that reported their state VR agency does not utilize VRI services, a follow-up question in the survey asked them to identify perceived barriers to its use. Respondents were permitted to select as many perceived barriers as they thought applied.

Perceived Barriers to the Use of VRI by the State VR Agency		
Table 47		
Type of Response	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Cost	16	47%
Technical purchase and support	13	38%
Technical expertise to utilize	13	38%
Staff training requirements	7	21%
Bureaucratic issues related to obtaining/implementing VRI equipment	19	56%

Over half of the survey respondents identified bureaucratic issues related to obtaining and implementing VRI services as the primary barrier to its use in their state VR agency. An additional 47% identified cost as a factor.

This concludes the Survey Findings portion of the VR Needs Assessment Final Report.

II. Consultant Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Establish baseline information related to interpreting in VR settings

The NCIEC Deaf Advocacy, Deaf Interpreting, Interpreting via Video, Mentoring and Mental Health and Substance Abuse work-teams have all conducted surveys, focus groups or other data collection activities that have resulted in information that is related to VR consumers and/or interpreting in VR-related settings. In addition, the Interpreter Practitioner, Interpreter Education Program, Interpreter Referral Agency, and Phase I and Phase II Deaf Consumer needs assessments included findings that either directly related to interpreting in VR, or have a potential impact on interpreters working in those settings. In addition, interviews conducted in preparation of this effort focused wholly on VR, and resulted in a number of important findings. These discrete efforts should be assessed and synthesized, in addition to the findings in this report, to establish a baseline of information about interpreting in VR that can serve as the foundation for establishing interpreter training and education priorities related to VR, and for assessing VR needs in future years of the grant.

Recommendation 2: Provide guidance to NCIEC work-teams based on the findings of the VR Needs Assessment

Important information related to VR consumers, interpreting in VR settings, and training and education for interpreters working in VR have emerged through the Consortium's data collection activities and this VR needs assessment effort. Key findings of those activities and this targeted effort should be pulled together and packaged in a way that provides guidance to the work-teams and further instills the NCIEC focus on VR.

Recommendation 3: Develop strategies for identifying and providing outreach to interpreters that work in VR

Based on information gathered through the VR Needs Assessment, it was learned that more state VR agencies employ part-time contract interpreters than do full-time staff interpreters. NCIEC should take steps to identify who those part-time contract interpreters are and then begin to develop informational products and training and education strategies targeted to those professionals. Once those professionals are identified, NCIEC should develop an electronic survey to assess their needs, as well as the needs of state VR agency full-time interpreter staff.

Recommendation 4: Develop strategies for covering the costs associated with training part-time contract interpreters that work in VR settings

In the VR Needs Assessment effort, it was discovered that state VR agencies do not typically offer educational or professional development opportunities to their part-time contract interpreters. However, training and education related to interpreting in VR is needed for this pool of interpreters. NCIEC should work with its federal partners and other national organizations to develop strategies for ensuring these professionals have access to VR-related training, the cost of which would not likely be covered by state VR agencies.

Recommendation 5: Assess current NCIEC effective practices and products in the area of interpreting in mental health settings for application in VR

Information gathered through the needs assessment indicates an increase in the numbers of VR consumers that have secondary disabilities, including mental health-related disabilities. NCIEC should assess its existing product base to determine how mental health related effective practices can be refined or adjusted to focus specifically on interpreting for VR consumers in mental health settings.

Recommendation 6: Assess current NCIEC effective practices and products in the area of mentoring for potential application in VR

In the VR Needs Assessment, respondents expressed a strong interest in mentoring for their full-time staff interpreters, and to a lesser degree, for their part-time contract interpreters in preparation for employment by the state VR agency. NCIEC should assess existing resources related to mentoring for their potential application in VR, particularly with regard to full-time staff interpreters that can be easily identified through the state VR agency SCDs.

Recommendation 7: Consider chartering a work-team to identify and compile effective practices related to LFD consumers

Throughout the VR Needs Assessment, the needs of the LFD VR consumer population emerged as a priority. NCIEC should consider chartering a new work-team, or expanding the scope of work of an existing team, to identify effective practices related to interpreting for LFD consumers.

Recommendation 8: Develop plan for additional VR-related data collection and needs assessments over remainder of the grant

RSA has clearly expressed that the VR-related needs assessment activities are valued activities for the grant to pursue. NCIEC should develop an action plan, budget and timeframe for collecting additional VR-related information during the remainder of the grant. For example, this might be accomplished by conducting focus groups with Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf, or through follow-up telephone interviews with SCDs that did not participate in the survey to get their input on the most important findings to emerge in the VR Needs Assessment effort.

Recommendation 9: Disseminate and promote the VR Needs Assessment Final Report

Key findings of the VR Needs Assessment Final Report should be packaged and disseminated to professionals at OSERS and RSA. The report should also be presented at appropriate CSAVR meetings, and directly to state VR agencies and the SCDs that work with them. The NCIEC should also assess other forums and opportunities for disseminating what was learned through the VR Needs Assessment via channels such as the RSA TACE centers, or through RSA-sponsored webinars.