

OMB 83-1 SUPPORTING STATEMENT
FOR PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT SUBMISSION

A. Justification

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.

The basic data comprising the Case Service Report system (RSA-911) are mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (the Act). Attachment A shows the applicable portions of the Rehabilitation Act which explicitly or implicitly require the recording and reporting of specific data elements by state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

Section 13 of the Act requires the Commissioner to collect and report information specified in section 101(a)(10) to the Congress and the President in the Annual Report. Section 626 requires the same information to be reported for individuals who received supported employment services. Data on persons served are needed, too, to satisfy Section 131 calling for an exchange of data between RSA, the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Department of Labor (DOL).

Section 106 requires RSA to define performance indicators and establish standards, which state VR agencies must achieve to retain program benefits. A subset of data elements from this reporting instrument are abstracted, aggregated, and applied according to prescribed formulae to generate the performance indicators for each state VR agency. The results of such calculations are then compared to the established standards to determine agency performance.

Due to additional workloads involved in the new monitoring cycle which ended in FY 2010, we were unable to complete a draft revised RSA-911. We anticipate submitting a final version in the winter of 2011 and clearance expected by July 2012. Following forms clearance, State agencies will need time to re-program their data collection systems and conduct systems testing. We should be able to implement the revised form in the 2013 reporting year.

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection.

In addition to the data the Commissioner must collect and include in the Annual Report to the President and Congress (Sections 13 and 101(a)(10)) and the data exchange with SSA (Section 131), RSA-911 data support other Rehabilitation Act responsibilities. Section 14 (a) calls for the evaluation of Rehabilitation Act programs and an assessment of their effectiveness in relation to cost. Through the years, many evaluation studies have utilized RSA-911 data to varying degrees. The Commissioner must also assure that each Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) meets the requirements of law, and, most particularly, that emphasis is placed on the achievement of a vocational goal (Section 102). RSA-911 data permit the Commissioner to monitor the degree to which vocational goals are being achieved. Selected RSA-911 data are used to evaluate the performance of state VR agencies using the standards and indicators required by Section 106. In addition, these data are used during both annual reviews and periodic onsite monitoring of state VR agencies required by Section 107 in order to examine effectiveness of program performance. Other important management activities, such as the provision of technical assistance, program planning, and budget preparation and development are greatly enhanced through the use of RSA-911 data.

The major consequence of the non-collection of data would be that the Department of Education and RSA would be operating the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs in violation of the law. A second consequence would be that RSA would lack indicators of program impact and effectiveness, making it difficult to account for the federal dollars allocated for these programs. The data exchange with SSA could not take place, and insights into the long-term benefits of VR services would be lost. Further, RSA could not adequately conduct activities such as program planning, policy formulation, and technical assistance.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or forms of information technology, e.g. permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision of adopting this means of collection. Also describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.

The system, devised in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act, is the least burdensome one possible, because RSA requires that state VR agencies provide only a portion of the data they typically collect for their own purposes. Essentially, the RSA-911 system is a "dump" of selected state agency data with little additional processing burden on the

agencies. All data are submitted electronically either via email or by compact disks. Data that are submitted via email must be compressed and password protected.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use of the purposes described in Item 2 above.

Duplication of data available in other reporting systems does not exist. The RSA-911 is the only system through which RSA requires data to be reported for each individual who applied for or received VR services.

5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities (Item 5 of OMB Form 83-I), describe any methods used to minimize burden.

Respondents are agencies of state governments that must keep comprehensive records on individuals who apply for services to better serve them and to fulfill the service record requirements of the Rehabilitation Act. This is true even for the smallest VR agencies. Section 102 defines the contents of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). State VR agencies, large and small, must also account to their governments for the expenditure of state funds. The reporting requirements of the RSA-911, even without the explicit itemization of data elements in Section 101(a)(10), involve but a segment of already existing information that agencies must have at their disposal. Nevertheless, to make reporting easier for small agencies, we have given them the option of sending in data electronically via email or by compact disks.

6. Describe the consequences to federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.

It is not possible to collect RSA-911 data less frequently because Section 13 of the Rehabilitation Act requires annual reporting. Moreover, without this data collection, the Secretary would be substantially hampered in complying with Section 106 of the Act.

7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner:

- **requiring respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly;**

- **requiring respondents to prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it;**
- **requiring respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document;**
- **requiring respondents to retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records for more than three years;**
- **in connection with a statistical survey, that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results than can be generalized to the universe of study;**
- **requiring the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB;**
- **that includes a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is not supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, or which unnecessarily impedes sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use; or**
- **requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secrets, or other confidential information unless the agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information's confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.**

There are no special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted along the lines discussed in the bulleted items above.

8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the Federal Register of the agency's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8(d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.

Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instruction and record keeping, disclosure,

or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

Consultation with representatives of those from whom information is to be obtained or those who must compile records should occur at least once every 3 years - even if the collection of information activity is the same as in prior periods. There may be circumstances that may preclude consultation in a specific situation. These circumstances should be explained.

RSA regularly contacts the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) on developments affecting the RSA-911 system. CSAVR is an umbrella organization, headquartered in suburban Washington, DC, representing the 80 respondents (state VR agencies).

In addition, RSA has given state VR agencies the opportunity to subscribe to the RSA-911 Listserv. This listserv is a mechanism used by subscribers to discuss various issues pertaining to the RSA-911 system. As a result, RSA has received input that has been used to modify, clarify, or simplify instructions or other reporting requirements.

Finally, a 60 day and 30 day notice was published in the Federal Register for public comment.

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

There has been no decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

The confidentiality of individual service record data has always been RSA's policy. The only personal identifier contained in the RSA-911, the Social Security Number (SSN), is used for record control purposes (e.g., to cull out duplicates) and for the RSA-SSA Data Exchange (Section 131 of the Rehabilitation Act). For the latter, confidentiality rules apply. Equally important, Section 13 of the Act reinforces RSA policy by expressly stating that the Commissioner is to assure that the identity of each person for whom information is supplied remains confidential.

RSA-911 data is submitted by agency grantees of the state VR programs by password protected compressed files sent via email or on compact disks sent by private carrier such as FEDEX or UPS. The data files are read into separate folders for each of 80 state agencies in a protected folder in one of

the Department's shared drives. The data with SSNs are never used outside of that shared drive which has with very limited (four RSA staff) accessibility. The submittals undergo a cleaning process to correct errors and resolve anomalies by working with the agencies submitting the data. After the data are cleaned, the SSNs and birth dates are removed, in order to protect and ensure the confidentiality of the individuals. The data are then used for preparing monitoring tables, standards and indicators, the Annual Report to Congress, for researchers who may request the data and other analyses. Data from the RSA-911 without social security numbers is also transferred to the RSA Management Information System which uses the data to generate programmed tables for the public and for monitoring. The social security numbers of individuals submitted by agencies are never used in any queries or tables.

RSA-911 data submitted on disks by agencies are shredded after the data have been transferred into RSA's shared folder. There are no RSA-911 data on hard copy disks. All data are strictly in digital form. The information on the Department's shared drive is backed up nightly, in order that it not be lost.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. The justification should include the reasons why the agency considers the questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

None of the items referred to in this question appears in the RSA-911 system. Other items sometimes thought of as sensitive, such as race, type of disability, and earnings are all required by law.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information. The statement should :

- **Indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden, and an explanation of how the burden was estimated. Unless directed to do so, agencies should not conduct special surveys to obtain information on which to base hour burden estimates. Consultation with a sample (fewer than 10) of potential respondents is desirable. If the hour burden on respondents is expected to vary widely because of differences in activity, size, or complexity, show the range of**

estimated hour burden, and explain the reasons for the variance. Generally, estimates should not include burden hours for customary and usual business practices.

- **If this request for approval covers more than one form, provide separate hour burden estimates for each form and aggregate the hour burdens in item 13 of OMB Form 83-I.**
- **Provide estimates of annualized cost to respondents of the hour burdens for collections of information, identifying and using appropriate wage rate categories. The cost of contracting out or paying outside parties for information collection activities should not be included here. Instead, this cost should not be included in Item 14.**

Respondents in the RSA-911 system are the 80 state VR agencies in the United States and its territories. In these agencies, an estimated 600,000 individuals will have their service records closed annually. The burden to submit RSA-911 data would largely be the time it takes to transfer already existing agency data to the RSA-911 format. Because of these considerations, we estimate that the information collection burden imposed on a respondent averages 45 hours annually. Therefore, the total annual burden hours requested is 3,600 (45 hours x 80 agencies).

Annualized Respondent Costs:

Annual Operating Costs (45 hours x \$20 per hour X 80 agencies)	\$ 72,000.00
Estimated Equipment Costs	<u>\$ 20,500.00</u>
Total Annualized Respondent Cost	\$ 92,500.00

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden shown in Items 12 and 14.)

- **The cost estimate should be split into two components: (a) a total capital and start-up cost component (annualized over its expected useful life); and (b) a total operation and maintenance and purchase of services component. The estimates should take into account costs associated with generating, maintaining, and disclosing or providing the information. Include descriptions of methods used to estimate major cost factors including system and technology acquisition, expected useful life of capital equipment, the discount rate(s), and the time period over which costs will be incurred. Capital and start-up costs include, among other**

items, preparations for collecting information such as purchasing computers and software; monitoring, sampling, drilling and testing equipment; and record storage facilities.

- If cost estimates are expected to vary widely, agencies should present ranges of cost burdens and explain the reasons for the variance. The cost of contracting out information collection services should be a part of this cost burden estimate. In developing cost burden estimates, agencies may consult with a sample of respondents (fewer than 10), utilize the 60-day pre-OMB submission public comment process and use existing economic or regulatory impact analysis associated with the rulemaking containing the information collection, as appropriate.**
- Generally, estimates should not include purchases of equipment or services, or portions thereof, made: (1) prior to October 1, 1995, (2) to achieve regulatory compliance with requirements not associated with the information collection, (3) for reasons other than to provide information or keep records for the government, or (4) as part of customary and usual business or private practices.**

There are no costs other than the burden identified in Q 12.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the federal government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information. Agencies also may aggregate cost estimates from Items 12, 13, and 14 in a single table.

Annualized Federal Costs:

Operating Personnel	\$120,000.00
Annual System Maintenance	\$ 5,000.00
Equipment Costs (CPU time)	<u>\$ 5,000.00</u>
Total Annualized Federal Cost	\$130,000.00

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in Items 13 or 14 of the OMB Form 83-I.

There are no program changes or adjustments associated with this request.

16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.

Tabulations are generated to describe personal and program-related characteristics by (a) state VR agency and by (b) specific target groups (e.g., the type of disability, race, gender, etc.). There are 80 state VR agencies and an unlimited number of target groups by which the data can be displayed, by type of closure (e.g., with or without an employment outcome).

Currently two automated programs are available and used by agencies to monitor data quality. National and target group data, as well as data derived for ad hoc purposes, are used for the many purposes described earlier. As needed, the data will provide demographics, relationships between variables, and program outcomes. Summaries of selected characteristics for all persons served including those with significant disabilities are published in the Annual Report.

RSA-911 data are collected annually and are due 60 days after the fiscal year of reference (November 30 of each year). All data are carefully edited for legitimacy of codes, consistency across variables, and completeness of reporting. In addition, the expected number of service records for each state VR agency is closely monitored. The utilization of the automated edit programs has shortened the time needed to produce a national database.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

Approval is not being sought to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in Item 20, "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions," of OMB Form 83-1.

There are no exceptions to the certification statement identified in Item 20 of OMB Form 83-1.