



**WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE ARTS
DIVISION OF REHABILITATION SERVICES**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DRS leads the way for its future

Charleston, W.Va. (March 9, 2011) – The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) is paving the way for its future through its Emerging Leadership Program, a nine-month management and leadership skills development program for DRS employees. This program is designed to develop and prepare qualified candidates for future management and leadership positions within DRS.

"As long-term employees leave DRS through retirement, it is imperative that we take proactive steps to preserve critical knowledge about the agency and the vocational rehabilitation program and to ensure business continuity at all levels of the agency," said Education and the Arts Cabinet Secretary Kay Goodwin. "We want to prevent gaps in knowledge, expertise and leadership experience and I am genuinely delighted and appreciative that an agency in my department has taken the initiative to develop such a worthwhile training experience as part of its succession planning goals."

The 13 participants come from various backgrounds within the agency and went through an application process last fall. Each individual was required to submit a short essay outlining one thing they would change about the agency, if they had the opportunity. Each applicant had to present and defend his or her position to the agency's 10-member leadership team.

Training sessions focus on the real management and leadership issues the agency faces in order to implement and administer the federal/state vocational rehabilitation program in West Virginia.

Thus far, training sessions have focused on the application and effect of the federal Rehabilitation Act on the administration of DRS, the agency's history and organizational structure, the impact of state and federal legislation on DRS, as well as fiscal accountability and managing state and federal appropriations.

Participants got to experience the state legislative process in action. Individuals were dramatically impressed by the experience. One participant noted that "not only was it

informative, but the information provided will stick with me because the presentation was interactive. Thanks for sharing so much knowledge, imparting great information and giving me a wonderful Capitol experience."

Training sessions are conducted once a month, over a three-day period, at the DRS Institute Complex.

DRS, a division of the West Virginia Department of Education and the Arts, is the state agency responsible for the federal vocational rehabilitation program in West Virginia. DRS assists people whose physical or mental condition is interfering with their ability to get or keep a job.

DRS also offers individualized service to assist employers in retaining valued employees or in hiring qualified employees. DRS can provide consultation related to disability, as well as information about assistive technology, disability resources, potential tax credits, workplace accommodations and other benefits to employers.

For more information about DRS and its programs, call 1-800-642-8207 (V/TDD) or visit the division's Web site at www.wvdrs.org/. In the Charleston area, call (304) 766-2634.