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**Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council for
the Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired**

Annual Report – Federal Fiscal Year 2019

Enclosed is a copy of the Delaware Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council (VRAC) for the Division for the Visually Impaired Annual Report to Governor John Carney and the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

Thank you for your interest in and support of programs that provide and promote the use of vocational rehabilitation and independent living programs for Delawareans who are blind or visually impaired.

For questions or comments regarding report contents or to request a copy in an alternative format, please contact the Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired:

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December 16, 2019

U. S. Department of Education, OSERS
Rehabilitation Services Administration
Attn: Terrence Martin, Vocational Rehabilitation Program Specialist
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20202-2800

Dear Terrence:

On behalf of Delaware Health and Social Services, Division for the Visually Impaired and the Delaware Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council (VRAC), I am pleased to present the 2019 Annual Report as required by Section 105(C) (4) of the 1992 Amendment to the Rehabilitation Act. In accordance with 34 CFR 361.17, a copy of this report has been submitted to the Honorable John Carney, Governor of Delaware. This report represents the 2018-2019 federal fiscal year. It includes details the Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council activities and recommendations, the Division for the Visually Impaired highlights, and significant achievements made by Delawareans with blindness.

Delawareans who are blind have access to DVI services in school, home and work across the lifespan. The Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired continues to play an integral role in helping people with blindness achieve their vocational goals; however, their successes would not be realized without consumer determination, community advocates, excellent vendor partnerships, and the evolving corporate culture that continues to improve inclusion practices and value diversity in the workplace.

Through the efforts of the Division for the Visually Impaired, in conjunction with the guidance and input of the Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council, we will continue to build on our solid foundation through educational workshops, community outreach, awareness, employer partnerships, and training to ensure the visually impaired and blind population of Delaware have the tools and knowledge needed to successfully gain employment and remain independent, productive citizens.

Sincerely,

Sandra Miller
Division Director (Acting)
Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired

cc: Office of Governor John Carney

1901 North DuPont Highway, Biggs Building/New Castle, DE 19720/302-255-9800

Message from the VRAC Chair

I am pleased to represent the Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council (VRAC) for the fiscal year 2019 as Chair. As a member of the Council for the last few years I have seen changes for the better and also changes that were less than satisfactory.

At present, the VRAC consists of thirteen (13) members. The Council's goals continue to focus upon providing advice, support, and evaluation of the Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired's provision of vocational rehabilitation and related services to the community of blind and visually impaired individuals in Delaware. Although the Director of DVI and one VR Counselor serve as members of the VRAC, the majority of its membership consists of community volunteers who donate time to VRAC's important work.

During the monthly VRAC meetings, the Council discussed the problem of maximizing meeting attendance to ensure that all Council members would be able to provide input and vote on important matters. As technology becomes available and meetings can be effectively run remotely, the VRAC must consider alternatives to in person meetings that require travel and significant time investments.

In addition to challenges related to in person meeting attendance, the VRAC's attempts to collaborate with DVI on various programs was met with significant "push back". In some cases, DVI appeared to be unwilling to engage effectively with the VRAC to support its proposed programming. As Chair of the VRAC and a member of this Council for a number of years, it is disappointing to reflect upon the multiple times that DVI's leadership simply refused to support or engage in meaningful compromise to bring forth programs designed to benefit our community. It is also important to note that the programs for which the VRAC sought support were not new – they were programs in which the VRAC and DVI previously participated to benefit the community of blind and visually impaired individuals in the state. Because of this lack of cooperation, the VRAC was unable to hear from the community during Town Hall or Public Meetings to gain input and we were unable to engage in any strategic planning activities because we were not supported with efforts to sponsor a VRAC Retreat.

The VRAC requested data to evaluate performance measures associated with employment of individuals with blindness and visual impairments, but these requests seemed to present challenges to DVI. DVI provided some data, but much more is needed to understand fully the high number of individuals who remain unemployed in the state.

Although we do not know exactly why the VRAC's requests for data and support were not met with the level of collaboration and transparency we believe is appropriate, it is apparent that continued staff turnover, leadership changes, and even the moving of DVI offices led to a disruption in effective communication and collaboration between the VRAC and DVI.

DVI remains under evaluation by the Delaware Sunset Legislative Oversight Committee. Although the Chair of the VRAC is not part of the Task Force working with the JLOSC to provide information related to DVI's effectiveness, two of the VRAC members served on the Task Force and one member served as a consultant to the Task Force. To date, our members report that significant issues were discussed during the task force meetings. The VRAC will represent itself during any future public meetings designed to address concerns raised about DVI and the services it provides to individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

The VRAC and DVI were able to collaborate on one project that was designed to benefit the community. In October 2018, the Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) and the VRAC held a technology Fair on the campus of Deltech Community College's Terry Campus. It was a very successful event. The vendors and speakers for the event passed on a wealth of information to the blind community. Also, there were 2 awards presented from the VRAC. The Sharon Sutlic Award went to Suzanne Howell and the Debbie Briddell Award for Excellence in Teaching Students with Visual Impairments went to Ken Rolph.

Towards the end of the year things started to settle down and we were able to finally move forward. Hopefully in the upcoming year we will be able to work together for the benefit of the community of blind and visually individuals in Delaware.

Respectfully Submitted,
Darryl Garner
Chair, VRAC



Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council (VRAC)

Description

Mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the VRAC is comprised of advocates, consumers, government representatives and the business community located throughout the state of Delaware. The VRAC serves in an advisory capacity to DVI and acts as the liaison between the state agency for the blind and Delawareans who are blind or visually impaired. The VRAC meets monthly and focuses on Council priorities and DVI services. A great deal of emphasis is placed on areas that the Council perceives as lacking substance, needing improvement, or requiring immediate attention by DVI.

The VRAC provides the following assistance to DVI:

- Review, analyze, and evaluate the performance, effectiveness and quality of services provided by the VR program.
- Collaborate with state and private agencies to ensure that the needs of individuals with visual impairments are appropriately identified and addressed by state and federal legislators, service providers, employers, and relevant members of the community.
- Maintain partnerships with local and national organizations (i.e. State Rehabilitation Advisory Councils, National Federation of the Blind, etc.) to promote services to underserved populations.
- Develop and review the goals and priorities related to the allocation of resources for VR. The Council also assists DVI with preparation of the VR State Plan in accordance with the federal regulations.

Council Composition (FFY2019)

Code Requirement	Individual	Council Role
i. State Independent Living Council	Suzanne Howell	Vice Chair
ii. Parent Information Center	Christina G. Andrews	Member
iii. Client Assistance Program	Blake Roberts	Member
iv. VR Counselor	Patricia Burrell	Ex Officio
v. Community Rehabilitation Program	Darryl Garner	Chair
vi. Business	Jacqueline Poquette	Member
vi. Business	Kevin McAllister	Member
vi. Business	Vacant	N/A
vi. Business	Vacant	N/A
vii. Blind Disability Advocate	Vacant	N/A
viii. I-Disability & Blind	William McCafferty	Member
viii. II- Parent	Sonya Lawrence	Member
ix. Recipient	Pham Thang	Member
x. Education Representative	Dale Matusevich	Member
xi. State Workforce Development Board	Alice Coleman	Member
xii. Director of Division for the Visually Impaired	Elisha Jenkins	Ex Officio

Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired



Mission

To provide educational, vocational and technical support to empower and foster independence for Delawareans with visual impairments.

Vision

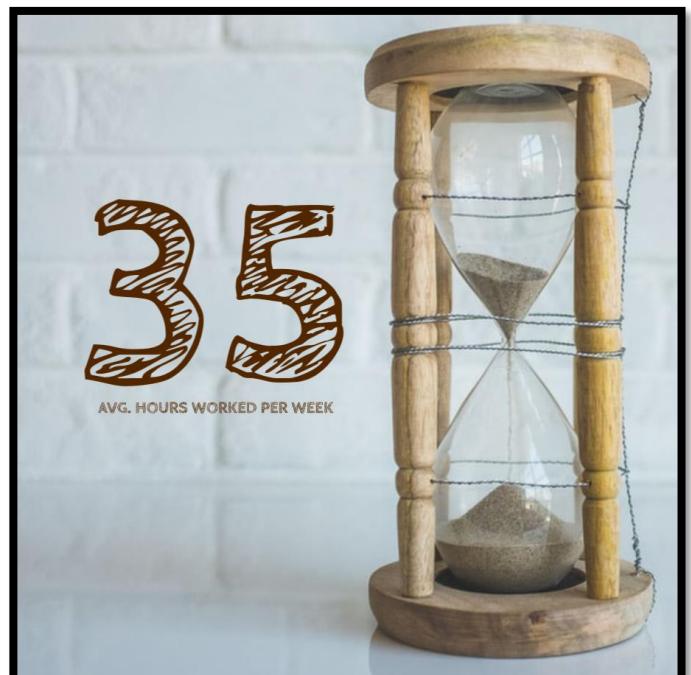
A leader in creating a world without barriers for individuals with vision loss.

Executive Summary

The Division for the Visually Impaired annual report describes the highlights and achievements of the past year and provides compelling evidence of the tremendous impact DVI vocational services have on the blind community in Delaware. Much of the success can be attributed to the fact that all programming encourages workplace inclusion, promotes career development, presents opportunities for consumers to gain marketable education and/or training to obtain gainful employment, and strives to eliminate barriers to independence.

DVI is appreciative of the U.S. Department of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration, the Honorable Governor Carney, and the Delaware General Assembly for providing the resources to efficiently serve all Delawareans with blindness. Since FY2011, the Division has operated without an Order of Selection. DVI recognizes the value in having the ability to provide services to all eligible consumers and continues to act as responsible stewards of program funds. When compared to other states, the Delaware blind and visually impaired population is relatively small; however, the effect services have on the lives of consumers is equally impactful. DVI continues to produce high-quality programs and is committed to ensuring continual improvement and fiscal integrity.

Most important, the Division is dedicated to the success of the consumers and privileged to help while they continue to bravely overcome obstacles along their journey to independence.



Strategic Plan Goals

Goal 1: Highest Consumer Achievement

Coordinate and secure high-quality training, education, work experiences and partnerships that create opportunities for blind and visually impaired Delawareans to obtain and maintain independence, post-secondary education credentials, and successful employment outcomes.

Goal 2: Seamless Coordination and Maximum Access

Create a comprehensive service delivery system that fosters accessibility and provides positive experiences for blind and visually impaired Delawareans enabling them to progress from school/training to work.

Goal 3: Skilled Workforce and Economic Development

Assist blind and visually impaired Delawareans with obtaining, maintaining and advancing in competitive integrated employment.

Goal 4: Quality Efficient Services

- a. Continue to develop an accountable and exemplary division workforce that provides customer-oriented, high-quality services.
- b. Reduce barriers to independence by streamlining assistive technology procurement process and reducing device acquisition time to fourteen days.
- c. Develop a comprehensive outcome management system designed to efficiently collect data, effectively analyze programs and identify gaps, and serve as a vehicle for service improvement.



Success Story – Anthony Calandra

Preparing to leave school and deciding on a career is a tremendous challenge faced by millions of American youth each year. The same was true for Anthony Calandra, a young man with severe vision loss, whose journey has resulted in him becoming a successful self-advocate, a positive peer mentor and an employee of Christiana Care Health System, before graduating from Meadowood School in the summer of 2019.



1. Anthony Calandra-Picture courtesy of Christiana Care, Helen Graham Center Newsletter.

Although Anthony's drive and determination ultimately led to his successes, he was supported by a team to assist him to meet his employment goals. In addition to his family, Anthony's team included his classroom teacher, his chosen community provider, and several experts from the Division for the Visually Impaired including his Teacher for the Visually Impaired (TVI), Orientation & Mobility Specialist (O&M) and the Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Counselor (VRC). He was working closely with his VRC to discover his interests and develop a plan for employment, when he decided to apply for the Project SEARCH program at Christiana Care Hospital. Project SEARCH is business-led, one-year employment preparation program that takes place entirely at the workplace. Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through worksite rotations. The program is designed to give participants the opportunity to work in three different positions on a rotation basis. The program has a skills trainer who assists with skill acquisition and a teacher who provides job readiness training in a classroom setting. Toward the end of the program, there is a shift to place more emphasis on job development to help graduates obtain community-based competitive, integrated employment.

Anthony was accepted into the Project SEARCH program in 2018 and began reporting to the work site instead of school for his last year. In addition to the built-in supports, DVI staff provided the supports needed to accommodate his vision needs. For example, Anthony's TVI provided large print program materials; self-advocacy guidance; and assistance while he adjusted to job skills as well as the changes accompanied with different rotations. Additionally, his O&M Instructor used self-written reminders, a campus map, and cellphone GPS to practice safe travel throughout the hospital throughout the entire program including each rotation. Anthony successfully completed the program in June 2019 and was offered a position by Christiana Care in July of the same year. He is now gainfully employed at as a Guest Service Receptionist in the Helen F. Graham Cancer Center & Research Institute.

Throughout his transition journey, Anthony continually strived to perfect his self-advocacy skills and was even invited to present to his peers at the annual Delaware Pathways Conference in March 2018. He focused his presentation on a shared vision for the blind and visually impaired youth, the importance of setting and achieving goals, and the need for students with disabilities to find their voice and become self-advocates. Anthony encouraged students to recognize their strengths, understand their value, and strive to achieve their full potential to succeed in higher education and employment. Today, Anthony is putting his self-advocacy skills to use on a regular basis. Most recently, he shared his personal journey as a cancer survivor with the Medical Director of the Helen F. Graham Cancer Center & Research Institute and expressed his dedication towards helping others like him to achieve goals. "I like my position as a Guest Service Receptionist, because I am the first face every patient will see before seeing their doctor," stated Anthony. "I enjoy helping a person to smile."

DVI Year in Review - Achievements & Highlights

The DVI team of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Orientation & Mobility Specialists, Vision Rehabilitation Therapists, Assistive Technology Specialists and Teachers for the Visually Impaired, collectively served 947 people who were actively engaged in employment activities, technology, independent living and orientation/mobility training.

DVI maintains a very strong community presence and offers balanced programming to engage consumers during their employment journey. The 2019 achievements and program highlights include the following:

DVI Administrative

AmeriCorps VISTA Program - As previously reported, DVI and the Delaware School for the Deaf partnered on a grant application to the Federal Corporation for National and Community Service. The project consisted of recruiting AmeriCorps Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA) volunteers to implement a creative project designed to solve a mutual need; reducing current and future poverty levels of the blind, deaf/blind, and otherwise disabled populations. DVI was awarded two AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers to assist with program development and implementation. The unique program centers on recruiting statewide volunteers to provide services such as; college and SAT preparatory study, discussion of career options and college tours. The goal was to build a robust, sustainable program by the time the VISTAs completed one year of service. Midway through FFY2019, the DVI project administrator successfully recruited the VISTAs; both of whom had project management and program development skills. The program carried over into FFY2019 and was completed midway through the federal fiscal year. Below are some significant accomplishments were achieved by the end of the project in April 2019:

- The project recruited 45 volunteers who served 54 students, youth, and adults.
- Seventeen students from the School for the Deaf received services.
- The program worked with 37 adjudicated youth at local facilities.
- DVI volunteers worked with the Partnership, Accessibility & Communication (PAC) to collect deaf/blind data, research group home needs, and meet with parent advocates. Their efforts have resulted in the formal exploration of developing group homes dedicated to people who are deaf/deaf-blind.

WIOA Leadership Team & WINTAC - DVI continued to be an active member of the statewide WIOA Leadership Team and assumed the integral role of coordinating technical assistance through the Workforce Innovation and Technical Assistant Center (WINTAC). The leadership team is comprised of core partners responsible for creating a seamless, customer-focused, one-stop delivery system that integrates service delivery and enhances access across all programs. Seeking technical assistance from WINTAC was essential for developing and implementing a system to ensure consumers are served quickly and efficiently. During FFY2019, the core partners worked with WINTAC to develop a mapping process that could identify how services are accessed to meet the needs of all citizens who inquire about services, regardless of who they ask. Once the mapping process was complete, the group developed an online vocational portal (VOCAL) as a place for job seekers and employers to link to WIOA core partners and employment related services easily. In addition, employee and employer surveys were developed to get more feedback in regard to gaps in understanding services provided by core partners.

Vocational Rehabilitation - General

VR and WINTAC Agreement - During FFY2019, VR continued to work with WINTAC on the goals established the previous year:

- **Pre-employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Implementation:** Develop Pre-ETS policies and procedures that address eligibility, expenditures and staff/stakeholder training.
- **Workforce Development Integration:** Develop strategies to enhance partner agency collaboration, evaluate service alignment that results in inclusive career pathway models, and enhance job seeker outcomes by using labor market information and increase business engagement.
- **Common Performance Measure Transition:** Develop processes for system analysis and improvement of collaboration with core partners including a logic model that addresses shared interest in WIOA implementation.

Employer Engagement Events - DVI hosted two business events during FFY2019.

- In October, VR kicked off the new fiscal year by honoring achievements and recognizing our business partner. After a networking breakfast, the ***Business Champions Breakfast*** attendees participated in Americans with Disabilities Act training presented by an expert from the Job Accommodation Network. The event convened after presentation of recognition awards for consumers, employers, and community. DVI was excited to offer this event during National Disability Employment Awareness and World Blindness Months.
- The second event, focused on networking, took place in May in recognition of Healthy Vision Month. DVI partnered with the New Castle County Chamber of Commerce to offer a free networking session to members and non-members. In addition to networking, guests heard from business leaders about the benefits of hiring people who are blind and explored many types of assistive technology being showcased from several different partners. In addition, three members of the business community provided operators from the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) tips on financial management, social media campaigns and organizational structure.



Vocational Rehabilitation - Pre-Employment Transition Services & Transition Services

Enhanced Services for Transition Students - DVI/VR works with students as young as 14, collaborating with our internal Education Unit and Local Education Agencies statewide to ensure students are offered transition services. Last year, this initiative was expanded by enhancing current programming to offer students with visual impairments additional opportunities to explore career options, learn about and prepare for college, and participate in summer employment or internship experiences. They participated in a variety of transition programs and assessments to learn about their strengths, interests and identify assistive technology needs. During FFY2019, DVI enhanced Pre-employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) by increasing our provider partnerships.

PIPEline to Career Success for Students with Disabilities - During FFY2019, DVI partnered with the Department of Education, the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, the Division of Vocational

Rehabilitation, National Alliance on Partnership in Equity and three school districts (across the state) to pilot a program designed to ensure the success of ALL students with disabilities in high school career and technical education (CTE) pathways. Project planning began in FFY2019. The objective is to increase the number of students with disabilities who:

- 1) Enroll in CTE pathways;
- 2) Participate in related work-based learning experiences in authentic employment settings;
- 3) Earn college and career credentials in CTE pathways;
- 4) Graduate from high school as a CTE pathway completer;
- 5) Continue their education and training beyond high school; and
- 6) Enter high-demand employment.

Delaware Transition Conference - DVI was once again a proud sponsor of the statewide Transition Conference, coordinated by several state entities and offered to Delaware students each year. Each year more than 400 high school students attend the event designed to help them make informed choices about career goals and their futures. DVI provided support and accessible materials, ensured students with visual impairments were active participants and offering outreach and resources to the transition community.



Delaware Pathways Initiative & Conference - The Delaware Pathways initiative is a partnership between Delaware businesses and educators, working together to build a robust, skilled workforce ready to meet future industry needs. VR staff and transition students participated in the Delaware Pathways Conference held in April. During the FFY2019 conference, DVI and transition students took part in a presentation on the PIPEline to Career Success for Students with Disabilities project.

Transition Spring Break Program - In April VR hosted another successful spring break program for transition students ranging in age from 14-19. This year participants engaged in activities focused on daily living, employment and assistive technology. This year some of the activities were led by Community Integration Services (CIS). CIS is a community provider who developed several workplace activities for the students to participate in workplace readiness and work-based learning at several businesses including, Barnes & Noble, Microsoft, AT&T and Tesla.

Level Up in Wichita, KS - VR supported four high school students to attend the Level Up Conference in Wichita, KS during the summer of FFY2019. Level Up is a week-long training program for students across the nation, who are blind or visually impaired. Located on the Wichita State University Campus, the high school experience is designed to prepare students to successfully transition to college or career. Those who attended explored new technology and various careers.

Summer Youth Employment Opportunities - Four transition students spent their summer engaged in workplace learning experiences made possible by community partners and government entities. This year participants worked with New Castle County Government and the City of Wilmington.

Graduation Celebration - DVI hosted a celebration to recognize the accomplishments of participants who graduated from middle school, high school and college; those who completed the Summer Skills Academy; and, some completed internships. Two Keynote Speakers shared their journey of college, careers and re-careering while having severe visually impairments.

Camp Abilities Delaware - The sports camp welcomed twenty students to Killens Pond State Park during the summer of 2019. Campers were introduced to a variety of sports, including cross-country running, field events, golf, football, and much more. Designed for transitioning youth, the educational component includes work-related topics including careers, work readiness activities, teambuilding, and conflict resolution. The purpose of the camp is to encourage physical activity, develop awareness of health and wellness, enhance teamwork skills and improve confidence and self-esteem. Camp Abilities Delaware is part of an international organization of educational adaptive-sports camps for DVI consumers between the age of 5 and 21 staffed with volunteers who are certified Teachers for the Visually Impaired and Orientation and Mobility Specialists. The volunteers spend their summers assisting the camps taking place throughout the U.S. and South America.

Disability Mentoring Day - VR staff partnered with local school districts, the University of Delaware, and the Department of Health & Social Services, to plan and implement Disability Mentoring Day in New Castle County in October 2018. Several students from DVI participated in the one-day event, which focused on employment preparation and career development for students with disabilities.

Beach House Weekend - Each year DVI partners with the Children's Beach House in Lewes, Delaware, to host a weekend of learning disguised as fun. The weekend also provides plenty of opportunities for students to naturally transfer skills considered useful and marketable in the workplace. During the fall 2018 Beach House weekend, the 9th-12th grade students began a leadership development journey that culminated in becoming Counselors in training (CITs) for the Spring 2019 Beach House weekend. Four high school students led fifteen others through an exciting weekend at the Children's Beach House in Lewes, DE. In collaboration with the DVI staff, the CITs planned and directed students through a variety of activities throughout the weekend.

Space Camp for Interested Students with Visual Impairments - Ten students and their DVI chaperones attended Space Camp, a week-long camp coordinated by teachers of the visually impaired, at the US Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama. Students fully participated in missions that illuminated real-world applications of science, technology, engineering and mathematics through use of assistive technology, adapted equipment, braille, and large print materials. They experienced firsthand the future of space travel, practiced clear communication through aquatic teambuilding activities, put engineering skills to the test as they construct an ablative shield during the Thermal Design Challenge and participated in leadership training to solve technically challenging anomalies in order to complete their space mission.

Summer Skills Academy - DVI offered students with visual impairments another Summer Skills Academy during FFY2019. The day camp style program was once again offered for two weeks and held at BlindSight Delaware, a partner agency dedicated to Delawareans with blindness. The comprehensive program provided students with a variety of learning opportunities related to careers, living independently, assistive technology, leisure and mobility.



New Orientation & Mobility Project - The DVI Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists piloted a new project designed to better prepare students for the transition from high school to life after graduation. The first event provided an opportunity for seven high school students to practice their independent travel, money management, and self-advocacy skills. Throughout the year, several students participated in trips to various community venues including (but not limited to), the Christiana Mall, Shop Rite, DHSS Campus, and West Chester University.

Mission Transition 2019 - Every summer for over a decade, DVI organizes the Mission Transition program. The program is designed to give college-bound students with blindness and visual impairments a real taste of college life. DVI arranges for the participants and staff to live in college dorms for the career-focused multi-day event. Attended by eight transition youth, the 2019 program moved to Delaware State University in Dover, DE. The change in venue led to a larger variety of experiences for the participants. In addition to the planned activities, the Delaware State University Disabilities Coordinator was able to offer our students the following experiences:

- The dorm has a "POD" concession stand/snack shop.
- Four students participated in an African American Literature Class. The students advocated for their preferred media, received the reading material, read it prior to class and were involved in the class discussion!
- The Apple Classroom hosted our group and implemented a lesson which provided an opportunity for students to interact with the technology and ask questions related to their technology.

Business Enterprise Program

Lieutenant Governor's Award for Excellence - was awarded to the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) Blind Vendors Committee for offering a significant contribution to the Governor's Healthy Delaware initiative through healthy vending. For over a year, the BEP piloted products, conducted surveys and hosted taste testings so that the vending patrons were satisfied with the new healthy products. By the end of FFY2019, all state vending machines were stocked with at least 40% healthy options.

BEP Strategic Plan Update - BEP personnel and the Blind Vendors Committee (BVC) continued to work on the program strategic plan goals and objectives during FFY2019.

BEP Micro Markets - The BEP spend a great deal of time introducing the concept of Micro Markets to consumers in several state buildings. By the end of FFY2019, BEP successfully opened two Micro Markets that replaced cafeteria or Bank of vending machines. The Micro Markets offer more healthy options than regular vending.



Independent Living & Community Outreach

DVI maintains a registry of over 3,000 people who meet the division eligibility requirements and regularly communicates with those who wish to be contacted. Information is routinely sent in various formats, according to consumers' desired media preferences. This includes electronic, automated phone calls, Braille and the US Postal Service. DVI utilizes an electronic marketing system, to create fully accessible newsletters and announcements and an automated phone system to send quick informational messages. During FFY2019 consumers received 23 automated calls and 14 newsletters and announcements. The number of people on the DVI registry may seem high; however, data suggests that Delaware could have anywhere from 17,000 to 21,000 who meet DVI eligibility mainly because of degenerative diseases such as Macular Degeneration, Glaucoma & Diabetic Retinopathy. As a result, a great deal of outreach, programming and education efforts target older adults, who are losing or have lost their vision.



Older Individuals Who Are Blind Program Improvements

- During FFY2019, the Independent Living (IL) program continued to receive technical assistance from the Older Individuals who are Blind Technical Training Assistance Center (OIB-TAC), which was developed by the National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision (NRTC) at Mississippi State for the purpose of improving the operation and performance of OIB programs. OIB initiatives are state grants funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) programs, which are intended to help older adults with severe visual impairments age in place with dignity. Individualized, year-long consultation helps state OIB programs to

develop program improvement goals, and strategies to meet those goals, through training, technical assistance, and action plans

DVI Sponsored Community Outreach

Healthy Vision Family Night at the Delaware Children's Museum - DVI and the Delaware Children's Museum (DCM) co-sponsored the third annual Healthy Vision Family Night in May. In addition to participating in regular museum activities, dozens of exhibitors offered the opportunity to learn about maintaining healthy vision and accessing services. The event received a tremendous amount of social media attention and had double the number of attendees from the previous year. May is Healthy Vision Month and as such, the perfect time to raise awareness about eye disease and prevention. DCM and DVI agreed to co-sponsor the event annually.

DVI & VRAC White Cane Day Event - White Cane Safety Day is designed to raise awareness of blindness, visual impairments and white cane safety. In October 2018, the VRAC and DVI cohosted a successful Assistive Technology & Community Resource Fair. The event was open to the public and held at Delaware Technical Community College in Dover, DE. Attendees had the opportunity to visit nearly 30 vendor exhibitor booths and attend breakout sessions. The celebration also included the VRAC presentation of two awards recognizing achievements in advocacy and education.



Community Sensitivity Training - The DVI Orientation/Mobility team continues to provide Blind Sensitivity Training throughout the state. The training ended with a full day of Blind Sensitivity Training, which is designed for sighted people to experience some barriers faced by people who are blind.

- Two days of training for an Adapted Physical Education class at the University of Delaware. Students learned about DVI services and the national shortage of Teachers for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TVIs) and Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialists (COMS). DVI also introduced students to the Camp Abilities Delaware program and sports equipment used for people who are blind.
- Law Enforcement Sensitivity Training – DVI continues to train all recruits in the New Castle County Police Department. Since DVI has been working with first responders for over two years, a researcher with Salus University has observed the training and included the practice into a project that involves officers in PA correctional institutions.

Independent Living Workshops - The DVI Independent Living program coordinated workshops every month throughout FFY2019. The topics are chosen to meet the needs of people with visual impairments; however, most are very suitable for all people with disabilities so are advertised to the public as well as the DVI registry. The majority of workshops were offered in person or by conference call to provide flexibility for all Delaware residents. Examples of FFY2019 workshops include: Labeling and Organization, Accessible Publications, Emergency Preparedness, and DE Emergency System for People with Disabilities, and Accessible Mainstream Electronics.

Social Media - DVI uses Facebook to connect with the general public and reach those who other people who may need services. The page is used to advertise workshops and events, promote DVI and share valuable information. DVI continues to increase the number of users, post reactions, and private vision-related inquiries. The DVI Facebook page was created to reach under-served populations and the public at large. The uptick in followers, increase in service-related inquiries, and innovative use of the site features prove this will continue to develop into a valuable outreach tool.



Community Sponsored Outreach

DVI staff are frequent exhibitors at community events, health fairs and local conferences. During FFY2019, DVI exhibited and/or sponsored more than twenty community outreach events; presented eight vision loss workshops; and, provided blindness sensitivity training throughout the state, effectively providing vision-related information to hundreds of people.

Delaware Diabetes Expo - The Annual Delaware Diabetes Expo, held annually in November, is a collaboration between the Delaware Diabetes Coalition and other community partners and agencies. DVI had a very active role in facilitating this event, as it has annually. The Expo featured breakout sessions, vendors, and screenings for participants. The DVI Independent Living Administrator served as the Expo's Mistress of Ceremonies and facilitated a session on Diabetes Self-Management for the visually impaired. Additionally, members of the Independent Living Program exhibited at the expo, answering questions and disseminating information to attendees.

LIFE Conference - DVI exhibited at the annual LIFE (Legislation, Independence, Families, and Education) Conference. This well-attended (500+) event offers guests a variety of breakout sessions and an opportunity for people with disabilities and their families to meet with vendors, state agencies and community resources.

Delaware Hispanic Festival - Delaware hosted an exhibitor table during the Hispanic Festival in the summer of 2019. According to the festival website, over 10,000 people per year attend the one-day event.

Vision-related healthcare professionals - Often the number one referral resource for people with severe vision loss, DVI routinely exhibits or attends Delaware Optometric Association's annual conference affording the opportunity to speak with approximately fifty medical professionals. DVI staff are active members of six large community resource sharing organizations. Each group offers organized time to learn about services and all are very well-attended. Collectively the groups have nearly 800 members throughout the state. Meetings average anywhere from 15%-40% membership attendance and group facilitators will distribute all information such as events and newsletters. The group environments have afforded DVI the opportunity to educate nearly 300 potential referral sources about DVI services annually.

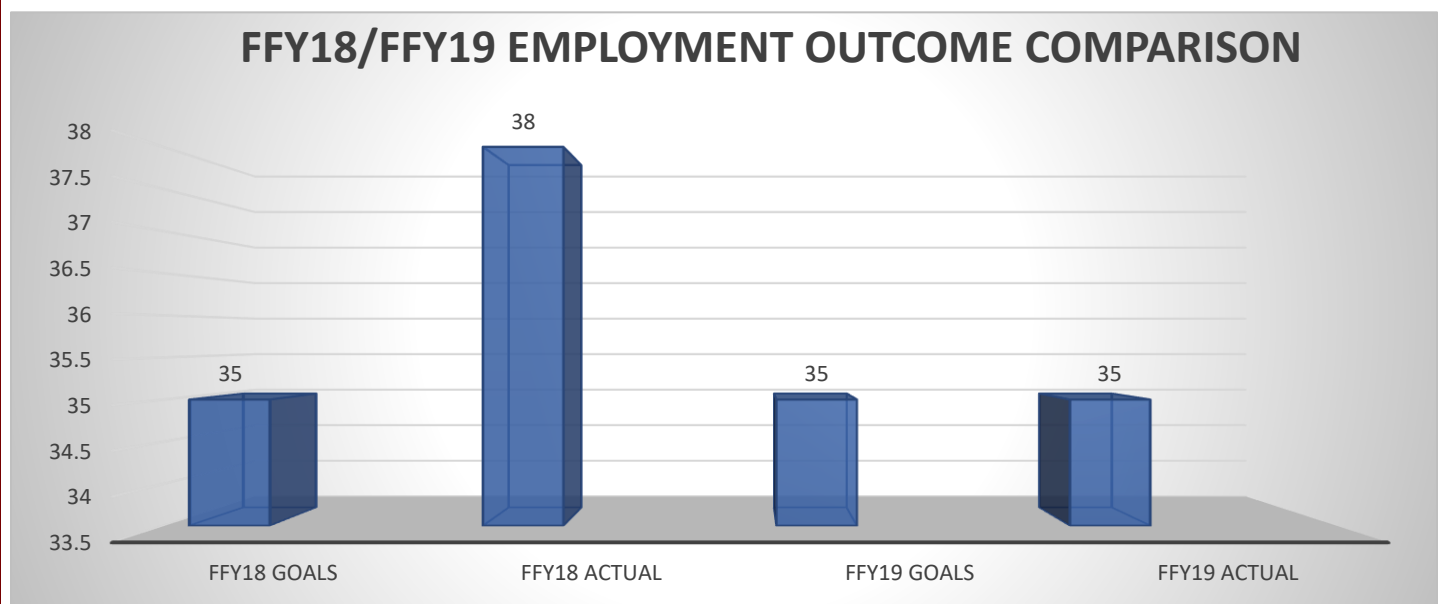
Consumer Satisfaction

The consumer satisfaction survey gathers perspectives of DVI clients concerning program services, levels of satisfaction, and areas for program improvement. Historically, DVI provided traditional mechanisms by which to provide feedback; either in-person or on the phone. In an effort to increase the rate of response and streamline the data analysis process, the Division began using Survey Monkey during FFY2017. The consumers now are provided a choice of using the electronic system or completing their survey on the telephone. In addition to program-related surveys, DVI developed agency questionnaires to capture data related to customer service and agency interaction in regard to general contact and all services. During FFY2018, forty-five people who were closed with VR participated in the consumer survey either by phone or through Survey Monkey. Once data was combined and analyzed from all systems of collection, it became obvious that substantial flaws in the system skewed the results. The results indicated that nearly 100% of consumers surveyed were satisfied in every category/question. Since this is significantly higher than data from the previous year, we were left to believe that our data was inconclusive, and the integration of new and former systems posed more of a challenge than we had anticipated. During FFY2019, DVI dedicated a team to this

project. They were tasked with identifying system integration issues, determine what data truly represents the agency, compare desired data points to what is collected, and adjust the system. Although this continues to be a work in progress, we are confident that our system has improved greatly since last year.

During FFY2019, we received responses from 76% of the VR consumers who received services. We noticed a significant drop in neutral (-10% to 30%) and negative (-16%) responses. The overall percentage of neutral responses decreased from 30% to 10%, showing Consumers were more vested with the survey. Consumer satisfaction also increased in DVI's coordination of services with responses evenly split among those satisfied and those extremely satisfied. DVI did find an opportunity for improvement due to a slight increase with third party provider services dissatisfaction. Process improvement is underway to develop more awareness and better communication with third party service providers. DVI is focused on continuing these successes and continuing to finetune our data collection system in FFY2020.

Impact Data



DATA ELEMENT	ACHIEVEMENT
Caseload	219
Number determined eligible during FY18	56
Number/percent new completed plans for VR services	84%
Total number of individuals in training/higher education	59
Total number of transition age students (14-21)	75
Total number closed with successful outcomes	36
Average hourly wage at closure	\$16.80
Average hours worked at closure	35/week

Spotlight - Elaine Huitt

Online blog ***Bold Blind Beauty***, recently featured Elaine Huitt, DVI Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor who works with transition youth, in their ***Woman on the Move*** section. Elaine shares with the author her compelling story of growing up ashamed to be blind and not receiving accommodations. She discusses how she kept her visual impairment a secret well into adulthood before finally seeking help and landing her dream job. DVI is thrilled to have Elaine working within our Vocational Rehabilitation program and excited that she had a chance to tell her story to a large audience. Access Elaine's whole story by [clicking this link](https://boldblindbeauty.com/2019/11/05/elaine-huitt-seeing-her-way-through-life/)¹.

Excerpt:

As a poised Sr. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, no one would ever guess that Elaine Huitt is 60 and blind. A beautiful lady, who walks confidently, without a white cane I might add, said even her doctors don't understand how she does it. Because of the severity of her sight, it's not uncommon for Elaine's doctors to ask her how she walked in their offices.

Elaine and her brother were both born with Idiopathic Congenital Nystagmus. While she wasn't diagnosed until after high school graduation, Elaine began wearing eyeglasses at 11 months of age. She explains that her condition is a blockage of the pathway from the eyes to the brain.



¹ <https://boldblindbeauty.com/2019/11/05/elaine-huitt-seeing-her-way-through-life/>