

Alaska State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee

2019 Annual Report



“There are so many people out there, fighting their battles every day, believing they will never amount to anything, that they aren’t worthy or capable.

But DVR is a program where those beliefs are challenged and people can kick-start the beginning of the life they never thought possible.”

*DVR Participant
Public Testimony*



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

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From the SVRC Chair and DVR Director

On the cover: High school student participates in career workshop by taking blood pressure of a volunteer.

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DVR is an amazing program. I'm so appreciative to have had the opportunity to experience it.

- DVR Participant, Public Testimony

As the Chair of the State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC) and the Director of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), we would like to express our excitement with the work being done to improve and enhance employment outcomes for Alaskan's with disabilities in this great state. We believe that the SVRC plays an important part in helping to provide guidance to Alaska DVR leadership on addressing the employment needs of Alaskans with disabilities. With new board appointments, we can see the passion and enthusiasm from our members as we strive to address the challenges of our aging and at-risk youth population. Now, more than ever, we need to address this need through efficient and accountable service delivery. Employment can be the biggest cure to many challenges Alaskans with disabilities experience. With the SVRC and DVR Partnership intact, we are confident we can do more!



SVRC Chair, David Bérube



DVR Director, Duane Mayes

I began working with DVR at a time in my life where I was most in need of support. I was living at the Fairbanks Rescue Mission and was working through learning how to heal from a past where I had been broken, addicted, and beaten down. I had lost all hope in myself.

Working with DVR helped me to begin to realize that I am, in fact, capable and I am worth being supported. Since working with DVR, I have graduated that Genesis Program, gotten my license back, have a safe, secure home for me and my son, and recently started working at THREAD Child Care Assistance as an eligibility specialist. Because of the support I received and still receive through DVR, I am able to live a happy, healthy, and independent life away from the threat of institutions or death like I was facing when I started with DVR.

- DVR Participant, Public Testimony

Dave Bérube
CHAIR
Anchorage
 Business Representative

Bonnie Lucas
VICE CHAIR
Anchorage
 Consumer Representative

Mandy Cleveland
Anchorage
 Parent Training and
 Information Center
 Representative

Kathy Craft
Fairbanks
 Alaska Workforce
 Investment Board

Tamara Douglas
Anchorage
 Client Assistance
 Program

Doug Gryzbowski
Kenai
 Vocational Rehabilitation
 Counselor

Jacqueline Llana
Anchorage
 Consumer Representative

Cynthia Lovel
Wasilla
 Business Representative

Duane Mayes
Anchorage
 Division of Vocational
 Rehabilitation,
 Director

Lisa McInerney
Anchorage
 Business Representative

Ric Nelson
Anchorage
 Consumer Representative

Bob Purvis
Sitka
 Community Rehabilitation
 Provider Representative

Kenneth Schoenlein
Willow
 Consumer
 Representative

Coleen Shivers
Juneau
 Alaska Dept. of Education &
 Early Development

Tony Simmons
Anchorage
 Alaska Dept. of Education &
 Early Development

Vacant

- State Independent Living Council
- Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation

The Alaska State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee

The State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC) is composed of volunteers from around the state who are appointed by the Governor to both advise and partner with the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). Members help shape policy by participating in strategic planning, needs assessments, consumer satisfaction surveys, and ongoing program evaluation.

Members include people with disabilities, community rehabilitation program service providers, representatives from independent living, Department of Education and Early Development, Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) programs, advocates, VR participants, and business leaders.

Each year, the SVRC submits this report on the status of the DVR program to the Governor and to the United States Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Mission

To assist individuals with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment.

The SVRC and DVR continuously work to improve the delivery of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to Alaskans with disabilities. A keystone of this work is an ongoing, three year cyclical strategic planning process, which is the responsibility of DVR and SVRC leadership. The strategic planning process utilizes data captured from the tri-annual Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) report. The results of the CSNA are used to determine DVR priorities.

The strategic planning team includes the DVR management and leadership teams, SVRC members, the Client Assistance Program, and Tribal VR programs. The four goals listed below were identified for the 2020-2022 planning cycle and provide organizational direction and focus for DVR. Specific teams are tasked with duties that will ensure these goals are met. These assigned tasks are reviewed and updated quarterly.

Goal 1: Provide High-Quality Services

DVR will deliver high-quality vocational rehabilitation services to people with disabilities and assist them with obtaining employment that is consistent with their career goals. This goal reflects DVR's continued focus on improving the VR service delivery system.

Goal 2: Provide Highly Skilled Staff

DVR will recruit, employ, retain, and train the most qualified and highly skilled rehabilitation staff. This goal reflects the value DVR places on well-trained staff and the need for succession planning.

Goal 3: Improve Organizational Systems

DVR will continuously evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational systems and identify opportunities to develop innovative solutions for necessary changes. This will include implementing advancements in technology as resources allow, analyzing current business practices to improve service delivery systems, and ensuring critical applications/systems are current.

Goal 4: Provide Leadership in the Workforce System

This goal is to strengthen our connection to other programs that serve individuals with disabilities. DVR will maintain a leadership role in expanding vocational opportunities for Alaskans with disabilities. DVR will continue to collaborate with other agencies to improve the delivery of VR services.

DVR at a Glance

Individuals served by DVR represent demographics as vast as Alaska itself. Although each individual has their own unique story, looking at aggregate numbers can help provide the community with an understanding of the overall scope of Alaska's vocational rehabilitation (VR) program.

Vocational Rehabilitation Outcomes for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2019

- 2,780 individuals received services from the VR program
- \$3,558,819 was spent on direct services to individuals
- \$1,488,677 was spent on Pre-Employment Transition Services under the VR program and the Potentially Eligible programs
 - \$1,224,321 was spent on Pre-Employment Transition Services provided to students with disabilities under the Potentially Eligible program
 - \$264,356 was spent on Pre-Employment Transition Services provided students with disabilities under the VR program
- 1,190 new individuals applied for services
- 1,471 individuals received information and referral services
- 421 individuals exited the program employed with an average wage of \$15.10/hr. The minimum wage in Alaska is \$9.89

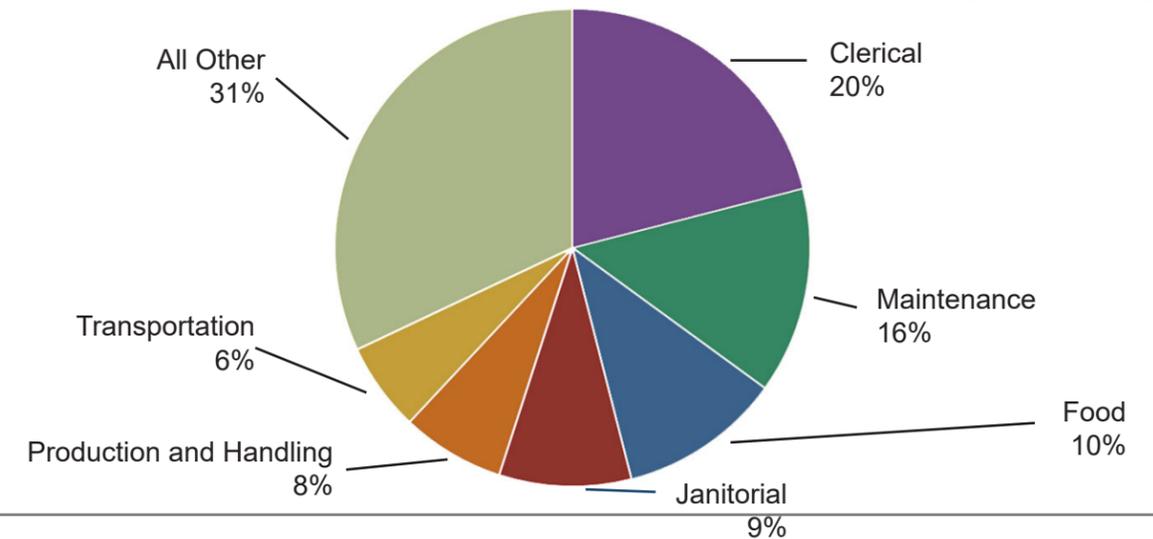
Of the 421 individuals that exited the program:

- 353 were employed in the private sector
- 55 were employed in federal, state, or local government
- 13 were self-employed

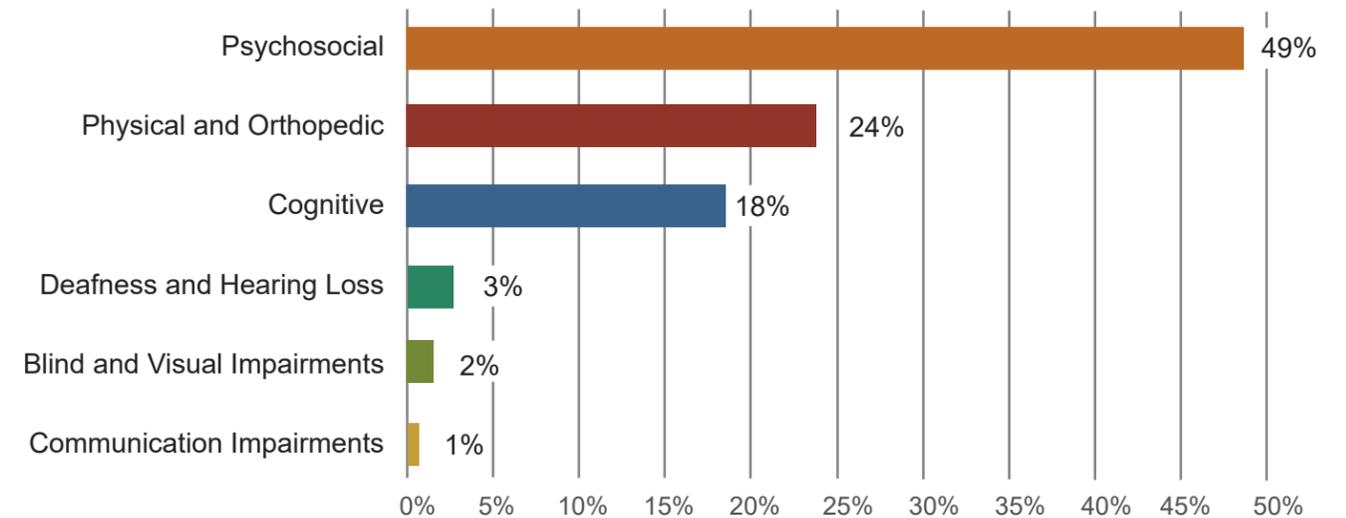
Who DVR Serves

- 95.6% of individuals receiving services were significantly disabled, with multiple barriers to employment.
- 54% were Caucasian; 27% were Alaska Native; 5% were Black or African American; 11% were Multi-racial; 2% were Asian, and 1% were Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian (participants may identify as one or more racial groups).
- 944 students with a disability (age 14-21) received Pre-Employment Transition Services.

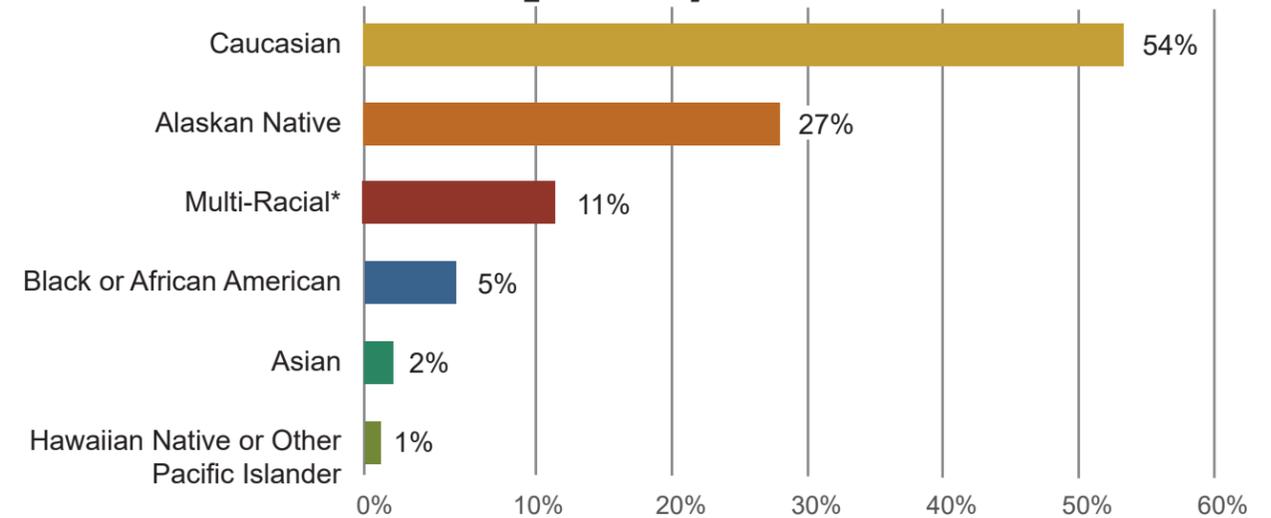
SFY 2019 Employment of DVR Participants after Exiting the Program



Participants by Disability SFY 2019



DVR Participants by Race SFY 2019



*Participants may identify as one or more racial groups.

The federal agency that oversees DVR is the Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). RSA has restructured service categories provided to individuals into five specific focus areas:

Career Services

Career Services consists of identifying the needs of individuals as their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is developed. Career Services includes services such as labor market information, vocational assessments, diagnosis and treatment, and counseling and guidance. Career Services are provided to assist individuals in obtaining or retaining employment.

Training Services

Training Services are provided to assist individuals in accomplishing their vocational goals. Training Services are available for individuals who are unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment that leads to self-sufficiency. Training Services includes services such as college/university enrollment (junior, four-year, and graduate

levels), occupational/vocational training, on-the-job training, and apprenticeships. Training Services assist individuals in obtaining an education credential, such as a degree or certificate, which will increase their probability of achieving competitive integrated employment.

Other/Supportive Services

Other/Supportive Services are available to participants who are receiving career or training services and to assist in reduce barriers to employment. Other/Supported Services includes services such as support for transportation, personal assistant services, maintenance, rehabilitation technology, reader services, and interpreter services.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Under the VR Program

Pre-ETS are a specialized group of services provided to Students With a Disability (SWD) to prepare them to transition from an educational setting to post-secondary education or employment. Pre-ETS under the VR program are delivered to SWD who have applied for VR services and can be provided at any stage in the VR process. These services are provided to a participant of the VR program who is 14-21 years old and currently enrolled in an educational program such as high school, college, or

Consumer Quotes from Satisfaction Surveys

"I am very happy with the services from DVR."

"Staff was polite."

"I enjoyed working with the computers and learning a lot."

"It was a wonderful experience."

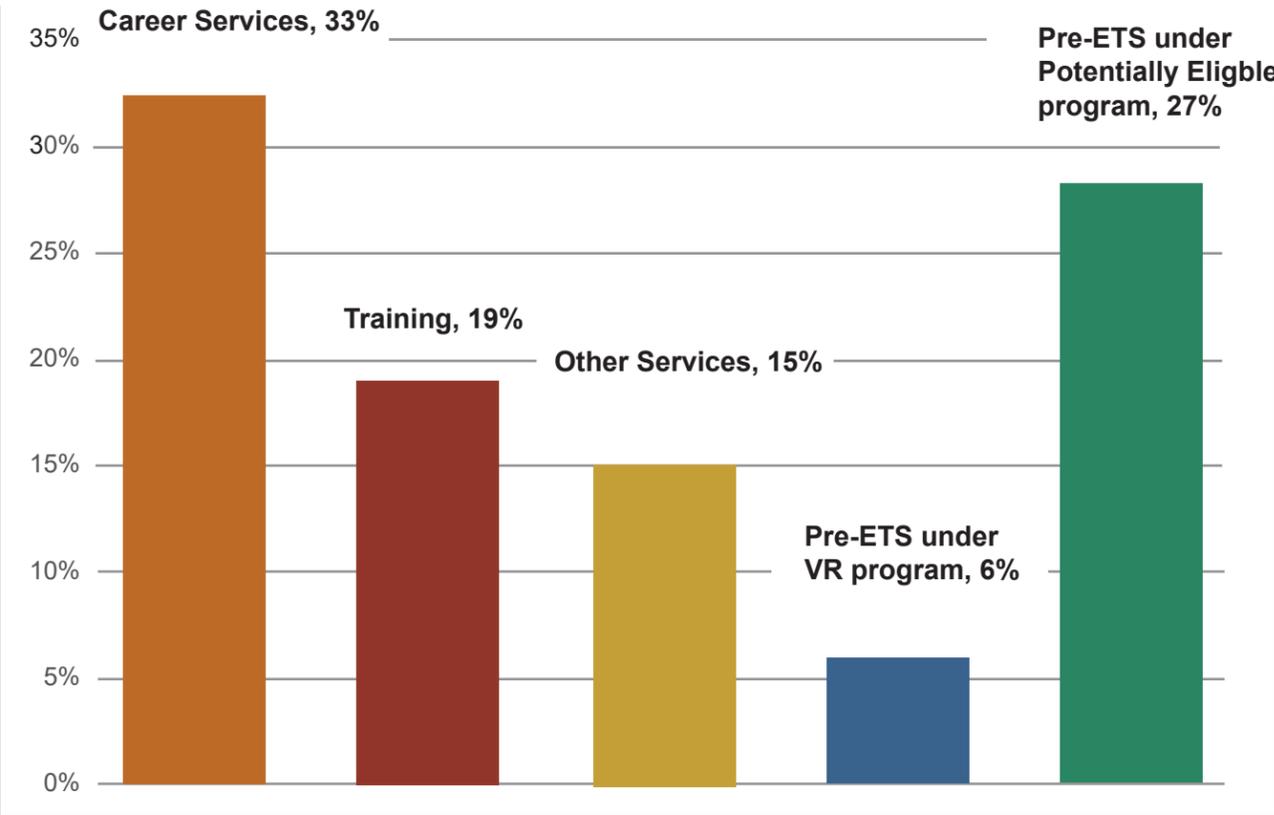
"I will always be grateful to them."

DVR Purchased Services continued...

recognized educational program. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as Amended identifies five distinct Pre-ETS activities: Job Exploration Counseling; Work-Based Learning Experiences; Counseling on Enrollment Opportunities in Post-Secondary Education; Workplace Readiness Training and Independent Living; and Instruction in Self Advocacy.

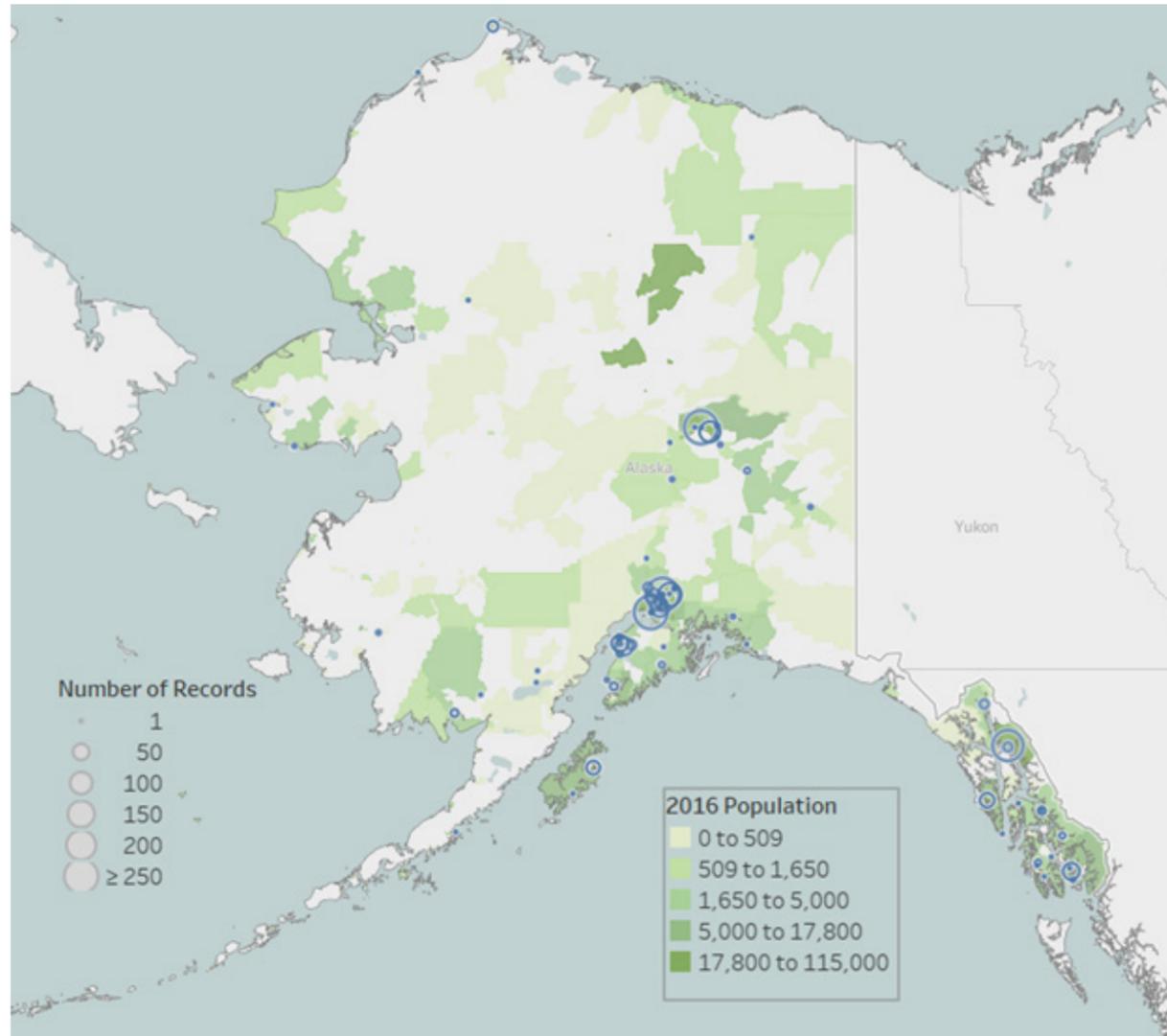
Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Under the Potentially Eligible Program

Similar to the Pre-ETS under the VR program described above, Pre-ETS under the Potentially Eligible program provides Pre-ETS to Students With a Disability (SWD) who are not applicants of the VR program, but who are considered to be potentially eligible for VR services. These services are provided SWD who are 14-21 years old and currently enrolled in an educational program such as high school, college, or recognized educational program. These SWD are also provided with Job Exploration Counseling; Work-Based Learning Experiences; Counseling on Enrollment Opportunities in Post-Secondary Education; Workplace Readiness Training and Independent Living; and Instruction in Self Advocacy. DVR served 944 SWD in approximately 165 different cities throughout SFY19.



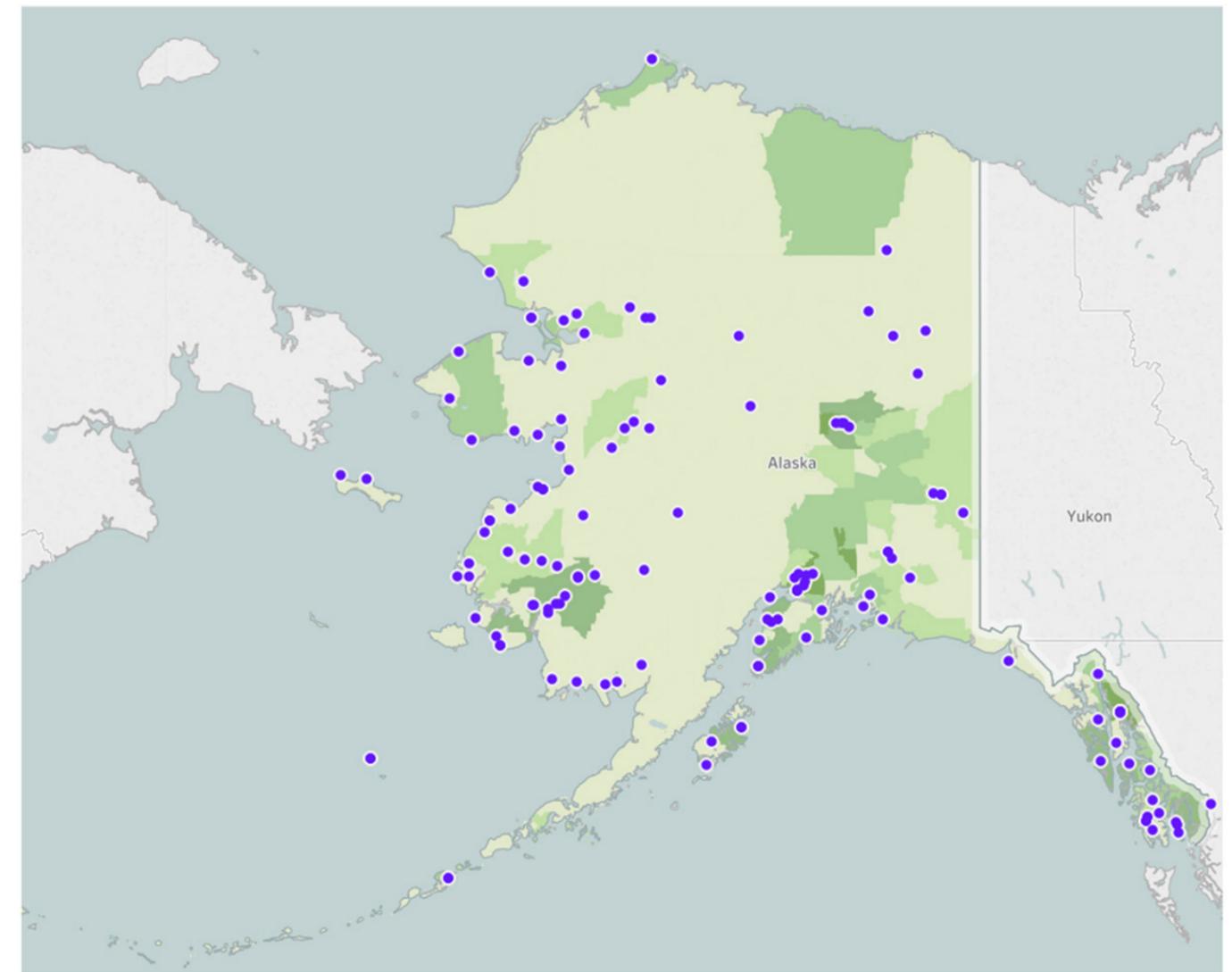
Locations of Alaskans Served SFY 2019

2,780 Individuals Received Services from the Vocational Rehabilitation Program



Vocational Rehabilitation Program: These are individuals who have applied for Vocational Rehabilitation services and have been assigned a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to assist them towards achieving competitive integrated employment.

944 Students with a Disability Received Pre-ETS Under the Potentially Eligible Program



Potentially Eligible Program: Pre-Employment Transition Services are services provided only to Students With a Disability (SWD) who are not applicants of the VR program, but who are considered to be potentially eligible for VR services. These services are provided to SWD who are 14-21 years old and currently enrolled in an educational program such as high school, college, or recognized educational program.

DVR Initiatives

Employment First Coordinator

In the Spring of 2019, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), in partnership with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, set in motion the creation of an Employment First Coordinator to serve as DVR's lead for developing and maintaining strong business relations with employers across Alaska. Marcus Sanders was hired as DVR's Employment First Coordinator in August 2019, with the responsibility to ensure the needs of businesses are fully considered and are successfully matched with Alaskans with disabilities who have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to meet the need of those businesses. Mr. Sanders is working closely with the Division Director, Duane Mayes, and DVR's Vocational Rehabilitation Managers to identify employers who are ready, willing, and able to hire qualified Alaskans with disabilities. Alaska DVR continues to align with other public Vocational Rehabilitation programs across the nation that have created similar positions in order to effectively address the needs of our business community.



DVR Director, Duane Mayes, and Employment First Coordinator, Marcus Sanders

Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program Partnership

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Leadership and the Alaska Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) Consortia met on October 23, 2019 to re-unify efforts in serving Alaska Natives with disabilities living throughout the state. A memorandum of understanding was updated and signed by the DVR Director and the ten TVR Directors in order to enhance joint efforts to ensure quality and culturally relevant employment outcomes for Alaska Natives with disabilities. DVR and TVR has scheduled on-going, bi-monthly meetings which will include an annual face-to-face meeting where DVR Leadership will meet with the Alaska TVR Consortia to actively address, resolve, and identify solutions for any issues that negatively impact the employment outcomes of Alaskan Natives with disabilities. DVR believes that the partnership with TVR creates a stronger and more culturally relevant system of vocational rehabilitation service delivery and highly values the insight and expertise of TVR leadership.

Senior Employment Initiative

At the direction of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) Commissioner, Dr. Tamika Ledbetter, the Division

of Employment and Training Services and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) met to address the employment needs of Alaska's older workers.

The number of senior citizens (65+) living in Alaska has increased by more than 5 percent each year since 2010, growing at a rate faster than any other state in the nation. As of 2018, Alaska had an estimated 87,304 seniors, up from 54,938 eight years ago, and it is projected the state will have more than 138,000 seniors by 2035. Seniors are living longer and want to work well beyond their retirement years due to either the desire to stay engaged or the necessity to work because they do not have enough retirement income to meet their needs.

As DOLWD moves forward with addressing the needs of older workers, there will be increased collaboration between the Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training Program, the Alaska Job Centers, and DVR. DOLWD and the Alaska Commission on Aging have already begun their strategic planning to effectively tackle the ever growing issue of senior employment.

At Risk Youth Entering the Workforce

Many leaders in Alaska are concerned with the growing population of at-risk youth that are either exiting the foster care system and/or the Division of Juvenile Justice correctional facilities with minimal supports in place to ensure success. The State of Alaska firmly believes

that and emphasis on the value of employment can make a positive impact on those who are considered "At-Risk Youth."

With the leadership of the DOLWD Commissioner, Dr. Tamika Ledbetter, and the Department of Health and Social Services Commissioner (DHSS), Adam Crum, a

taskforce has been created to to utilize and maximize existing resources within DOLWD and DHSS to improve outcomes for at-risk youth. The taskforce includes directors and supervisors from DOLWD's DVR, Alaska Workforce Investment Board, the Alaska Vocational Technical Center, as well as DHSS's Office of Children's Services' Independent Living Program, and Division of Juvenile Justice.

DOLWD hired a Program Coordinator, Leslie Vines, to oversee collaboration of the

above listed agencies and to manage an internal standing committee designed to create measureable and meaningful goals to determine impact. The committee will create a scorecard for both DOLWD and DHSS to track progress annually, create a work plan that focuses on connecting all of the relevant agencies serving this population, and make policy recommendations to DHSS and DOLWD leadership, with the goal of improving employment outcomes of at-risk youth.

"As the Director of DVR, I am confident that the State of Alaska can affect this change for the better, and do so in a collaborative manner between both DOLWD and DHSS".

- DVR Director Duane Mayes

Thank you and your staff for working with us to hire your client as a certified nurse's assistant. She's become a valuable member of our team. I was moved by the unanimously glowing feedback from her supervisor, peers, and elders during her performance review. She is a real asset to our organization, and I'm thrilled by her success.

- Alaskan Business Owner

Survey of Participants Who Exit DVR Services

The SVRC oversees the on-going consumer satisfaction survey of DVR participants who were closed after an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) was developed.

Consumer Satisfaction Survey Highlights

DVR is a consumer-driven organization where a participant's self-involvement in the vocational rehabilitation process and informed choice are vital for success. The consumer satisfaction surveys focus on four points: Consumer and Staff Interaction, Consumer Involvement, Program Information, and Program Satisfaction.

Surveys are sent to participants' email addresses via the online survey tool, SurveyMonkey. The surveys are sent on a monthly basis to individuals who have exited the program after an Individualized Plan for Employment was developed. Currently, 87% of DVR participants have a valid email address, which is a 4% increase from last year. The average monthly response rate is 8% which is similar to past reporting years.

Treating the Consumer Participant with Respect

Eighty-one percent of DVR participants who responded agreed that staff were polite and helpful throughout the time their case was open. Seventy-seven percent of respondents felt their questions and requests to staff were replied to promptly.

Informed Choice and Involvement in the DVR Process

Seventy-five percent of respondents were pleased with their involvement in the decision-making process that led to their Individualized Plan for Employment. Additionally, 87% stated they knew the goal of DVR was to help them find employment or stay employed.

Referral of Others

Overall, 83% of respondents stated they would recommend Alaska DVR to others, which is an increase of 8% from last year.

Review

The results of the surveys are reviewed on a quarterly basis and forwarded to regional office managers for follow-up and further action, if needed.

All Respondents SFY 2019 - Survey Categories

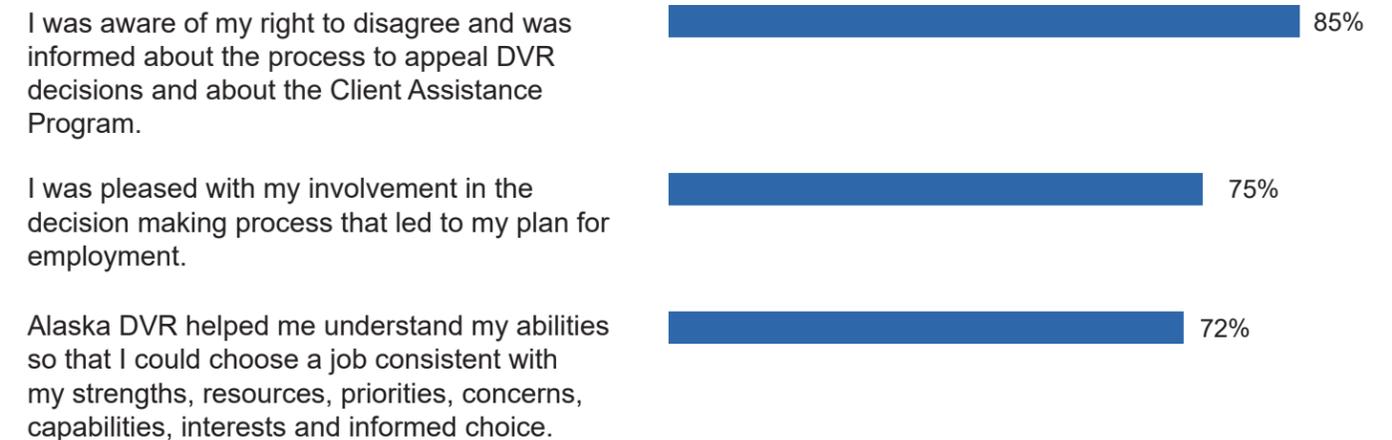
1. Program Satisfaction



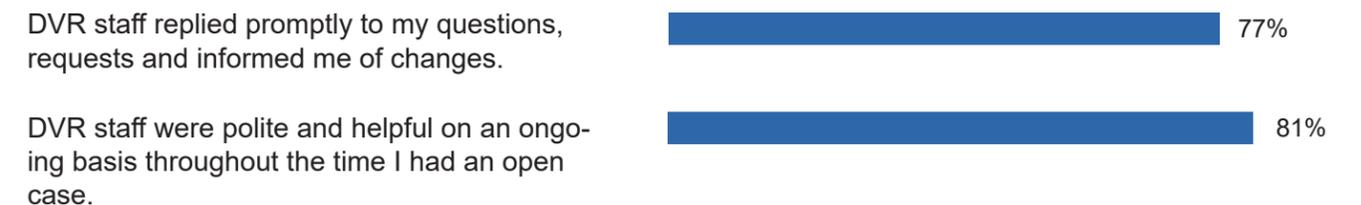
2. Program Information



3. Consumer Involvement



4. Consumer and Staff Interaction



SVRC 2019 Expenditures

The SVRC FFY 2019 funds were used for expenses related to quarterly meetings as well as the cost of printing of the annual report and the purchase of framed certificates for the Committee's Business Recognition Award winner.

Three of the quarterly meetings were held via video conference, and one was held face-to-face in Anchorage, which is the least expensive location for the SVRC to meet. Meeting costs included the use of a court reporter and providing accessibility options for people with hearing impairments.

2020 Resource Plan

FFY 2020 funds will be used to support the SVRC's quarterly meeting expenses, including one face-to-face meeting to be held in Anchorage, Alaska. This will involve travel and accommodations for members and staff, a court reporter, a sign language interpreter for public testimony, and conference room rental.

Funds will also be used to pay for travel, room and conference registration for two members to attend a National Coalition on State Rehabilitation Council conference and to purchase up to three framed certificates, or a similar type of award, for the winners of the SVRC's Business Recognition Awards.

In partnership with DVR, the SVRC engaged in a broad range of activities during federal fiscal year 2019 from October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019 to help ensure the quality of DVR's services.

SVRC Activities Federal Fiscal Year 2019

- Collected public testimony from around the state via email, phone, fax, in person, and written letters.
- Held four meetings, three of which were video/teleconference meetings and one face-to-face meeting in Anchorage, Alaska. Each meeting focused on different regions or catchment area: Anchorage, Rural, Northern, and Southern.
- Conducted outreach efforts to recruit new members to join the SVRC.
- Coordinated with DVR Communications Lead to use DVR's newly developed social media and networking tools, including Facebook and periodic newsletters, to advertise meetings and solicit feedback.

Speakers

At each meeting, reports were given by the DVR Director, Duane Mayes; Chief of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Mariah Krueger; DVR Rehabilitation Manager(s) and from the following partner members: Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation, the Alaska Workforce Investment Board, the Client Assistance Program, the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, and the parent training organization "Stone Soup Group."

The committee also heard from the following guest speakers:

• Business Community

Fairbanks Memorial Hospital Talent Development Coordinator, Karen Lapp.

• Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) Directors

Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope TVR Director, Dallas-Lee Brower; Tanana Chiefs TVR Director, Amanda Race; Tlingit and Haida TVR Director, Teresa Sarabia; Maniilaq TVR Director, Tom Cyrus.

• Community Agencies

Rural Cap Community Services Director, Patrick Anderson; Southeast Independent Living Center Assistant Director, Sierra Jimenez; Re-entry Coalition Case Manager Marsha Oss.

• State Agencies

Statewide Suicide Prevention Council, Acting Executive Director, Beverly Schoonover; Alaska Mental Health Trust, Program Officer, Jimael Johnson; Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education Executive Director, Kristin Vandagriff.



SVRC and AT Subcommittee Ad-Hoc Members at October, 2019 Quarterly Meeting

I've been struggling trying to get a job for myself to sustain the livelihood for my daughter. But DVR has very much helped me throughout this struggle. In certain areas, I'm disabled, and I'm very grateful for them helping me.

- DVR Participant, Public Testimony

SVRC Subcommittee Activities

The State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC) has five standing subcommittees: Executive; Program Evaluation; Assistive Technology; Planning; and Policy, Public Relations and Resources. The committee also has an ad-hoc Business Recognition Subcommittee. Below is a summary of each subcommittee's role and activities.

Executive

Chair: Dave Bérube

The Executive subcommittee is comprised of the Chair, Vice Chair, and the chairs of the standing subcommittees. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Director also attends as an ex-officio member.

The subcommittee held monthly teleconferences during which the committee members reviewed the work of the SVRC as a whole, as well as assigned work to the other subcommittees. We also planned the SVRC's quarterly meetings, including identifying guest speakers.

Considerable attention continues to be given to ensure each member can fully

and actively participate remotely for our three annual video conferenced meetings and that the committee hears from all regions of the state, including rural areas.

The executive subcommittee's role is to help SVRC members work together to assist DVR in providing the best possible services to their clients.

Program Evaluation

Chair: Ric Nelson



DVR Business Specialists explain employment services to Carlisle Transportation Systems staff at the Anchorage Job Fair.

The Evaluation Subcommittee held meetings as needed throughout the year. We worked with the DVR Director to explore ways to improve provisional hire processes and outcomes. We also focused on finding better ways to get the word out to

improve and increase public testimony participation.

We coordinated with the Planning and Recruitment

subcommittee to help DVR identify six priorities that we feel DVR should focus on to address gaps in serving the needs of current and potential DVR consumers.

SVRC Subcommittee Activities continued...

Assistive Technology

Chair: Bonnie Lucas

The AT subcommittee provides consumer input and feedback on how the federal Assistive Technology (AT) Act funds are being used in the state of Alaska. The AT subcommittee brings formal recommendations to the SVRC for further actions.

AT Act funds are currently administered by DVR and passed through the implementing agency, Assistive Technology of Alaska (ATLA). ATLA is a non-profit agency based in Anchorage that provides services statewide.

The AT subcommittee held monthly teleconferences. ATLA Director, Mystie Rail and DVR AT Coordinator, Jason Caputo, also attended. The DVR AT Coordinator tracks grant progress, provides informal input to DVR and ATLA, and brings issues to the full SVRC, as needed.

The AT subcommittee also plans an annual one-day meeting with the full SVRC that focuses entirely on AT. This year, it was held in Anchorage. The meeting focused on assistive technology issues within the state and gives SVRC members an overview of AT Act activities and progress.

ATLA and the DVR AT Coordinator asked the AT Subcommittee to help improve a complimentary but non-AT Act program, the

AT Guaranteed Loan Fund. This program is administered by DVR and provides low cost loans to people with disabilities to get the AT they need. Due to a variety of factors, including low interest rates, the program has been underutilized.

The AT Subcommittee found other states with similar programs had similar issues and most had chosen to end the Guaranteed Loan Fund program and transfer the funds to a more effective program that served a similar need. We worked with ATLA to create a plan for transferring funds from the Guaranteed Loan Fund program to ATLA, to be used to both reinvigorate and expand their AT Act services that help Alaskans access the AT they need. This plan was approved by DVR as well as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, which oversees the AT Act funding. Our expectations is that the funds will be transferred and in use by July 2020.

Planning and Recruitment

Chair: Mandy Cleveland

The Planning and Recruitment subcommittee's role is to work with DVR on the preparation and updating of the DVR State Plan and tri-annual Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, recruitment of new SVRC members, and contributing to the preparation of the SVRC's annual report on the status and effectiveness of Alaska DVR.

SVRC Subcommittee Activities continued...

During this time period, the subcommittee focused on SVRC member recruitment.

Policy, Public Relations, and Resources

Chair: Ken Schoenlein

The Policy, Public Relations, and Resources subcommittee reviews both policy changes (when submitted for review by DVR) and notices of quarterly meetings to communities. The subcommittee held meetings, as needed, to accomplish the goals outlined in the SVRC Tasks and Timelines document.

The subcommittee reviewed the DVR and SVRC websites and made suggestions for changes, which were all adopted. The subcommittee also helped promote the quarterly meetings in the communities in which they were held.

Business Recognition (Ad-Hoc)

Chair: Bob Purvis

The SVRC's Business Recognition subcommittee annually selects, and provides an award, to both a successful large and a small business who have made notable efforts to employ people with disabilities. The subcommittee focuses on a different region of Alaska

each year. Nominations for these awards come from the DVR Business Team, which is made up of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors from each of DVR's five regions.

The rural region was selected for the 2019 Business Recognition Award. The subcommittee only received one nomination for the two business awards, but it was a very strong recommendation. The nominee was Alaska Commercial (AC) Store in Kotzebue. The SVRC voted to award the AC Store the 2019 Business Recognition award at the October 2019 quarterly meeting.

All background reviews and tax payment checks were completed prior to the committee voting on the AC store in Kotzebue's nomination.

I am so thankful that the audiologist knew about DVR. That was the key to this whole process. My DVR counselor was thorough, kind, and attentive. Having hearing aids drastically changed, for the better, my ability to communicate and pay attention to sounds at work.

- DVR Participant Public Testimony

After reviewing the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment results, the SVRC suggested that DVR prioritize at least four of the following six topics for the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan:

- People who need supported employment and are not being adequately served;
- Training and recruiting of Community Rehabilitation Providers;
- Help the rapidly increasing seniors with disabilities population who need and/or want to work;
- Focus on the increase in DVR eligible youth/students, including but not limited to:
 - Look at better use of apprenticeships and similar programs through AVTEC and other Department of Labor and Workforce Development programs so employers don't have to go out of state to find qualified workers;
 - At-risk-youth exiting foster care through Office of Children Services to the street, without needed services.
- Prioritize working with partners to achieve these numerous goals; and
- Look into how to help the State better utilize the Provisional Hire program.

DVR's Response

DVR agreed to address at least four of these recommendations in the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan, and will continue to report to the SVRC on accomplishments in these areas. The DVR Director also explained several strategies DVR is using to help the state better use Provisional Hire. The Evaluation Chair had suggested this priority and was pleased with DVR's plan.



The State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee invites you to:

Apply for Membership

If you care about issues pertaining to disability and employment, the SVRC encourages you to apply for a seat on this committee.

You may apply at: gov.alaska.gov/services/boards-and-commissions/apply-for-a-board-appointment/

You may also apply by sending a completed Boards and Commissions application, resume and a brief letter explaining your desire to serve the State of Alaska, to:

Office of the Governor

Attention: Director of Boards and Commissions
P.O. Box 110001, Juneau, AK, 99811-0001

For more information, contact the Boards and Commissions office:

Call: 907-269-7450

Fax: 907-269-7461

E-mail: Boards@Alaska.Gov

Attend a Meeting or Public Forum

All State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee meetings and forums are open to the public. Meeting dates are available at labor.alaska.gov/svrc/svrc-meeting-calendar.pdf. Notification of meeting times and agenda are posted 30 days prior to meetings at aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/.

More information about the SVRC is available at labor.alaska.gov/svrc, including minutes from previous meetings, and DVR participant and stakeholder public testimony.

Share Your Thoughts and Ideas with SVRC

Call: Voice/TDD 907-465-2814 or 1-800-478-2815

Write: Chair, State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
PO Box 115516
Juneau, AK 99811-5516

Fax: 907-465-2856

E-mail: dol.svrc@Alaska.Gov

Special Education Teachers

The Transition Camp was A-MAZING! Every kiddo that participated thought it was incredible and they said they would do it again. They felt like they were exposed to topics and things they had no idea even existed.

This experience has been the perfect springboard as we go forward in the school year, talking about the importance of staying in school. It has also caused people in the community to think about how they can partner with us and do on the job training in the future with these students.

Thank you so much for all you do!

*Heidi Fairbanks,
Skagway School
District, Special Education Coordinator*

All I know for sure is that this is the best thing (Summer Work Program) in transition that has ever happened for our kids. The employers love it, the community loves it. and the kids had amazing growth and maturity that could never come from a classroom experience.

Christie Morris, Teacher, Unalaska

Youth in the Parks (YEP) Participants

"I feel excited and fulfilled after having done YEP. I got more comfortable with myself."

"YEP made me more aware of my comfort level and boundaries. It helped me more with self- accountability and self-acceptance."

"YEP was my first job. It was good payment and a good experience. I feel good because

I got to learn how to use power tools. I made some good friends, too."

"After doing YEP, I learned how to work on my patience and to have a good attitude. I'm proud of myself for being capable to do things like shoveling, weed-whacking, and making good friends."

"YEP will help me to know what to expect out of future jobs. I know to always be prepared. I have a resume now."

"My life is a lot different than I expected it would be after doing YEP. I used to be closed up, not wanting to go anywhere. I shut myself out of social situations. I feel less fear speaking out for my own words and opinions now. "



Alaska State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee

2019 Annual Report

Michael J. Dunleavy, Governor

Dr. Tamika L. Ledbetter, Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Labor
and Workforce Development

Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development

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