

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

2019 ANNUAL REPORT ON VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

The Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired

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State Rehabilitation Council Chair

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Commissioner

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Message from the State Rehabilitation Council Chair



Thank you for your interest in this 2019 Annual Report on Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services. This year, you will find reflections on the many activities and initiatives the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) has undertaken to serve Virginians who are blind, vision impaired, or deafblind.

We continue to be grateful for our very strong partnership with the comprehensive DBVI VR program and that relationship certainly positions us to serve our community with values of collaboration, rehabilitation, and support as we help our clients achieve their maximum possible level of education and employment toward independence.

As a Commonwealth, Virginia is very diverse; both in geography and in the citizens we serve. From the rural corners of southwest Virginia to the hustle and bustle of Northern Virginia, our leadership, staff, and partners consistently adjust to the needs of our clients, tailoring them to their goals and their abilities.

As we continue to focus on rehabilitative services, our staff is mighty and our partners are growing and diversifying! As we move into a new decade, with 2020 just around the corner, DBVI realizes that our clients' goals are ever changing to include more technology and, oftentimes as a result, even more independence! This is also a theme in several of the success stories that you will find throughout this year's report.

As with previous years, we've continued to work with the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) at the local level, and with the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) and the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) at the national level. We've continued the opportunity for council members to attend annual meetings for these groups and return with knowledge to share with the council. This year, members also attended the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils, Incorporated (NCSRC) meeting.

Competitive integrated employment continues to be the name of the game and this year DBVI and DARS were excited to present at CSAVR with one of our former clients being featured in a general session as they continued their career in the federal government, after receiving services from DBVI's VR program! This was a testament to the great outcomes that our staff, partners, and clients are able to generate together, and you'll be able to explore more of those through the enclosed success stories.

It has been an absolute honor and privilege to serve as the Chairperson for the past two years for an enthusiastic body of council members and alongside a committed and enthusiastic group of staff here at DBVI. As we flip our calendars to 2020, we all look forward to continued growth and development for those who seek DBVI's services, and we look forward to improving upon the great work that continued from years past through 2019, and into the next decade.

Thank you to Commissioner Hopkins, Deputy Commissioner Mitchell, and our supportive stakeholders across the Commonwealth. And thank you, again, for your interest in our 2019 Annual Report.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justin Graves". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Justin Graves
FFY2019 SRC Chairperson

Message from the DBVI Commissioner



We appreciate that you are taking the time to read this assessment of Virginia's vocational rehabilitation program for individuals who are blind, deafblind, and otherwise vision disabled. We believe you will be well informed and favorably impressed by the outcomes achieved by Virginians served through this program. While the report cannot detail each individual's story, it does reflect the collective efforts of the program's participants and professionals.

Annually, the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) for the Blind compiles and submits a report on the Vocational Rehabilitation program of the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI). This report is more than a response to a statutory mandate; it is the story of many Virginians who experience significant vision impairments. The report describes their challenges, accomplishments and perceptions of the services provided by DBVI. This annual report also reflects the efforts of vocational rehabilitation professionals, business relations specialists, and other DBVI team members who strive to make a difference in the lives of the individuals they serve.

Thank you to Christine Appert, 2019-2020 SRC Chairperson, and primary author/editor of this report, as well as to the other Council members and agency personnel who helped to organize and present this information. We are grateful for each member of the SRC who voluntarily partners with DBVI to assure that residents of the Commonwealth who are vision impaired are well served through the vocational rehabilitation program.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Raymond E. Hopkins". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Raymond E. Hopkins
Commissioner

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

Overview

The Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program provides necessary vocational and rehabilitative services to individuals who are blind, deafblind or vision impaired who want to achieve successful employment outcomes. Eligible individuals receive assistance preparing for, securing, retaining, advancing in, or regaining competitive integrated employment. Field-based services reach consumers in their homes, at their jobs, and in their schools. A plan is developed that considers an individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. Teams of VR experts assist consumers in reaching gainful employment in accordance with their abilities; loss of vision; vocational and adjustment counseling; post-secondary school or vocational training; eye surgery and/or eye treatment; adaptive equipment for training and/or employment; rehabilitation engineering services to modify training and/or job sites; and customized and supported employment services. Major emphasis is given in the provision of job placement and follow-up services. Vocational Rehabilitation services help persons with visual disabilities to successfully work in the community.

State Plan Goals

DBVI, with assistance from the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), developed six goals and priorities for the VR and Supported Employment (SE) programs for this state plan cycle. The six goals are listed below:

1. Expanding and enhancing workforce development activities to develop and maintain effective working relationships with Virginia business and industry at the local, regional, and state level to develop partnerships that facilitate industry recognized credential attainment, skill development, and entry into career pathways for eligible individuals who are blind, vision impaired, or deafblind, leading to competitive integrated employment.
2. Increasing and improving competitive integrated employment outcomes, with wages above the state average, for all blind, vision impaired, or deafblind individuals receiving services from DBVI.
3. Achieving agency annual performance goals and establishing baselines for the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance in section 116(b)(2)(A) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014.
4. Providing rehabilitation technology to blind, vision impaired, or deafblind individuals, including youth and students, to facilitate their success in training and competitive integrated employment settings.
5. Expanding transition services for youth and students seeking employment and/or post-secondary training; including pre-employment transition services for secondary school students.

6. Increasing awareness of services among the public, community stakeholders, and individuals applying for or receiving services to include VR services that are available and the role of the VR counselor in assisting individuals to achieve competitive integrated employment in Virginia's workforce.

Business Relations Unit

With an ambitious agenda and a dedicated staff, the Business Relations Unit continues to make significant progress in establishing partnerships and networking with businesses and organizations throughout the state. Team members have presented at numerous conferences, meetings, and events. Through the efforts of the Business Relations team, DBVI is well represented at key gatherings of government, industry, rehabilitation, education, and workforce stakeholders. In the spirit of WIOA, the unit is a partner within the "Virginia Career Works" system and serves on Business Solution Teams across the state while offering assistance to the local workforce development boards within the agency. The Business Relations Unit provides ongoing support to the VR Counselors.

The Business Relations Unit has intensified work with WIOA Title 1 partners. For example, they have started to co-enroll individuals who are eligible to receive services through their work-based learning program which provides a stipend wage as they work on the job. Both DBVI and Title 1 partners view this as a success for the consumer. Notably, research has demonstrated that work-based learning leads to successful employment outcomes.

For instance, ten work-based learning experiences were set up in the Richmond area. One led to a direct hire and another was developed in partnership with Virginia Career Works Richmond with WIOA funding the work experience. Five positions were created in partnership with the DBVI's Library and Resource Center (LRC). The uniqueness of the partnership with the LRC is that each experience can be customized for each consumer and still meet the needs of the business.

In the spirit of WIOA, DBVI works closely with the DARS Business Development Managers across the state. Diversity Training for Business is done cooperatively and tailored to the needs of the business. Meetings are held jointly with partners including Wells Fargo, Fairfax County Government, Graphic Packaging, Department of Defense, James Madison University, and Marvin Window Company.

A good example of teamwork and cooperation at the local level comes from the Fairfax Regional Office. The Business Relations Specialist co-facilitated the federal job club along with DARS and together they maintained relationships with federal agency hiring managers, and selective placement managers. Recruiters from business and government agencies such as Fairfax County Government, General Dynamics and United States Citizenship and Immigration were scheduled as guest speakers for job club. DBVI job seekers were hired through the job club into career jobs at agencies such as Department of Transportation Washington Headquarters, and Department of Labor and Industry.

The Virginia Department of Transportation, partnering with DBVI, offered seven paid work experiences to individuals across the state. These individuals are gaining skills, gathering

information and building confidence. Some workers were offered employment within VDOT and for others the experience catapulted them into the career of their choice.

DBVI Success Story

K.N.T.

K.N.T. was a DBVI VR consumer with an interest in the IT field. Staff from the Business Relations Unit approached her about a paid work experience with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). The job involved an opportunity to help with an upcoming bridge competition event and to assist with administrative tasks around the office. K.N.T. indicated some initial hesitation since it seemed like the job might not involve IT. The Business Relations Specialist reassured her that her efforts might lead to other opportunities. In fact, this is what happened!

Before her twelve-week internship ended, she was offered a full-time position with VDOT as an IT Specialist in the IT Department. K.N.T. was delighted to accept the job and grateful to the staff who helped her learn from this opportunity. Currently, she loves her work and is motivated to think outside the box when it comes to her goals and outcomes.



A hiring initiative by Marvin Window Company in Roanoke represents another illustration of inter-agency and business partnerships. After meeting with the Marvin Project Manager, DARS, and the Veterans Administration, they kicked-off with Diversity Training for staff. Marvin expects to have an initial hire of five to six individuals. VR counselors met with consumers, discussed the job description, and moved forward with assessments on the job site.

CVS Health, DARS and DBVI's Business Relations Unit and VR program cooperated to implement a training and hiring initiative. The multi-faceted project includes an assessment process, a plan for unpaid work experience, job shadowing, job coaching, on-the-job training, working with retail store managers, and the pharmacy tech internship program.

The Business Relations Unit collaborated with federal contractors across the state to support business plan utilization goals for hiring individuals with disabilities. Associated successful placements included Amazon, University of Virginia, Dynamic Aviation, and Virginia Department of Transportation. Currently the Business Relations Unit is developing business plans with Carded Graphics, PPI-Time Zero, LSC, and others.

Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities

The Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities (CPID) grant was awarded to Virginia Departments for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) and DBVI in 2015. Specific goals of the project include:

- help individuals with disabilities acquire marketable skills and credentials that enable them to secure competitive integrated employment in high-demand, high-quality occupations,
- enhance the capacity of existing career pathways programs in Virginia to effectively serve individuals with disabilities,
- enhance access to and use of existing career pathways in selected occupational clusters (including advanced manufacturing) by individuals with disabilities,
- strengthen the alignment of Virginia's VR programs with the other core programs authorized by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and other federally-funded career pathways initiatives, and
- disseminate project findings and knowledge gained from the project evaluation.

Over the four years of the grant cycle, the CPID program has served 488 individuals, which include 68 DBVI closures (52 from Vocational Rehabilitation). Staff attributed success over the past year to innovative events and partnerships, availability of new industry tours, enhanced credentialing opportunities, and close alignment with DBVI's Business Relations Unit. To date, a total of 236 CPID participants have earned credentials and 195 individuals have achieved competitive integrated employment.

Credentialing fairs represented one of the CPID program's main efforts during 2019. The Credential Fair and Open House in December 2019 was sponsored by Intellectual Point in Northern Virginia. This popular event offered students advice on preparation for an IT career and introduced free resources. In addition, a Logistics Credential Fair in June at Blue Ridge Community College highlighted training and jobs in this high demand industry in the Shenandoah Valley. Potential employers including McKee Foods, Dynamic Aviation, and Burris Logistics participated in a panel discussion. Welding credentialing fairs were held in Tidewater and the Shenandoah Valley.

Intellectual Point facilitated the availability of accessible training to interested individuals attending the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VCRBVI). This year, two instructors and an individual were trained and credentialed in Information Technology Infrastructure Library.

Tours this year were provided in all three industry sectors: Southeastern Container and Continental Inc for manufacturing; Sysco Manassas for Logistics; and George Mason Gaming

Institute for Information Technology. Tours have been instrumental in changing perceptions, especially in the manufacturing training pipeline.

Focusing on high school students about to choose career options, CPID offered nine fully supported and accessible academies. DBVI's partnership with the National Integrated Cyber Education and Research Center (NICERC) continues to thrive. The 3rd annual Robotics and Cyber Academy, a six-day residential academy, was held the last week of June with a cohort of 21 high school students and 4 student classroom assistants at VCRBVI. This year a particular emphasis was put on employability skills, such as teamwork, communication, problem solving and critical thinking. During this experience, the students built their bots from the box in less than a half day and spent the next three and a half days integrating math, physics, electric currents, calculations and problem solving into programming their technical wonders. While promoting social skills, participants enjoyed a complement of evening activities such as a trip to the Escape Room RVA, rock climbing, and visits to the DBVI Recreation Center for basketball, billiards, and swimming.

Coding academies were offered in Oakton and Fredericksburg. Twenty-one high schoolers participated in hands-on activities and received tips for getting started in the IT career pathway. Other IT, welding, and cyber analysis academies were held throughout the Commonwealth over the summer months.

CPID created a series of collaborations with George Washington University (GWU) in developing and distributing a series of four webinars on best practices. DBVI/CPID team member, Tish Harris, facilitated the second webinar, *"CPID and the Demand Side Approach: Building Career Pathways While Working with Business."* The webinars can be accessed through GWU's portal.

<https://gwcre.org/virginia-cpid/>

The CPID project maintains an accessible website for consumers with information, resources, and details about activities and events. <https://vadars.org/drs/cpid>


Pre-Employment Transition Services

WIOA requires Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies to set aside 15% of their federal funds to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services to students with disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services. Five required services are designed to assist students in attaining the education, skills, and credentials that will facilitate their transition into competitive integrated employment.

WIOA Required Pre-Transition Employment Services

1. job exploration counseling
2. counselling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary programs at institutions of higher education
3. workplace readiness training
4. work-based learning experiences
5. instruction in self-advocacy

Some individuals receive pre-employment services through DBVI; however, most consumers also benefit from the VR Program. Services encompass counseling, training, and support for eligible students age 14 and older. VR programming offers assistive technology, transportation, tuition, books, supplies, and room and board, which cannot be provided through Pre-Employment Transition Services.



DBVI Roanoke VR Counselor Rick Bradley w/Patricia Boyd.

DBVI Success Story ***Patricia Boyd***

When she was about ten years old, Patricia began losing her vision due to glaucoma. A diagnosis of myopic degeneration and lattice degeneration resulted in more significant vision issues, including: omitting words when reading print, reduced distance acuity, and neglecting smaller items in the environment. She was unable to drive and unemployed due to health issues. Remarkably, her health began to improve greatly in February 2017, due to intentional diet and exercise while her attitude, drive, and determination increased accordingly. After not working for five years, she made a personal goal to return to the workforce and find new housing.

Patricia and her VR counselor worked together and identified her passion for caring for others. An updated résumé focusing on job readiness was created. Patricia was employed on the spot following DBVI's "Take Action" training event. Currently, she utilizes public transportation to go to and from her work assignments. Self-satisfied with her job, Patricia has proven to be a great asset to her employer and the patients she cares for. In addition, she moved out of her apartment and acquired her own home. A positive attitude, motivation, and the support of VR all contributed to Patricia's success in attaining her goals.

VR transition counselors and VR counselors with combined transition/adult caseloads work with the Regional Workforce Specialists, Education Coordinators, Orientation and Mobility Instructors, and other professionals to coordinate the services cited above. DBVI contracts with the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and community partners to offer a complement of services and activities at the local level.

During the past year, regional office staff worked with the CPID program and the DBVI Business Relations Unit team in presenting a variety of hands-on workplace experiences, industrial and college tours, certification programs, and STEM-based academies. As described in corresponding section of this Annual Report, pre-employment transition students from across the Commonwealth took advantage of opportunities locally and in Richmond to engage in learning about careers and acquire workplace skills.

Three well-established and popular summer programs were available for pre-employment transition high schoolers through the Vocational Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI). The Learning Excellence in Academics Program (LEAP) is a three-week college preparatory program offered to juniors and seniors in high school or recent graduates. This year eight students lived in the VRCBVI residence and attended classes at Virginia Commonwealth University.

In July, twenty-two students participated in Learning Independence, Feeling Empowered (LIFE). This five-week residential program for teenagers in high school incorporated three components: blindness skills classes, confidence-building activities, and an integrated community-based work experience.

The CPID Robotics and Cyber Academy, hosted at VRCBVI in June, was a highly successful collaborative effort. Twenty-one students from across the Commonwealth, who are served by DBVI and DARS, came together to build a bot and learn basic coding to program their bot. The accessible curriculum, which followed Universal Design for Learning principles, represents a model that can be replicated and utilized in other settings with a diversity of students. Plans are already underway for next year's Cyber Academy which will maintain an IT pathway and focus on coding.

Education Services for Children and Youth

Overview

DBVI provides services for children, birth through high school age, who are blind, deafblind, and vision impaired. Currently, Education Services has 2,374 open clients. Remarkably, this represents an increase of seventy-one referrals over last year. Preschool numbers remained relatively constant with 226 cases between the ages of birth to four years. Three full-time and three part-time Education Coordinators provide services to the six regional offices.

Services Provided by DBVI Educational Coordinators

- support parents and professionals who are involved in homeschooling children and students
- provide functional vision assessments for children who do not attend public school
- attend Individualized Education Program (IEP)/Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)/Special Education Eligibility meetings upon request
- facilitate access to adaptive developmental/educational materials through the Library and Resource Center (LRC)
- provide training and consultative services for parents, Teachers for the Vision Impaired (TVI), and other stakeholders

Early Intervention

DBVI continues to provide Sensory Quilts to every family of a child age birth to three years during the home visit. The blanket is intended to facilitate engagement with the family and encourage tactile exploration, visual scanning, and movement by the child. The DBVI Education Coordinator and other Early Intervention professionals can “coach” the family on how to use the tactile quilt with their infant/toddler in the home environment. Community quilting groups have learned about the agency’s work and partner with DBVI in fabricating the blankets.

Professional Development and Training

Education Services staff also provided regional training sessions for Teachers of the Vision Impaired (TVI’s) and associated professionals in the field of vision and participated in the annual agency training for new TVI’s. Additionally, the Director of Education Services partnered with the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind’s Outreach Program, the Virginia Commonwealth University’s Partnership for People with Disabilities, Virginia Project for Children and Young Adults with Deaf-Blindness, and the Virginia Department of Education to provide professional training opportunities for staff and vision professionals in the areas of Unified English Braille (UEB), Cortical Visual Impairments (CVI), and Learning Media Assessments.

School-Age Services

Across the state, the Education Services staff partnered with various organizations, communities, and parent networks to provide informative and engaging outreach activities for students and families. Examples of outreach efforts included audible egg hunts held in various regions, Sounds of the James River nature activities, a fishing derby, assistive technology demonstrations, and goal ball clinics. Collaborative community efforts included a STEM event at the NASA Space Museum in Hampton, a STEM program at the Science Museum of Virginia in Richmond, and audio described plays at the Barter Theater in Abingdon and Virginia Repertory Children's Theatre in Richmond.

DBVI Success Story

C.B.

Starting his relationship with DBVI as a preschool consumer, C.B. is a great example of the life-long impact the agency's services can have for an individual. As a high school student, C.B. began working with the VR program. After high school, he received an array of services including vocational counseling at VRCBVI and Carroll Center for the Blind, Orientation & Mobility training, transportation support, Assistive Technology and tech tutoring, Rehabilitation Engineering, job development, and consultation with a Business Relations Specialist. For over a year, C.B. has been successfully employed working 32 hours weekly, at \$13.00/hour with a full suite of benefits.



A historically high number of youngsters ages eight to eighteen years of age attended DBVI's Super Summer Camp 2019. This seven-day residential program was offered free of charge to campers who are blind, vision impaired or deafblind. An Open House conducted on the first day of camp allowed participants and families to get acquainted with the staff and facilities. Activities during the week included swimming, canoeing, fishing, hiking, arts and crafts, archery, and goal ball. In addition, volunteer and paid Counselor-in-Training positions provided opportunities for older students to gain mentoring skills and work experience.

Notably, many Education Services partnerships and events were presented in collaboration with the VR Program, Pre-Employment Transition Services, and the CPID program. For example, the workshop at the Science Museum of Virginia in Richmond involved hands-on science activities, self-advocacy skills, and exploration of postsecondary options for training in the areas of

science, technology, engineering, and math. The experience at the Barter Theater in Abingdon gave students a chance to explore careers in the theater, in addition to the availability of a live audio-described performance. Pre-Employment Transition Services and the CPID programs are discussed in more detail in previous sections of this report.

Regional Offices

Overview

DBVI has six regional offices strategically situated throughout the Commonwealth. The Bristol, Fairfax, Norfolk, Richmond, Roanoke, and Staunton locations are staffed by qualified professionals who provide vocational rehabilitation, education, independent living, orientation and mobility, low vision, rehabilitation technology, and deafblind services. In preparation for the 2019 Annual Report, the Regional Office Managers summarized key program activities and accomplishments in response to the following questions:

1. Describe one or two of your regional office's greatest accomplishments for this year. Why were they outstanding?
2. What innovative activities or practices did you try that had a positive impact on staff or clients?
3. Anything else that you would like to share?

Consistent themes reported by all offices related to partnerships within the community, teaming with the DBVI Business Relations Unit, and enhanced services and opportunities for pre-employment transition service students. Examples were given of events, programs, and consumers who benefited from collaborative efforts of DBVI with local agencies and businesses. In addition, there were several notes, commenting on increased referrals and participation in Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI) experiences, including the Learning Independence Feeling Empowered (LIFE), the Learning Excellence and Academics Program (LEAP), the Senior LIFE Program, and the CPID Robotics and Cyber Academy.

Accomplishments and Innovative Activities

The Bristol office offered job fairs, company tours, and disability awareness training to area employers and Virginia Career Works Centers. Local businesses were involved in two Workforce Exchange sessions this year. These events allowed for the exchange of information between select businesses and community partners all in one convenient location. The business had an opportunity to provide an overview of their company, indicate their needs, and answer questions.

Beyond their typical compendium of services, the Roanoke office Vocational Rehabilitation staff introduced some innovative programming. For example, a partnership with Warm Hearth Village, a senior retirement and assisted living community in Blacksburg, benefits individuals served by both organizations. DBVI student and adult consumers can prepare for employment by volunteering. The facility has a wide range of occupations which makes it an ideal site for work experience, situational assessments, mock and informational interviews, and employment. In addition, DBVI's independent living services are helpful for many of the Warm Hearth Village residents. Also, Roanoke staff continues to place a priority on pre-employment transition opportunities for high school students. A "Jumpstart Your Skills" program in Lynchburg

represented one of their efforts. Students and their parents experienced hands-on learning activities with paratransit transportation and food preparation in a kitchen. Two young adult clients led a panel discussion on topics related to life after high school and personal challenges.

DBVI Success Story

Thomas Langston

Thomas Langston lost his vision later in life while battling several other debilitating medical conditions. Currently, his vision is reduced to a very small field with one eye.



As a business owner and operator before losing his vision, Thomas owned a real estate company for twenty years. In addition, he had a business reproducing images, such as pictures, on tiles and memorabilia items.

Through VR services, Thomas was able to identify areas of interest and vocational opportunities that he wanted to pursue. Several barriers to employment and independent living were identified. Due to his vision impairment, he experienced limitations in his ability to live alone and care for himself and mobility outside of his home was impacted. The abilities he needed for his business also represented challenges, such as computer and phone access, reading printed documentation, and hand work with tile and craft supplies.

A complement of vocational rehabilitation services came to the rescue! Rehabilitation Teaching, Orientation and Mobility, Technology Tutoring, and the provision of Assistive Technology made it possible for Thomas to rebuild his life. The VR Counselor helped to coordinate services and worked closely with Thomas in guiding him towards returning to his tile imaging business. Currently, Thomas is able to utilize various forms of technology and engage fully with his work through craft fairs, local art fairs, and online selling.

The Staunton office reported serving twenty-nine VR consumers in obtaining and maintaining employment this year. Staff participated in the VRCBVI Collaboration experience and cooperated with the DBVI Business Relations Unit in establishing partnerships and event planning. A DeafBlind Expo was held at the Wilson Workforce Rehabilitation Center and attended by seventy individuals.

As with other offices, Fairfax staff noted increased consumer involvement with VRCBVI programs for both pre-employment transition students and seniors. CPID academies and collaboration efforts have been particularly effective. Consumers learned about training by word-of-mouth and initiated requests for training with their VR counselors.

The Richmond regional office's proximity to the main VDBVI campus and VRCBVI facilitated their consumers taking advantage of many of the department's programs. Pre-employment transition students participated in various workplace training experiences available in the area. Individuals have received support from the CPID Program and Business Relations team, which resulted in successful employment outcomes.

Teamwork was highlighted as the theme for the Norfolk office this year. The staff worked together to move out and back into their offices during a building renovation. During the renovation, VR counselors continued to provide agency services to consumers and fulfilled job responsibilities without missing a beat. In addition, office staff participated in a retreat focused on team building. Presentations and discussion bolstered participants' relationships with co-workers and consumers

Virginia Enterprises for the Blind – The Randolph Sheppard Program

Despite a slow start for the Virginia Enterprise for the Blind Program, (VEB), FFY2019 culminated in the grand opening of several high-profile locations. New business opportunities for 2019 yielded \$584,000 and included the Patrick Henry Building Micro-Market in Richmond, the VDOT Broad Street, Richmond Micro-Market, and the VDOT Hampton Micro Market. Sales increased 5% over last year as the program recovered from the loss of the Fort Lee military feeding contract. Currently, there are thirty-six active vendors participating in the program and continuing education. The Annual Meeting was held in Richmond and emphasized the new business model.

Looking forward the focus for 2020 will continue to be on training. Learning about opening new business opportunities and recruiting vendors is a priority. With an average of four retirements per year, VEB is committed to enlisting, training, and licensing five to eight new vendors a year.

VEB has initiated work on a business plan for cleaning services. There is also an effort to look at the private sector and collaborating with large corporations providing café services on campuses and in employee break areas.

Program Evaluation: Consumer Satisfaction Survey FFY2018

Program Evaluation Overview

Each year, DBVI's Policy, Planning, and Evaluation Unit conducts a Consumer Satisfaction Survey (CSS) among individuals who were eligible to receive Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services through the agency at the time of case closure. The survey provides a systematic method of obtaining critical consumer feedback and is one of a number of measures of program effectiveness and a quality of service indicator. The evaluation program is designed to include individual consumer surveys that each eligible participant can complete on their own. Survey items inquire about consumers' satisfaction with the VR program, services, and service providers. All individuals with an eligible VR case closure are provided an opportunity to complete an on-line survey. Reports of survey results are generated annually and upon request. Additionally, quarterly data is provided to the SRC and the DBVI VR Team.

In FFY2018 (Oct 1, 2017 to Sept 30, 2018), 398 consumers were eligible to receive the VR Consumer Satisfaction Survey. During FFY18 individuals were contacted exclusively by email invitation to participate in the online evaluation. Some individuals elected not to provide an e-mail address and others could not be reached. The overall response rate was 10.3% (n=28). For the 271 contactable individuals, remarkably, this is significantly lower than the FFY17 VR CSS overall response rate of 31.8%.

Overall Satisfaction Results for FFY2018

- Individuals with employment outcomes continue to report high overall satisfaction with the VR program, the highest in the last 6 years, with a weighted score of 94.7 (out of 100). In contrast, individuals without employment outcomes are reporting the lowest satisfaction in the last six years with a score of 58.5.
- A majority of all respondents, 68% (n=19), reported being "Very Satisfied" or "Satisfied" with the VR services received from DBVI.
- The overall satisfaction score for FFY2018 is 78.60, showing an increase from the FFY16 score of 73.66, but remains lower than the FFY2011 baseline score of 86.29.
- Results for overall satisfaction with the VR program from FFY2013 through FFY2018 are included in the table below.

Table 1 - Overall Satisfaction scores FFY2013 through FFY2018

Year			All	Rehabilitated	Not Rehabilitated
FFY2013			82.22	86.06	74.00
FFY2014			78.61	86.84	69.41
FFY2015			86.67	90.02	80.03
FFY2016			73.66	82.75	63.33
FFY2017			79.65	85.57	69.79
FFY2018			78.60	94.70	58.50
AVERAGE			79.90	86.68	69.19

Satisfaction with VR Staff and Service Delivery for FFY2018

When compared to FFY2017, the FFY2018 scores increased for individual perception of VR staff being respectful and sensitive to needs. FFY2018 survey highlights are provided below:

- Ninety-six percent (n=27) of individuals agreed their VR counselor was respectful, resulting in a weighted score of 92.86. Sixty-eight percent (n=19) of individuals agreed their VR counselor responded to questions and concerns in a timely manner resulting in a score of 83.03.
- Survey results indicated that 79% (n=22) believed that their VR counselor was sensitive to their needs, yielding a weighted core of 85.7.
- Seventy-five percent (n=21) of individuals agreed their counselor was knowledgeable about their disability giving a weighted score of 81.43.
- Sixty-eight percent (n=19) agreed their VR counselor partnered with them in choosing services, yielding a weighted score of 78.46.
- Results for satisfaction scores with VR staff from FFY2013 through FFY2018 are included in the table below.

Table 2 – Satisfaction with VR Staff FFY2013 through FFY2018

		Respectful	Knowledgeable about your disability	Sensitive to your needs
FFY2013		87.65	87.88	86.87
FFY2014		86.20	85.43	82.00
FFY2015		91.73	90.26	90.40
FFY2016		83.71	78.59	77.96
FFY2017		86.61	85.96	83.93
FFY2018		92.86	81.43	85.71

Program Evaluation Open-Ended Responses

Written comments on 2018 survey forms were limited and seemed to be abbreviated statements. Most respondents remarked on communication with counselors or employment. For instance, one former consumer expressed positive involvement with service delivery and employment outcomes.

- *I am very satisfied with my experience. The counselor was always helpful. The glasses that I received assistance in purchasing made a real difference. I was able to*

complete my bachelor's degree at Bluefield State College and was hired as an engineer by Jenmar (civil) Corporation

Individuals praised the compassion, competence, and talents of their providers and expressed gratitude for the services they received.

- *The counselor was extremely helpful and informative throughout the entire process. The training center changed my views about my disability and gave me the confidence to achieve all my employment goals.*
- *I am very satisfied with my J.A.W.S./Computer Instructor. DBVI is very fortunate to have him, and I am very fortunate to have the opportunity of working with him.*

DBVI Success Story

Justice Roberts

Initially, Justice Roberts could not imagine leaving his rural roots. Today, he is a confident young man serving as a mentor to others, plotting a career path, and preparing for college.

Justice first met with VR in March 2018 to discuss and review an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). At sixteen-years of age, he expressed a clear interest in becoming a Software Engineer. Justice received counseling and guidance on careers in this field, labor market information, and discussed recommended accommodations. He achieved an excellent score (GPA 3.7) completing the Career and Technical Test and earned a certification in Computer Information Systems (CIS). Currently, he is dually enrolled in high school and John Tyler Community College. Among his many activities, Justice volunteers at his local library.



Commissioner Raymond Hopkins; Justice Roberts; Deputy Commissioner, Services, Dr. Rick Mitchell

VR continues to provide counseling and guidance on steps towards college planning and the availability of pre-employment transitional services. He was an enthusiastic participant in the 2018 CPID Cyber Robotic Academy hosted at VRCBVI. He embraced the skills building activities such as a visit to the Escape Room and rock climbing. Demonstrating outstanding skills, Justice received a reward for being the first to solve the Robotics Challenge and for finding embedded code errors, rewriting the code, and posting it in less than two hours. In 2019, he returned to the Cyber Robotics Academy as a mentor and plans to help as a Classroom Assistant for the new 2020 Coding Academy

As a high school senior, ready to launch for college, Justice and his entire network can't wait to see how he grows and propels forward building his and others' self-confidence and tech skills.

Conclusion

Given the small number of evaluation responses submitted in FFY2018, it is difficult to determine how well the summary statistics represent the entire group of eligible individuals served. This report should be viewed as informative, in providing general guidance, rather than as definitive statements regarding the consumer satisfaction results of any specific subset of VR cases or individuals being served.

With this understanding, the data and information will be considered by DBVI decision makers and the SRC in the continued development and implementation of the 2020 Combined Virginia State Plan and WIOA implementation. The feedback and insights gleaned from survey participants can contribute to recommendations for enhancement of VR services.

Common Performance Measures

Overview

DBVI is in the process of transitioning to the WIOA Common Performance Measures (CPM). These new data collection procedures replace the Standards and Indicators report. The six core WIOA programs are all required to report CPM. The six core partners in WIOA include:

- Adult Formula Program (WIOA Title I)
- Youth Formula Program (WIOA Title I)
- Dislocated Worker Formula Program (WIOA Title I)
- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (WIOA Title II)
- Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service (WIOA Title III)
- Vocational Rehabilitation Program (WIOA Title IV)

Review of the WIOA Common Performance Measures

1. Employment Rate - 2nd Quarter After Exit
The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program. For Title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities or in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit.
2. Employment Rate - 4th Quarter After Exit
The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program.
3. Median Earnings - 2nd Quarter After Exit
The median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.
4. Credential Attainment
The percentage of participants enrolled in an education or training program (exclusions; those in on-the-job training (OJT) or customized training) who attain a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent. During program participation in or within one year after exit from the program. A participant who has attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent is included in the percentage of participants who have attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent only if the participant is employed or is enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year after exit from the program
5. Measurable Skill Gains
The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress, towards such a credential or

employment. Depending on the type of education or training program, documented progress is defined as one of the following:

- documented achievement of at least one educational functioning level of a participant who is receiving instruction below the postsecondary education level,
- documented attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent,
- secondary or postsecondary transcript or report card for a sufficient number of credit hours that shows a participant is meeting the State unit's academic standards,
- satisfactory or better progress report, towards established milestones, such as completion of on-the-job-training or completion of one year of an apprenticeship program or similar milestones from an employer or training provider who is providing training, or
- successful passage of an exam that is required for a particular occupation or progress in attaining technical or occupational skills as evidenced by trade-related benchmarks such as knowledge-based exams.

6. Effectiveness in Serving Employers (States select two of three measures) – Virginia has selected employer retention and employer penetration as described below:

- retention with the same employer – addresses the program's efforts to provide employers with skilled workers; and
- employer penetration rate - addresses the program's efforts to provide quality engagement and services to all employers and sectors within a State and local economy.

Since this indicator is a new approach for measuring performance under WIOA's six core programs, DOE and RSA have implemented a pilot program during which States must select two of the three approaches. DOE and RSA will evaluate State experiences with the various approaches and plan to identify a standardized indicator in the future.

Preview of WIOA Reporting and Common Performance Measures

Nationally, all state VR agencies are working with RSA on reporting of Common Performance Measures and utilizing 911 data along with new performance data dashboards developed by RSA. Based on current information from RSA, DBVI is able to report on the Measurable Skill Gains measure as shown in the table below.

Table 3 - Common Performance Measures

	PY2017	PY2018
Employment rate 2 nd Q after exit	In progress	In progress
Employment rate 4 th Q after exit	Not yet available	Not yet available
Median Earnings 2 nd Q after exit	In progress	In progress
Credential Attainment	In progress	In progress
Measurable Skill Gains Indicator	40.2 %	78.4%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Reported as a statewide measure with WIOA partners	
Employer Retention	Not available	Not available
Employer Penetration	187 services 109 businesses	256 services 129 businesses

The Measurable Skill Gain indicator (MSG) for PY2018 is 78.4%, equaling 232 Measurable Skill Gains reported. This is an improvement from 40.2% in PY2017. This improvement may be due to several factors which include, but are not limited to, an updated case management system programmed to capture the data for this calculation, training of VR staff in capturing and recording the data in the case management system, and a better understanding of the new common performance measures gained by the VR staff. This CPM is the first WIOA CPM to have negotiated targets set by RSA for VR agencies to reach.

RSA has developed a set of five dashboards or graphics that illustrate key data elements. These tools are intended to assist state VR agencies with determining how the RSA 911 data elements are used and how the CPM are calculated. The dashboards include information on Education, Training, and Measurable Skill Gains (MSG):

- Program Exit Data
- Pre-Employment Transition Services
- Competitive Integrated Employment Outcomes
- Program Participant Data

The DBVI staff is reviewing the RSA dashboards to determine a system for capturing and reporting the necessary data elements. The goal is to develop best practices that accurately and completely reflect the VR casework and utilize the information in ways that support and strengthen the VR program.

About DBVI and the SRC

Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI)

DBVI is committed to providing quality services to assist Virginia's citizens who are blind, deafblind, or vision impaired in achieving their maximum level of employment, education, and personal independence. The department provides an array of specialized services to eligible individuals of all ages to assist them in attaining the skills, confidence, and positive outlook that are critical to independence.

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)



L to R: Top Row: Megan O'Toole Hall, Wanda Council, Shelesha Taylor, Mark Roane, Irene Conlin, Ken Jessup, Commissioner Raymond Hopkins. Bottom Row: Chairman Justin Graves, Vice-Chair Christine Appert, Julie Akers, Jenny McKenzie, Ray Kenney. Not pictured: Tammy Burns, Larysa Kautz, Gina Koke, Jill Nerby.

The purpose of the federally mandated SRC is to work in partnership with DBVI to review, analyze and advise the agency on its vocational rehabilitation program, policies and practices. Further collaborations include development of the agency State Plan, federally required needs assessment, consumer satisfaction surveys, training, and employment opportunities for individuals who are blind, visually impaired, and deafblind.

The majority of the 16 members are blind or visually impaired. Members, all of whom are appointed by the Governor, represent current or former recipients of VR services, and representatives of parent groups, the Client Assistance Program VR, disability advocacy groups, the Department of Education, Community Rehabilitation Providers, a vocational rehabilitation counselor, the Commissioner of DBVI, and members of business, industry, and labor. The Council meets quarterly, on Fridays, at the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired in Richmond. Citizens are welcome to attend Council meetings and offer their comments. To learn more about the work of the SRC or Council membership, please contact the Council liaison, Pamela Hinterlong at Pam.Hinterlong@dbvi.virginia.gov

Table 4 – SRC Membership Roster

Name	Location	Seat Requirements
Julie Akers	Radford, VA	Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(vi)
<u>Vice Chair</u> Christine Appert	Charlottesville, VA	Former or Current Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(B)(viii)
Tammy Burns	Midlothian, VA	Representative of a Parent Training and Information Center 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(ii)
Irene M. Conlin	Virginia Beach, VA	Representative of an Individual who is blind, has multiple disabilities, and has difficulty representing him or herself or is unable due to disabilities to represent him or herself. 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(3)(ii)(B)
Wanda Council	Newport News, VA	Representative of Department of Education 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(B)(x)
<u>Chair</u> Justin Graves	Fairfax, VA	Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(vi)
Raymond Hopkins	Richmond, VA	The Director of the designated Statue Unit DBVI as an ex-officio, non-voting member 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(B)(xii)
Ken Jessup	Virginia Beach, VA	Representative of Disability Advocacy Group 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(3)(ii)(A)
Larysa Kautz	Alexandria, VA	Representative of Community Rehabilitation Services Program Provider 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(v)
Ray Kenney	Richmond, VA	Representative of the Statewide Independent Living Council 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(i)
Gina Koke	Richmond, VA	Representative of Disability Advocacy Group 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(3)(ii)(A)
Jenny McKenzie	Roanoke, VA	Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(vi)
Jill A. Nerby	Charlottesville, VA	Former or Current Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(B)(viii)
Megan O'Toole Hall	Montpelier, VA	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor-Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Member 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(iv)
Mark W. Roane	Richmond, VA	Former or Current Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(B)(viii)
Shelesha Taylor	Richmond, VA	Representative of Client Assistance Program 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(iii)

Glossary of Abbreviations

Table 5 - Abbreviations and Terms

CPID	Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities
CPM	Common Performance Measures
CSS	Consumer Satisfaction Survey
DARS	Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitation Services
DBVI	Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired
LEAP	Learning Excellence in Academics Program
LIFE	Learning Independence Feeling Empowered Program
NVTC	Northern Virginia Technology Council
RSA	Rehabilitation Services Administration
SRC	State Rehabilitation Council
VSDB	Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind
VDOT	Virginia Department of Transportation
VEB	Virginia Enterprises for the Blind
VR	Vocational Rehabilitation
VRCBVI	Vocational Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act