

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

2021 ANNUAL REPORT ON VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

The Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired

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Table of Contents

Message from the State Rehabilitation Council Chair.....	2
Message from the DBVI Commissioner	4
Vocational Rehabilitation Program	5
State Plan Goals	5
Business Relations Unit	6
Pre-Employment Transition Services	8
Education Services for Children and Youth	10
Regional Offices	12
Accomplishments and Innovative Activities	12
Virginia Enterprises for the Blind – The Randolph Sheppard Program.....	14
Vocational Rehabilitation Consumer Satisfaction Evaluation Program Summary.....	15
Partial Federal Program Year (FPY) 2020, Sept 2020 through June 2021.....	15
Glossary of Abbreviations.....	19
About DBVI and the SRC.....	21

Message from the State Rehabilitation Council Chair



It was a privilege to serve as Chair of the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired State Rehabilitation Council (DBVI SRC) for a second term. Despite continued pandemic concerns, it has been a busy and productive year for DBVI. The 2021 Annual Report reflects the accomplishments of the Council and Agency as our centennial anniversary approaches.

Over the past twelve months, DBVI staff continued to maintain a proactive, problem-solving stance linked with innovative solutions. Last spring, as the Commonwealth emerged from some restrictions, direct service providers took advantage of available options whenever possible. For many consumers, this allowed services to initiate or resume and significantly impacted their independence and work attainability.

The sections of this Annual Report spotlight the activities and achievements of the DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Undaunted by an unpredictable and fluctuating employment market, the Business Relations Unit describes an impressive array of initiatives and offerings promoting successful collaborative partnerships between employers and DBVI consumers. The Pre-Employment Transition and Education reports provide a sampling of the appealing virtual and in-person events offered to young consumers. Career exploration, individual advocacy, post-secondary counseling, and work-based skill development were featured in programs around the state. A few small in-person opportunities, such as the “Leap into Linux” residential summer course offered unique and stimulating learning opportunities.

Another area of note is the Consumer Satisfaction Survey. This report is always valuable in providing a snapshot of consumers’ perception of service delivery after case closure. Following revisions of the survey instrument and protocol, this year’s analysis was of particular interest and showed some desired improvement in response rate. Finally, the managers from the Regional Offices provide information on the efforts of their teams to offer continuity and support through effective case management and address individual and community needs.

The work of the SRC continued through regular virtual meetings. A thoughtfully planned orientation for newly appointed SRC members was virtually presented in March. The session was a wonderful chance to get acquainted even if everyone was geographically scattered. As we welcomed new members, several individuals completed their term or withdrew from the SRC for various reasons: Tammy Burns, Larysa Kautz, Ken Jessup, and Laura Sinclair. We appreciate everyone’s contributions and extend special gratitude for Ken Jessup’s many years of dedicated participation.

Looking ahead, we anticipate that DBVI staff will offer in-person services to individuals when possible and the SRC members will come to Richmond and attend quarterly meetings. These positive trends move us forward as we celebrate the past hundred years of accomplishments and service.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine L. Appert". The script is cursive and fluid.

Christine L. Appert, SRC Chair, 2020 - 2021

Message from the DBVI Commissioner



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). While there is a statutory requirement for such a report, you will find that this document goes beyond a mere response to a required task and tells the story of many Virginians who have significant vision disabilities and a program that supports them. The report describes their challenges, accomplishments and perceptions of the services provided by DBVI. This annual report also reflects the efforts of the team of vocational rehabilitation professionals who strive to make a difference in the lives of the individuals they serve.

Thank you to Christine Appert, Chairperson of the Virginia State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) for the Blind and Vision Impaired and primary author/editor of this report. We also extend our thanks to the other volunteer members of the Council who contributed to this annual effort. The SRC not only produces an annual assessment of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program of the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI), but its members partner with DBVI to assure that residents of the Commonwealth who have vision related disabilities are well served. We are grateful to each SRC member for volunteering to serve Virginians who are blind, low vision, and deafblind.

Throughout 2021, DBVI has held events and presented public information recognizing its 100th year of providing services. During a century of service, the past twenty months may have been the most challenging and unique in the Agency's distinguished history. Hopefully, this annual report will reflect the resilience, hard work, and creativity displayed by DBVI personnel while providing substantive services to consumers of vocational rehabilitation services. We appreciate the flexibility and dedication of the DBVI staff in their efforts to help Virginians with vision disabilities to attain and retain employment in the midst of a pandemic.

The success of the clientele of the VR Program is a testament to the determination of individuals who are vision impaired to be part of the workforce and the effectiveness of the services they receive. We hope you will benefit from reading the stories of a few of the program participants. We celebrate their efforts and successes as well as those of the professionals who serve them. Thank you for 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 both informed and impressed by their achievements.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Raymond E. Hopkins".

Raymond E. Hopkins, Commissioner, VDBVI

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

The Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program provides necessary vocational and rehabilitative services to empower individuals who are blind, deafblind, or vision impaired and want to achieve successful employment, education, and independence. Eligible Virginians 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 to the provision of job placement and follow-up services. A core goal of the VR Program is to help persons with vision loss 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 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. Expanding the utilization of Supported Employment services for adults and youth to increase competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Business Relations Unit

The DBVI Business Relations Team continues to make significant progress in establishing partnerships with businesses and organizations throughout the state and on the national level. The Business Relations Team continues to represent the agency in meetings, conferences, and events with government, industry, rehabilitation, education, and workforce partners. The Director of Business and Corporate Initiatives and the Business Relations Specialists collaborate with the “Virginia Career Works” system and serve on Business Solutions Teams at the local and state level.

The Business Relations Team continues to expand the statewide virtual platform “DBVI Career Connections” which connects federal partners and business leaders with career seekers through a monthly virtual professional face-to-face meeting. The platform has also been used to host career fairs for large corporations and specific training surrounding career readiness.

“Steer Your Career” was launched the first of the year to fulfill a need to provide career-ready workshops virtually to those individuals who were on the cusp of employment. The six weekly sessions offer an array of topics and allow for group participation. DBVI business and community partners lead discussions and offer their expertise in the area of resume refinement and virtual interviewing. The final goal is achieving direct employment or work-based learning that aligns with the individual’s career goal.

In 2021, “Coffee and Collaborations” virtual meetings were established to address a need within the agency to bring VRC’s, Regional Managers, Business Relations, and the Pre-ETS Teams together to assist in staffing cases and mutually support their peers in a safe, relaxed space. These meetings were well attended and had very positive feedback from the staff that participated.

The Business Relations Unit continues to promote the benefits of the DBVI On-the-Job Training to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselors and businesses across the state as well as nationally. The Director of Business and Corporate Initiatives maintains a close working relationship with CSAVR (Council of State Vocational Rehabilitation Administrators) which has led to the agency partnering with companies that are entering into OJT contracts allowing career seekers the ability to work remotely. In addition, CSAVR relies on the DBVI Business Relations Team and the DBVI Rehabilitation Technology Team to work with large national companies and federal contractors in testing to confirm the workplace is compliant for accessibility which has led to employment for career seekers and continued partnerships.

DBVI continues to be recognized as a leader within national VR for the programs and best practices put into place before and after the pandemic with consultation and sharing of our best practices with the state programs in New Jersey, Nebraska, Delaware, and Montana over the past year. The Director of Business and Corporate Initiatives continues in the role of the Point of Contact (POC) for DBVI as well as the POC for CSAVR programs within Region Three.

In the continued spirit of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), DBVI staff continue to work closely with the Department of Aging and Rehabilitation Services (DARS) across the state, not only with co-enrolled cases but working in concert with private employers and government agencies to develop a pipeline of talented candidates. DBVI has taken a leadership role in the Federal Job Club, co-facilitated by DARS. This allows federal agencies the ability to meet directly with professional career seekers and discuss employment opportunities, internships, and Schedule A hiring. Several individuals have been hired into positions this past year based on their participation within the job club.

The DBVI Paid Work-Based Learning Program decelerated due to COVID-19 restrictions and several businesses needed to terminate the internships due to work-at-home orders. The Business Team is working with individuals and businesses and seeing an increase in those returning to the site with some being able to work remotely. Deemed a national best practice, work-based learning will continue to be offered as a means to build a resume, gain valuable work skills, and receive a letter of recommendation as well as a job offer in their career of choice.

The Business Team is proud of the above accomplishments of 2021, despite the pandemic. The initiatives (older and newer ones) have had a positive impact on building collaborative relationships with employers and the individuals we serve. These programs have led to successful careers in life-changing professions for our individuals. We will offer opportunities for individuals to participate in focused group sector chats which are based on career goals. We will continue to build upon our highly successful work-based learning program and encourage the participation of students to explore and gain information on the world of work.

DBVI Success Story

JOSHUA

Following high school, Joshua received vocational counseling and transition services from DBVI.

Recommendations provided for assistive technology and accommodations in a college setting. With a vocational goal of “multi-media artist and animator,” Joshua attended Longwood University and accomplished several projects including a published children’s book (Yoba’s Bedtime) and a self-published web comic (Bloodworth’s Antique). He also worked part-time at the James L. Hamner Library as a



Circulation Assistant. As Joshua approached his senior year of college, he was referred to the DBVI Business Relations Unit team to explore setting up a work- based learning and job development experience prior to graduation. Through his diligence and DBVI supports, Joshua graduated from Longwood University with a degree in graphic and animation design. After graduating, he moved to Richmond where the Business Relations Unit team connected him with staff at the Richmond Public Library to discuss a position as Library Assistant/Graphic Designer. With the support of all partners, a paid work experience was arranged. It didn't take long for Joshua's talents to shine, and he was offered a part-time job within two months. Shortly after that he assumed a full-time position as a Library Technician. He continues to help the public, assist with graphic design projects, develop logos, and create *Read Up Richmond* flyers and posters. Joshua applied his talents and took advantage of the opportunities offered by DBVI staff to follow a creative and productive career path.

Pre-Employment Transition Services

With the pandemic creating barriers to traditional in-person training and events, the DBVI Pre-ETS programs quickly pivoted to offer many new programs and initiatives for students.

A re-created Virtual Information Technology Credential Fair was offered in December of 2020 to provide information on IT career pathways to students and staff alike. It was composed of two virtual sessions and we were pleasantly surprised to achieve 116 registrations for the student session, as well as 150 registrations for the adult job-seeker session. The fair featured information on IT career pathways, labor market demand, and credentials with presenters from Intellectual Point, Wilson Workforce and Training Center, Global Connections to Employment, and Northern Virginia Community College. Students also heard from Diane McBride, DBVI Business Relations, and LaPearl Smith, DARS Business Development, on apprenticeships and work experiences, as well as how to begin building your resume. Representatives from the Virginia Career Works Center also shared resources that they could provide students throughout the Commonwealth.

Our Pre-ETS individuals were also invited to consider joining our tiered IT cohort training to add IT credentials to their academic pursuits. This tiered training was piloted last year. DBVI took the lead on coordinating the cohort with DARS also partnering on the opportunity. Individuals that pass the Comp TIA credential can choose either Information Technology Infrastructure Libraries or A+ training, which is foundational IT training. The students received outstanding support services, including taped lectures for auditory learners, review sessions, accessible textbooks, tutoring, and practice exams. Two of our students joined the IT Tiered training cohort to add credentials to their resumes!

Ace Academy was presented virtually in January 2021 for the first time. The participants were separated into two groups: Ace Academy high school seniors and freshman through juniors in college,

and Ace Academy high school freshman, sophomore, and junior students. Focus areas included advocacy, job exploration counseling, post-secondary counseling, and work-based learning. Programming is participative, with students joining exercises and role play to develop skills sets. Fourteen in the college group and eight in the high school group enthusiastically participated. Students improved communication skills, learned to brand themselves and present themselves to an employer, got tips on requesting accommodations, learned how and when to disclose their disability, and learned that the sky's the limit. Parents joined the final meeting of Ace Academy for a presentation of the content covered during the Ace Academies and how best to reinforce or even embrace the lessons learned and their students' independence.

In April, "Resiliency" was a one-night virtual event offered to alleviate the anxiety and stress experienced by students, parents, and DBVI staff juggling schooling, work, childcare, and family responsibilities during the pandemic. There were 22 individuals on the call including several Ed Coordinators and Counselors in addition to our students and families,

The virtual Career Exploration kickoff was well attended with 52 separate virtual participant accounts. In successive weeks, topics included a focus on Hospitality, Tourism, Retail, Customer Service, Food-related Careers, Human Services, Teaching, Graphic Arts, Audio-visual Technology, and Communication including writing, and Business, Administrative, and Advanced Marketing.

The Ace Leadership Academy was held to help prepare our college-bound students to find success. It included twelve students who are attending, college-bound, or seeking advanced credential training held each Tuesday evening in June. This participative, collaborative program trained students to advocate for themselves as they prepare for academic and career success. The activities, individual role-playing, and informative speakers hit on all five required Pre-ETS activities.

Summer of 2021 brought a focus on STEM fields, with hands-on career exploration offered in virtual formats and small in-person cohorts. The Robotics Program morphed into more advanced STEM career explorations which included "Leap into Linux", a six-day residential course. DBVI's Technology instructors and Rehab Engineering personnel collaborated with the instructors to ensure the curriculum was accessible to JAWS users. Subjects included an intro to networks and servers, how to modify websites to conform to ADA requirements, and explored the network structure of a computer. Students each presented the websites they created to a live audience during the "Friday Cyber Celebration".

The STEM opportunities kept coming! Three "Virtual Cyber Warriors" hands-on career exploration academies were offered to our students which included "Raspberry Pi and the Security Camera", "Ethical Hacking" and "HTML Hero". Each academy was one week long, and all students were shipped materials in advance.

Rounding out our summer training offerings was the five-week "Financial Literacy" class. Students learned the importance of financial literacy, budgeting, how to integrate financial planning into daily living, saving for retirement, compounding interest, credit scores, and accessible banking apps.

WIOA Required Pre-Transition Employment Services

1. job exploration counseling
2. counseling 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

Education Services for Children and Youth

DBVI provides services for children, birth through twenty-two years, who are blind, deafblind, and vision impaired. Education Coordinators are assigned 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

Again this year, COVID-19 restrictions impacted children's in-person participation at school and the planning of the Pre-Employment Transition Program (Pre-ETS) events typically organized during the spring and summer months. In some areas, education coordinators used FaceTime and videos to complete assessments and provide information to families. This report highlights some activities that occurred during the 2020-2021 school year and summer.

The Education Coordinators have collaborated with VDBVI's Pre-ETS Services staff and the staff of VRCBVI to recruit students for a number of virtual, as well as in-person, training opportunities. The virtual training sessions included topics such as Career Exploration, Technology, Cyber Security, Financial Literacy, and other topics relative to the five required Pre-ETS services. In-person sessions included Computer Programming and the LIFE and Steps to Success programs at VRCBVI.

Each year, DBVI hosts a residential “Super Summer Camp” at Camp Easter Seals UCP in New Castle, Virginia. However, as with many 2021 events, Super Summer Camp was virtual again this year and included four days of activities. Students had opportunities for structured topic-based discussion and informal interaction. This configuration presented topics of interest to transition-aged students, including work readiness issues, job-related experiences, expanded core curriculum, independent living skills, social skills, and self-advocacy. Two former campers, who are now college students and Paralympic athletes, discussed their experiences. Optional activities were posted for participants such as YouTube videos with cooking demos, arts and crafts activities, and orientation and mobility tips.

DBVI Success Story LOGAN

As a high-school student, Logan was challenged with multiple diagnosis of Autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and significant vision issues. He was referred to DBVI for Pre-Employment Transition services Logan quickly articulated his long-held personal goal to become an auto mechanic.

The DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor attended educational planning meetings and tried to problem solve with school personnel and family how Logan might drive a car. Eventually, this hurdle was overcome with some intervention from DBVI. In addition, DBVI offered Logan a plethora of activities that he embraced. As a frequent flyer in transition programming, Logan’s contributions and involvement served as a model for other students to follow. During Logan’s senior year of high school, he became a registered apprentice in Auto Mechanics at Berglund Automotive of Roanoke. Notably, Skills USA acknowledged his achievements. When he graduated, Logan was offered a full-time position with benefits as a technician in the Quick Lane. In the coming year, he will have the opportunity for specialized training through the Ford School. An ongoing plan for Logan’s future gives him opportunities to expand his skills and increase his income as he follows his lifelong dream.



Regional Offices

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 2021 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?

Regional Managers unanimously expressed admiration for staff ingenuity, commitment to serving the community, and responding to the overwhelming demands and issues related to the pandemic. The collaboration continued with agency staff such as the Business Relations Specialists and Pre-ETS team who contributed to planning virtual programs and support for individual consumers. Throughout the state, staff members continued to foster partnerships with local businesses and agencies.

Accomplishments and Innovative Activities

Flexibility and teamwork were mottos for all six of the regional offices this year. Many creative ideas were initiated for service delivery. Communication, instruction, and counseling strategies were adapted to virtual formats, such as Zoom, Google Meet, FaceTime, and video chats, in addition to the usual phone calls, texts, and emails.

Many staff members had to rely on virtual means for collecting data and obtaining signatures for documentation. The various regional office administrative teams worked ceaselessly to employ new procedures for processing referrals or intakes and forwarding documentation to new applicants via the postal service. They were also instrumental in moving loaner tools and equipment through the mail when face-to-face deliveries were not allowed.

The Staunton office experienced the onboarding of two new employees who quickly oriented themselves and were up to speed with assistance from the Regional Managers and staff. The new O&M Specialist developed a unique strategy of a "team approach" when they were unable to visit in person or face-to-face with a client who happened to have other service providers or their family members available to assist with their virtual instructions.

Multiple virtual events provided opportunities for individuals served by the Bristol regional office to experience these events and interact with other individuals who are blind or vision impaired. One student created a video urging other students not to be like him and decline opportunities but to take full advantage of what DBVI has to offer as he was now doing.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) in Bristol collaborated with the VRC in Roanoke and prepared a video for Pre-ETS students and parents. Using the Zoom platform, the VRCs recorded their Pre-ETS presentation and held a follow-up Zoom meeting after students had time to view the video. This video was sent to all students on the Bristol and Roanoke VR caseloads and posted on DBVI's Facebook page which quickly accumulated nearly 200 views. The presentation was also shared by the Winchester Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind of Virginia and the Virginia Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments.

While COVID-19 initially created the need to work remotely and do more with electronic records, The Roanoke regional office has experienced greater work efficiencies and time savings through more virtual meetings, more electronic records management, and signatures. Also, significant effort and time have been invested in building relationships with other community agencies, non-profits, DARS, and Virginia Career Works Center programs.

The Fairfax Regional office is now better prepared for unforeseen events. Staff members have taken the extra steps to be prepared for a variety of emergencies which included preparing a To-Go Emergency Bag, obtaining a weather alert radio, cleaning supplies, and PPE. All employees feel more empowered when they have the tools for a safer workplace. Many students participated in Cyber Warriors, Ethical Hacking, and HTML Heroes special programs. Whether or not the students continue to pursue a career in the IT field, these classes teach valuable IT skills, that will serve them going forward in any number of career fields.

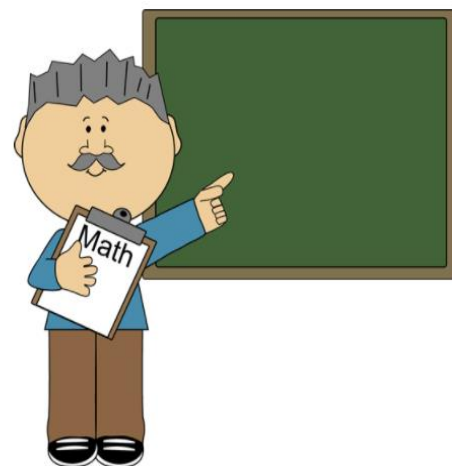
The Norfolk Regional Office continued the successful weekly "Connect the Dots" group that was initiated last year in response to pandemic restrictions. The group is comprised of local DBVI consumers and dealt with topics such as relationship building, adjustment to difficult circumstances, maintaining a positive pandemic perspective, resource development, support systems, communication, requesting help, and confronting fears. As in-person meeting restrictions relaxed, the group began to meet monthly. In addition, the NRO office staff enrolled in professional development opportunities through various web-based sessions and offerings from the VRCBVI. Also, the Norfolk Office Manager was able to complete a seven-month Lead VR training offered by the University of Arkansas.

Due to the Richmond office's proximity to the main DBVI campus and VRCBVI, many consumers took full advantage of many of the department's programs. This included participation in training through Intellectual Point to obtain IT credentials. Students participated in the LIFE Program and the Leap into Linux Program, which led to one student obtaining an internship. Professionally, the Richmond Regional staff continues to work on counseling skills and the use of motivational

interviewing. Many staff members had the opportunity to participate in several online training sessions through the Agency and outside sources including coursework in the VCU Professional Counseling Program.

DBVI Success Story MR. AZEEM

Mr. Azeem, his wife, and one-year old daughter migrated from Pakistan to the United States in February 2020. His vision is impacted by issues secondary to Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP). The family settled with family in Virginia after Mr. Azeem was unable to find employment in Kentucky. Mr. Azeem secured a part-time job at a 7-Eleven Convenience Store, but the pay was inadequate to support his family.



At that point, a referral to DBVI began the process for a more satisfying and productive income for Mr. Azeem.

Working with DBVI staff, Mr. Azeem developed an employment plan based on his strengths and interests in math and business. His goal was to acquire the skills and pass the required exams to become a mathematics teacher. Following an assistive technology assessment, he was provided with appropriate software and hardware to address testing and employment needs. The DBVI staff assisted Mr. Azeem with setting up testing accommodations, arranging for payment of test fees, and accessing the test center. He passed the Praxis teacher exam and applied for Virginia teaching licensure. This allowed him to immediately accept a full time teaching position as a mathematics teacher in a local middle school for the 2021-2022 school year. Mr. Azeem made excellent use of DBVI's services in a short period of time to advance his skills and contribute to his new community by working in a demanding job.

Virginia Enterprises for the Blind – The Randolph Sheppard Program

Pandemic restrictions gradually lifted in 2021, and the Virginia Enterprise for the Blind Program (VEB) has experienced a moderate return of business opportunities. VEB currently has 23 vendor facilities operating daily and 11 vendors waiting for conditions to improve to return to work. With 35 of 62 facilities open, sales are gradually returning, as the hosting agencies make decisions on staffing and telework. Telework has taken a toll on business revenue overall and will continue to be a concern going forward into 2022.

New business opportunities for 2021 included the State Corporation Commission Micro-Market in Richmond, the FBI Quantico Micro-Markets, and various new vending accounts which yielded an additional \$187,000 in new revenue. Currently, 34 active vendors are participating in the program and continuing education. Consistent with other organizations, the annual meeting was rescheduled as a virtual event.

Looking ahead, the goal for VEB in 2022 is to re-open all facilities with all vendors returning to full operations. Three new vendors completed training in 2021. New business opportunities are under consideration and the New Business Acquisition Committee was formed to explore future business ideas and business plans.

Business highlights as of July 2021

- Only 23 of 34 RS vendors facilities were operational due to pandemic constraints
- 35 of 62 VEB facilities were open for business in PY
- Facility sales reached \$6,373,162 or a 50% increase over the previous PY
- VDOT highway vending sales returned to pre-pandemic levels of \$4,664,514
- New business installed: \$187,000 in net new revenue from State Corporation Commission Market, FBI Quantico Market, and various vending accounts
- Virtual Annual Meeting was held in May 2021
- Training: 3 students graduated

Vocational Rehabilitation Consumer Satisfaction Evaluation Program Summary

Partial Federal Program Year (FPY) 2020, Sept 2020 through June 2021

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program, housed in the Services Division at DBVI, is responsible for the administration and operation of Virginia's VR program serving individuals who are blind, vision impaired, or deafblind, as described in the Workforce Innovations and Opportunities Act (WIOA) of 2014. The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) partners with and assists DBVI in reviewing the effectiveness of, and individual satisfaction with, the VR services. Services are designed to meet the needs of individuals consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, abilities, interests, and informed choice so that they may prepare for, engage in, and retain competitive integrated employment. The Policy, Planning, & Evaluation (PPE) team, housed in the Administration Division at DBVI, partners with the Services Division staff to administer the VR Consumer Satisfaction Evaluation Program. The PPE staff provide oversight, review, and analysis of evaluation results. The evaluation program is designed to include individual consumer surveys that each eligible VR participant can complete on their own.

The survey process provides a systematic method of hearing the point of view of individuals being served. It is one measure of program effectiveness and also a quality of service indicator. In their confidential responses to the survey questions, individuals can provide their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with received services, VR staff, and various aspects of the VR program. DBVI distributes surveys at the time of VR case closure, to assess consumer satisfaction with VR services. Reports of survey results are created annually and upon request. Additionally, quarterly data is provided to the SRC and the DBVI VR team. All individuals with an eligible VR case closure who received VR services are provided an opportunity to complete a survey to express their satisfaction with the VR program, services, and service providers.

During the 2020 federal fiscal year (Oct 1, 2019, through Sept 30, 2020) several steps were taken to review the evaluation program and identify and implement methods to increase the response rate for this important program. To address the response rate, three main areas of focus were determined; communication, utilization of agency resources, and updating and editing the survey platform and questions. For communication, DBVI updated the VR case closure letters that are provided to individuals at the end of their VR program, to include information about the VR consumer satisfaction evaluation. Additionally, training was provided to VR staff to engage staff in the evaluation process and reaffirm the importance of communication about the evaluation. DBVI partnered with the SRC to accomplish the third focus area of updating and editing the survey platform and questions. The number of questions required to be completed decreased from nineteen to nine. The estimated completion time also decreased from ten minutes to less than five. The questions were also reviewed and edited for simplification. In order to align the collecting and reporting of evaluation responses with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) federal program year reporting, the new survey questions and format were used for a partial 2020 federal program year (FPY) to include Sept 2020 through June 2021. A copy of the updated survey questions are available at the link below.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/stories/SM-S5L253QQ/>

During the calendar year 2021, DBVI also implemented additional assistance with outreach and follow-up activities that have proven successful in the past. These activities included mailing a paper copy of the consumer satisfaction survey with the VR case closure letter, and email and phone call follow-up to individuals who were eligible to complete the survey.

During partial FPY 2020, 166 individuals were eligible to receive the VR consumer satisfaction survey (CSAT). Due to the implementation of the improvement strategies described above, a total of 50 responses were received, equaling a 30% response rate. This is a noted improvement over the 8% response rate received for the last reporting period and exceeding the DBVI target response rate of 20%. Monitoring and optimizing the implemented strategies will continue for FPY2021, which includes July 2021 through June 2022. Additionally, DBVI continues to see a 100% completion rate for survey respondents, meaning once the participant began the survey, 100% of the time the survey was completed.

Federal Program Year (FPY) 2020 consumer satisfaction survey responses indicate:

- Individuals with employment outcomes continue to report high overall satisfaction with the VR program with a weighted score of 91.8 (out of 100). Individuals without employment outcomes are reporting the highest satisfaction in the last six years with a score of 71.2.
- A majority of all respondents, seventy-four percent (n=37), reported being "Very Satisfied" or "Satisfied" with the VR services received from DBVI.
- The overall satisfaction score for FPY is 78.80. Results for overall satisfaction with the VR program from FFY2016 through FPY2020 are included in the table below.

Table 1. Overall Satisfaction scores FFY2016 through FPY2020

Year	All	Rehabilitated	Not Rehabilitated
FFY2016	73.66	82.75	63.33
FFY2017	79.65	85.57	69.79
FFY2018	78.60	94.70	58.50
FFY2019 and 2020	73.33	87.32	45.54
FedProgramYear2020**	78.80	91.82	71.20

When compared to FFY2019 and 2020, FPY2020 scores were higher for the individual perception of VR staff being respectful, knowledgeable about disability, and sensitive to needs. FPY2020 survey highlights are provided below:

- ❖ 78 percent (n=39) of individuals agreed their VR Counselor was respectful, resulting in a weighted score of 85.83.
- ❖ Individuals believed their VR Counselor was sensitive to their needs, scoring an 84.26 (78 percent, n=39), and responded to their questions and concerns in a timely manner, scoring 75.63 (70 percent, n=23).
- ❖ 78 percent (n=39) of individuals agreed their Counselor was knowledgeable about their disability, scoring 87.23, and 70 percent (n=35) agreed their VR Counselor provided adequate information in choosing services, scoring 80.0. Results for satisfaction scores with VR staff from FFY2016 through FPY2020 are included in the table below.

Table 2. Satisfaction scores with VR Staff FFY2016 through FPY2020

Year	Respectful	Knowledgeable about your disability	Sensitive to your needs
FFY2016	83.71	78.59	77.96
FFY2017	86.61	85.96	83.93
FFY2018	92.86	81.43	85.71
FFY2019 and 2020	84.38	83.75	80.00
FedProgramYear2020**	85.83	87.23	84.26

In FPY20 DBVI introduced a Net Promoter Score (NPS) question to the survey. The NPS is a metric used in customer experience evaluation programs. An NPS is used to measure how likely a customer is to refer your product or service to others, scores can range from -100 to +100, a higher score is desirable. A national benchmark NPS for government organizations in 2021 is 47. The FPY20 NPS responses were calculated to establish a baseline for DBVI equaling 36. The DBVI NPS will be monitored and analyzed in the coming years.

Given the number of evaluation responses submitted in FPY2020, it is difficult to determine how well the summary statistics represent the entire group of eligible individuals served; as a result, please view the summary information as informative, and providing general guidance, rather than as definitive statements regarding the consumer satisfaction results of any specific subset of VR cases or individuals being served. A detailed summary of all evaluation questions and responses is located on the website listed below and is available for review and comment.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/stories/SM-S5L253QQ/>

The open-ended responses from the VR consumer satisfaction evaluation included numerous positive comments from consumers regarding their experiences with the agency and their satisfaction with their VR Counselors and trainers. Independence and accessibility to services and opportunities continue to be a focus for individuals DBVI serves.

In FPY20 DBVI continued to work on initiatives to address areas of concern for the individuals served and to align with the expectations of the Workforce Innovations and Opportunities Act (WIOA) of 2014. Collaboration efforts continue within the VR Program in order to provide training on employment skills, provision of pre-employment transition services, work experiences, and work-based learning opportunities.

The DBVI VR Program is part of the Workforce system within the Commonwealth of Virginia. As a member of this large, coordinated network, DBVI continues to position itself to maintain strong partnerships within the Virginia Workforce system as the Commonwealth implements the Workforce

Innovations and Opportunities Act (WIOA) of 2014. The results of this consumer satisfaction survey will be used by DBVI decision-makers and the SRC in the continued development and implementation of the Combined Virginia State Plan and WIOA implementation. The feedback and insights will also be used to make recommendations for the improvement of services on behalf of individuals. The comments provided by the consumers are rich in content and will continue to aid in improving the high-quality service delivery program that exists at DBVI.

**** FedProgramYear2020** is a partial federal program year, from September 2020 through June 2021. This timeframe is used for this reporting year to align the reporting year at DBVI with the federal program year in WIOA. The next reporting timeframe, Federal Program Year 2021, corresponds to July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022.

Glossary of Abbreviations

Table 3 - Abbreviations and Terms

ACB	American Council of the Blind
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AER	Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired
AFB	American Foundation for the Blind
AT	Assistive Technology
BEP	Business Enterprise Program
BOB	Business Opportunities for the Blind
BVA	Blinded Veterans Association
CAP	Client Assistance Program
CIL	Center for Independent Living
CRC	Certified Rehabilitation Counselor
CRP	Community Rehabilitation Program
CSAVR	Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation
CSPD	Comprehensive System for Personnel Development
DBVI	Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired
DDS	Disability Determination Services
DOE	Department of Education
DOL	Department of Labor
DRS	Department of Rehabilitative Services
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
EN	Employer Network
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
IL	Independent Living
SILC	State Independent Living Council
IPE	Individualized Plan for Employment
JWOD	Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act
LEA	Local Education Agency
LRC	Library and Resource Center
LWIB	Local Workforce Investment Board
NCSAB	National Council of State Agencies for the Blind

NFB	National Federation of the Blind
NIB	National Industries for the Blind
ODEP	Office for Disability Employment Policy
OJT	On-the-Job-Training
OSERS	Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services
O&M	Orientation & Mobility
RSA	Rehabilitation Services Administration
RT	Rehabilitation Teaching
RT/IL	Rehabilitation Teaching/Independent Living
SGA	Substantial Gainful Activity
SRC	State Rehabilitation Council
SPIL	State Plan for Independent Living
SSA	Social Security Administration
SSDI	Social Security Disability Income Insurance
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
SWIB	State Workforce Investment Board
VATS	Virginia Assistive Technology System
VEC	Virginia Employment Commission
VIB	Virginia Industries for the Blind
VOPA	Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy
VR	Vocational Rehabilitation
VRCBVI	Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired
VSDB	Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind
WWRC	Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center
WIA	Workforce Investment Act

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)

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 the 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.

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 Cato at Pam.Cato@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)
Christine Appert	Charlottesville, VA	Former or Current Recipient of VR Services 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(B)(viii)
Alexa Bowe	Newport News, VA	Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(vi)
Heidi Lawyer	Henrico, VA	Representative of a Parent Training and Information Center 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(ii)
<u>Chair</u> Irene 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)
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)
Annette Hyde	Radiant, VA	Representative of the Virginia Workforce Board 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(B)(xi)
<u>Vice Chair</u> Prem Jadhvani	Leesburg, VA	Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(vi)
Leelynn Untalan Brady	Suffolk, VA	Representative of the Statewide Independent Living Council 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(i)
Edna Johnson	Alexandria, VA	Former or Current Recipient of VR Services 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(B)(viii)
Rachael Rounds	Midlothian, VA	Representative of Community Rehabilitation Services Program Provider 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(v)
Liang Liao	Richmond, VA	VR Counselor-Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Member 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(iv)
Ricardo Lizama	Arlington, VA	Representative of Disability Advocacy Group 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(3)(ii)(A)
Marianne Moore	Richmond, VA	Representative of Department of Education 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(B)(x)
Chanthen Nene	Manassas, VA	Representative of Disability Advocacy Group 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(3)(ii)(A)
Mark Roane	Richmond, VA	Former or Current Recipient of VR Services 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(B)(viii)
Joliefawn Liddell	Richmond, VA	Representative of Client Assistance Program 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(iii)
Milford Stern	Roanoke, VA	Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(vi)