

NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

..... providing leadership on behalf of Persons with Disabilities as they prepare for and engage in employment and careers



We Are VR

VR New Hampshire transforms the lives of Granite Staters with disabilities by helping them prepare for, obtain, and succeed in meaningful careers—all while helping New Hampshire businesses meet their workforce goals.

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



NH Vocational Rehabilitation
21 South Fruit Street, Suite 20
Concord, NH 03301

Director

Lisa K. Hinson-Hatz

Our Mission

To assist eligible New Hampshire citizens with disabilities to secure suitable employment and financial and personal independence by providing rehabilitation services.

Our Vision

NH Vocational Rehabilitation seeks to become an organization committed to fulfilling the needs of customers by providing continuously improving quality services through an effort of teamwork and professionalism.



Message from the SRC Chair...Christopher Purington

I am pleased to submit the 2021 Annual Report on behalf of the New Hampshire State Rehabilitation Council. This past year continued to have much uncertainty for NH citizens with disabilities and NH businesses due to the ongoing COVID-19 health crisis. Despite these challenges, there is also an opportunity present to further champion and show the value that students and adults with disabilities have in NH's workforce. This will continue to be our focus moving forward.

We started off the year by mapping out initial goals and work plans for each subcommittee: *the Policy Committee, the State Plan Committee, and the Governance/Membership Committee*. This work has included supporting VRNH in their policy update project this year, working on building in measurable outcomes to the State Plan, and outreach and orientation for new NH SRC members.

A key effort by the NH SRC this year was advocating for an extension to the grant period for VRNH. Due to COVID-19, the volume of service has been significantly lower than normal over the past year, yet the pandemic has had a disproportionate effect on the employment rate for people with disabilities. As stakeholders for people with disabilities seeking to gain and increase employment in NH, we wanted to make sure that VRNH would be able to utilize their current resources to invest in the employment supports necessary to help NH citizens return to work after COVID-19. Having to return federal grant dollars due to the effects of COVID-19 on service levels is a significant loss for NH citizens with disabilities that are unemployed and underemployed, as well as for NH businesses that are struggling to find the workforce they need. NH SRC will continue to advocate for VRNH now and in the future, so they can have the time and resources necessary to make sustainable investments that support the recovery of NH's workforce.

Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre and I are pleased to be reelected to the NH SRC Executive Committee this year, and we are grateful to welcome Lauri Jean Pevear to the Executive Committee as well.

2022 will be a year where the SRC will work to support many marketing and outreach efforts with VRNH. It is an exciting time with VRNH's new marketing and branding campaigns. These new strategies will help to further build the bridge between creating the statewide awareness needed to have more people come to VRNH for assistance and developing greater relationships with businesses throughout the state to create good employment matches and career pathways. The members of the NH SRC will be able to bring their individual strengths and networks forward, and as a collective the NH SRC will work to amplify VRNH's impact throughout NH. We look forward to supporting great career success in 2022 for students and adults with disabilities.



Director's Report-2021 Lisa K. Hinson-Hatz

2021...This was a year of continuing COVID precautions, great project developments in the bureau, a new logo with collateral materials and in-depth conversations about the operations of the agency. I hope everyone reading this report is safe and healthy.

The VR Counselors and staff continued to utilize a productive mix of in-person and virtual services to meet the employment and service needs of individuals with disabilities and business partners. Customers and businesses have been very comfortable with the virtual format in completing aspects of the services obtained.

The administrative team has been very hard at work on many contracts that will improve various aspects of the operations of the agency. Contracts include: Quality Assurance with The Stephen Group (two-year contract), Customer Satisfaction Surveys for two years, Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment due on 9/31/22, contracts with the mental health centers and area agencies to have certified work incentives counselors, a contract to update our logo, webpage, social media accounts and marketing materials. There are others and I can provide an update for all the SRC meetings happening in 2022! Lots of great things happening to modernize the program.

For our SRC collaboration, we have brought on a few new members, reviewed and supported a lot of policy changes (in place for July), began reviewing our goals and priorities for the update to the State Plan due in 2022 and the committees have been meeting to continue the SRC work. All the participation is so very appreciated!

I am thankful for our SRC's leadership, my staff's amazing expertise and dedication and I look forward to a healthy, happy and active 2022. There will be some substantial program changes due to the quality assurance work with TSG and we will have a new annual business plan and strategic plan for the agency. We also will be implementing new services for transition students and for adults to take full advantage of career pathways and the employment opportunities in our state sectors. It will be a busy and fruitful year.

Happy Holidays!

Purpose, Mission and Vision

NH State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

Purpose

Providing Leadership on Behalf of Persons with Disabilities and Guidance to Vocational Rehabilitation Programs.

Mission

New Hampshire State Rehabilitation Council, through action and advocacy, partners with New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation to strengthen the agency's operation and effectiveness in the delivery of quality and timely services to individuals with disabilities, as they prepare for and engage in employment and careers.

Vision

By collaborating with key disability-related organizations and building strong partnerships with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and employers' groups, the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) provides leadership and advocacy that increases the number of qualified individuals with disabilities who strive to realize their goals of becoming successfully employed. The SRC maintains and widely publicizes the success of this ongoing relationship.

This is evidenced by Congressional and State legislative recognition of the cost-effective benefits of the VR program, as they provide consistent financial support for VRNH services.

2021 Membership

NH State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

Ben Adams
Manchester
Easter Seals

Dawn Breault
Merrimack
Special Education

Holly Cadwallader,
Walpole

Bret Cote
Nashua

Maureen O'Donnell
Concord Advocate

Carrie Dudley
Concord
SILC Chair

Lisa K. Hinson-Hatz,
Ex-Officio
VR Director

Jessica Brennan, Ex-
officio SBVI
VR Counselor

Courtney Lockwood
Concord
Disability Rights
Center

Kristen McGraw
Goffstown
Upreach Therapeutic
Equestrian Center

Nathalie Fortier
Concord
Future in Sight

Lisa Gerrard, Rep
State Workforce
Opportunity Council

Kimm Philips, Rep.
Pembroke
Parent Information Center

Lauri Jean Pevear
Barrington
NH Brain Injury Foundation

Chris Purington, Chair
Concord

Lorrie Ripley
Concord
Client Assistance Program (CAP)

Andrea Kanab,
Nashua
Deaf & Hard of Hearing

Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre
NH Council on Developmental
Disabilities, Vice Chair

Charles Saia, Past Chair
Governor's Commission on Disability

Brandy Pappas, Rep
Special Education

Therese Willkomm
Durham
Assistive Technology / UNH

NH State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

The SRC's responsibilities include:

- Reviewing, analyzing and advising in strategic partnership with VRNH services regarding the performance of the VR agency relating to eligibility, including Order of Selection, extent, scope, and effectiveness of VR services and functions that affect an individual's ability to obtain employment.
- Working in partnership with the state VR program, the SRC develops and reviews state goals established by the VR program, evaluates the effectiveness of the programs and services of the VR agency, and provides a yearly report of progress.
- Providing information and assisting with the development of the unified or combined state plan, plan amendments and needs assessments.
- Conducts and presents an annual customer satisfaction survey to assist the agency in making program improvements and to celebrate successes.
- Prepares and submits an annual report on the status of the VR program.
- Coordinates activities with the other Councils in the state (Independent Living, DD Council and Special Education Council) to avoid duplication of efforts and to develop prosperous relationships to assist in our mission.
- Coordinates the establishment and ongoing relationship with the Independent Living Council and Center for Independent Living program.
- Performs other comparable functions to assist the VR agency, consistent with the purpose of the SRC.
- Each member is responsible for increasing the public's knowledge of VRNH through community outreach and engagement activities with the community and that help develop VRNH success stories.

NH State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

Executive Committee

Responsible for providing general leadership and guidance for the work of the SRC and its committees. The committee assists with developing meeting agendas and annual reports for the SRC in collaboration with the VR Director and staff. The Executive Committee consists of the Chairperson of the Council, all officers and one other member elected by the Council on an annual basis. It may also include the immediate past Chair. Whenever possible, the majority of this committee will be persons with disabilities.

Governance/ Membership Development

Responsible for the review and updating of the NH SRC By-Laws and making recommendations to the full SRC on these. Participate in reviewing and updating of the current NH SRC Purpose, Mission and Vision statements and makes recommendations to the full SRC on these. The committee helps inform the process for identifying and engaging new Council members to fill positions vacated by Council members vacating and/or terming out of their slot. Assure the membership list is up-to-date for this purpose. The committee also conducts regular orientation for new and potential members of the SRC and ensures that members are acknowledged and thanked for their service.

Policy

Participate in and review the development of VR policies. Monitor Order of Selection and review policy manual regulations.

State Plan

Participate in, review and monitor the development of the State Plan and monitor the multi-agency State Plan. This committee also has responsibility for providing input and recommendation on the activities for the triennial comprehensive statewide needs assessment.

NH State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

Recap of the SRC's Year – Highlights

October 2020 The Chair of the SRC begins a discussion of revitalizing the SRC individual subcommittees and reworking schedules to allow SRC members to participate in more than one subcommittee if so inclined. Volunteers are sought to chair the subcommittees and dates are identified where they could begin meeting to identify goals and objectives to work on in 2021.

The VR Transition Specialist, along with her staff of *Student Transition Specialists* attended the SRC meeting to give a presentation of how they assist students with disabilities in New Hampshire and how the SRC can help the VR agency in connecting with students by providing outreach to schools. Working with STS counselors prepare students as they move to VRNH later on for individualized services.

January 2021 The VR Agency has been working with *Concepts Communications* to work with VRNH to design, develop and implement an education and public relations campaign to elicit customers for NH's program. Representatives from *Concepts* are in attendance to get input from SRC members around revising the agency's logo and message development.

April 2021 Two newly appointed members begin their terms on the SRC and are introduced. As well, a third who will represent a local CRP, is nominated and recommended for appointment.

The Director of New Hampshire's Services for Blind and Visual Impaired gives the SRC an in-depth overview of both SBVI and Sight Services for Independent Living services available to NH citizens with blindness and visual impairments.

Individual subcommittees of the SRC report out on the progress they have made since the beginning of the year on goal and objective development and work against those goals.

The VR Director updates the Council on several contracts currently in development including the Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey. Several SRC members express interest in being included in the development of the survey instrument.

June 2021 Agency updates are provided by the VR Director on VRNH's financial status. VRNH has met and exceeded match requirements and will be able to carry over the entire FY-21 grant.

Activities and Accomplishments

Late last month, the SRC Chair sent a letter to Senator Shaheen seeking an extension for NH's grant period for both FY-20 and FY-21 due to inability to spend down the dollars due to Covid-19. The SRC was informed that unless an extension is granted, VRNH is at risk of returning unspent dollars, which at the time of this update was 2.7 million dollars.

The VR Director also updated the Council on the status of several contracts including those on quality assurance, education and outreach to customers, CSNA and the customersatisfaction survey.

A call for nominations was made for officers for the coming year.

September 2021 - Two prospective members were introduced to the Council. A vote was taken to forward their names to the Governor of NH for formal appointment.

Election of officers are held. Christopher Purington is elected for a second term as Chair of the Council and Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre and Lauri Jean Pevear are elected as Vice Chairs.

NH Vocational Rehabilitation FY 2021 in Review October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021

Vocational Rehabilitation is a joint State/Federal program that assists eligible individuals with disabilities to become contributing members of their community. To this end, New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation supports the following programs and priorities

- Rehabilitation Services
- Services to the Blind and Visual Impaired
- Independent Living
- Transition & Pre-Employment Transition Services
- Supported Employment

Working with People with Disabilities.....

During Federal Fiscal Year 2021, NH Vocational Rehabilitation

- Helped **360 individuals** with disabilities gain employment
- The average hourly wage was **\$15.52**
- The average hours worked per week was **27**
- The average weekly salary was **\$443**
- The average annual salary was **\$23,053**

NH Vocational Rehabilitation FY 2021 in Review October 1, 2020– September 30, 2021

People with disabilities can work and take advantage of the opportunities available to the citizens of New Hampshire. Yet they face barriers unique to their situation, barriers that prevent them from achieving their goals. Vocational Rehabilitation assists persons with disabilities to achieve their employment goals through the provision of individualized services.

Who Are Our Customers

During Federal Fiscal Year 2021, NH Vocational Rehabilitation....

- Worked with 3,767 eligible individuals
- Received 1,190 new applicants

Types of Disabilities

Cognitive	33%
Mental Health	33%
Physical Disability	15%
Blind or Visual Impairment	7%
Hard of Hearing	6%
Communicative	3%
Deafness	3%
Other	2%

VR Program Highlights

NH Vocational Rehabilitation FY 2021 in Review October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021

In Fiscal Year 2021:

- VRNH assisted 76 individuals with a Supported Employment goal in achieving their successful outcome.
- VRNH assisted 697 individuals in writing their Initial Plans for Employment; 201 or 29% of those were students.
- VRNH assisted 16 individuals in completing their Individual Plan for Employment in Self-Employment.

No one should be deprived of an opportunity to recognize and realize their talents and potentialities because of a disability.

Average Earnings

*.. for Federal Fiscal Year 2021
the Average annual earnings of customers before and after rehabilitation.*

**Before
\$5,928**



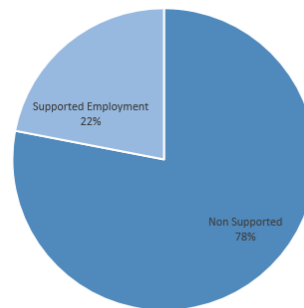
**After
\$23,053**



NH Vocational Rehabilitation FY 2021 in Review October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021

Types of Jobs.....

During Federal Fiscal Year 2021, 360 customers gained employment.



Sources of Revenue

During Federal Fiscal Year 2021, VRNH received....

Federal Funds	\$7,305,610
State Funds	\$2,979,462
Program Income	\$2,258,376
Total	\$12,543,448

INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS ALIVE & WELL WITHIN SERVICES FOR THE BLIND AND VISUAL IMPAIRED



By Daniel B. Frye
Administrator for Services for
Blind & Visual Impaired
NH Department of Education

During 2021, Services for the Blind and Vision Impaired (SBVI) launched its new programs for both the youth (Pre-ETS and Transition-aged learners) along with its Older Blind population, defined by Federal law as age fifty-five and older. Both of these in-person initiatives left our participants at both ends of the chronological spectrum with a palpable sense of confidence and a positive outlook on blindness.

First, in collaboration with our contract partners at Future In Sight (FIS), we held the first of our Silver Retreats from Monday-Friday, September 20-24, 2021, at the Holiday Inn in Concord. These five-day retreats are designed to introduce qualified members of the SBVI Older Blind community to additional low-vision and nonvisual skills of blindness in a real-life, extended, learning environment. These sessions are meant to provide the program participants with significantly more training in blindness skills, and conversation about adjusting to vision loss, than they would ordinarily receive from a few hour visit to their homes from a representative of FIS, who could offer a brief low-vision evaluation, some cursory instruction in independent living skills in their home, and perhaps a brief Orientation and Mobility lesson.

Instead, eight eager Older Blind program participants arrived at the Holiday Inn, somewhat uncertain about what the week would have in store for them, but soon got down to work. The very fact of taking up residence in a new place—even for a few days—required these participants to use new found Orientation and Mobility (O&M) travel skills to navigate the hotel. Similarly, while not a formal lesson, when food was served for breakfast, buffet-style, each participant who was willing to try learned how to fill their plates and navigate back to their tables. These two seemingly simple tasks are often out of reach for newly blind people, but our participants, with the encouragement of the SBVI and FIS staff, successfully managed these activities.

In addition to the informal opportunities for learning, and the invaluable chance for developing deeper peer relations, instruction, at almost a one-on-one ratio, was offered in travel skills; cooking and other Independent Living skills in the FIS kitchen; an extended dialogue, facilitated by Daniel Frye, Administrator of SBVI, about losing vision and the attitudes that would support an effective adjustment to a life with limited or no vision; Access Technology skills, using newly purchased iPads, featuring some of the most common apps employed by blind and vision-impaired users; a discussion about low-vision and a presentation from an ophthalmologist, focusing on Macular Degeneration; trips out to a restaurant, where program participants could practice their newly acquired skills of blindness in a public setting; and so much more.

Services for Blind & Visual Impaired

While this first Silver Retreat was a success, the dedicated staff of SBVI and FIS are evaluating how the next Silver Retreats can be made even better. Our current plan is to offer these intensive blindness adjustment sessions twice a year for the next several years, in different parts of the State, accommodating the participation of as many qualified people as wish to avail themselves of this unique learning opportunity.

The second Older Blind initiative, again supported by a contract between SBVI and FIS, was a monthly series of Access Technology workshops. Given the Covid-19 situation under which we were operating for much of this last year, these were mostly offered via the remote Zoom platform, but like our Silver Retreats, we are hoping to transition to in-person instruction for those who want this. Each month a different topic was tackled, including using Outlook, other office products, smart devices for the home, Apple products, basic keyboarding, and so much more. Again, wanting this to be a small learning environment, particularly because it was being offered remotely, we kept the ratio at approximately 2 teachers to five or six students. The demand for this type of instruction was incredible, reflecting the fact that the Older Blind community, because of their vision loss and because society simply requires interaction, more often than not, to be electronic, were excited to learn these technological tips and tricks. Almost all of our feedback from these AT Workshops, under the banner of the SBVI Older Blind program, were glowing, and our contract promises that we will keep these on offer for at least the next several years.

Turning our attention to the other end of the age spectrum, supported by a contract with Sky's the Limit Communications, owned and operated by David DeNotaris, we have had several Inter-disciplinary Collaborative Engagement (ICE) events of note during this last year. In fact, we've done so much under the ICE banner—on almost a monthly basis—that every event cannot be featured in this brief article. This being said, prior to Covid restrictions being lifted, allowing us to undertake in-person teaching, we've had monthly meetings with youth—from 9-20 participants almost every time—on issues of voting and self-advocacy; employment search practices and job maintenance strategies; blind mentor presenters, including a blind woman serving as a Legislative Specialist in Senator Maggie Hassan's office, a blind attorney working for the Federal government, specializing in space exploration law, multiple Access Technology teachers, and many others.

In addition to our monthly remote programming, we've gradually moved to in-person work with New Hampshire's youth, with two in-person events held this summer and autumn. In late August, we had a learning retreat, before school started for most, in Lincoln, New Hampshire, where nine students came to engage in Challenge Recreation. Challenge Recreation are activities that sound like fun, but are used to strengthen the self-confidence of blind and vision impaired students who may not believe that they can undertake certain activities. During this outing, we had students zip-lining; kayaking alone on the water; orienteering, which is using Access Technology on smart phones to find specific destinations, in concert with their canes, and a beeping protocol created by Microsoft; target shooting, with non-lethal rifles, as is often done during the Paralympics, participating in a talent show, tandem bike riding and hiking, and relaxing by a pool for a well-deserved break and pizza party. This intensive, three-day event pushed each student, from the most confident to the least self-assured, to understand that there is very little that they cannot accomplish, if they will only try. In general, our most confident and skilled students morphed into junior mentors, while our least self-assured learners bloomed by the end of the retreat, demonstrating their

Services for Blind & Visual Impaired

extraverted side and collecting phone numbers from their newly made friends as the program was ending. Students, like their Older Blind colleagues, had to operate in a restaurant with buffet service, cross the street independently to reach their sleeping quarters, and learn a variety of new environments on the fly. Sky's the Limit Communications brought to New Hampshire a uniquely talented group of professionals prepared to teach and encourage these young learners.

In the autumn, the ICE participants assembled again for a fall gathering at the Holiday Inn in Concord, where, under the direction of the hotel chef, they were taught how to assemble and make a pizza. The only part of the process that the students could not participate in was inserting the individual-sized pies into the brick oven, for sanitary and health reasons. In addition to this collective cooking lesson on Friday evening, Saturday was filled with a day of instruction on social skills—functioning at a reception; learning how to introduce themselves with their own elevator speeches; managing formal table manners at our banquet held on Saturday evening; acquiring instructions on how to politely enter into an existing conversation, without being rude or perceived as interrupting; and for some fall fun, apple carving in the evening, while watching a movie, *Hidden Figures*, where they had an opportunity to learn the stories of other marginalized people who have had to struggle to secure their appropriate place in the world, based on their aptitude, and inclination.

The ICE program invites students, their parents or another family member, and their Teacher of the Vision Impaired (TVI) to participate in these activities together, with the goal of having their entire support network understand the high expectations that the students achieved during the retreat. Many students, though, came with their parents, but were dropped off and left in our care, for this weekend of confidence-building. Finally, like their older peers, the incidental things that needed to be managed, including choosing their outfits, packing their bags, and the like, all turned out to be teaching moments.

As we continue to offer these programs, calculated to attract our youth, but which have a teaching component, SBVI is contributing to the cultivation of a cadre of New Hampshire youth who will be ready for college or any other post-secondary education adventure that they wish to explore. SBVI, and its dedicated staff, along with our contracting partners, are transforming lives through raising expectations about what it means to be blind or vision impaired.

Jesse Brennan: A Biographical Sketch of a Humble but Phenomenal Woman



Jessica Brennan (Jessie by strong preference) was born on May 7 to a family of two loving parents and an older sister. They welcomed the new addition to their family, and the Laurie Family settled, during Jessie's growing up years, in Springfield, New Hampshire. By way of factual inference and all shared accounts, Jessie's parents came quickly to accept her blindness as just one of Jessie's many characteristics, where she reports having grown up owning and riding horses. In addition, Jessie came early to enjoy piano playing, downhill skiing, and being a part of a Crew Team.

Clearly an active and engaged youth, Jessie also excelled academically, graduating from Kearsarge Regional High School in 2011 as a member of the National Honor Society. By way of extracurricular activities in high school, Jessie continued her previously realized interest in the sport of crew, being a part of the school's Crew Team and a member of the school's Track and Field team.

Not one to allow much grass to grow under her feet, Jessie quickly matriculated at Providence College, where she graduated with her Bachelor's Degree in Health Policy Management in 2015. "I loved my time at Providence; it's where I really honed my social skills and allowed myself to have your traditional kind of college fun." Two years later, having decided that she wanted to give back to a profession that enabled her to thrive as a student, Jessie earned her Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from Assumption College in 2017. In March of this same year, just months before graduating from graduate school, Jessie sat for her Certification in Rehabilitation Counseling (CRC), which she successfully passed on her first attempt.

Following an expected professional trajectory, Jessie accepted a position as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) with Vermont's Vocational Rehabilitation agency, where she managed a general caseload for almost four years. Wanting to distinguish herself early in her VR career, Jessie was appointed as the VRC representative to the Vermont State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), where she focused her attentions primarily on the SRC's Policy and Procedures Committee. Finally, Jessie also served on the Access Technology Committee for the State of Vermont.

Staff Spotlight

But Jessie's athletic interests did not diminish as she moved into her professional life; indeed, these interests only continued to grow. In 2019, Jessie took up running competitively and this interest quickly morphed into participating in triathlons. "I completed my first triathlon in Sunapee in 2020, placing first in my division." In 2021, her competitive spirit really took off running, where Jessie finished first in two half ironman triathlons, again placing first in her division and then she also placed first in her division in two Olympic distance triathlons. Jessie says, "I definitely have an interest in representing the United States at the Paralympics in either 2024 or 2028; I hope it will challenge me to be my best, and inspire others to get out, try, and realize success in whatever is meaningful to them." Finally, in 2021, Jessie, because of the cycling component of the triathlon event, placed second in overall female Paracycling national championships in Boise, Idaho, in July. Jessie's ambitions are no less for 2022. "I'm presently registered for one Olympic-distance, two half ironmen, and one full ironman triathlon next year."

Jessie, when running, is accompanied by her guide dog, Elwood, a yellow lab, trained at Guiding Eyes and part of the guide dog school's special running dog program. An animal lover at heart, Jessie still cares for her previous guide dog, Otis.

Peripatetic by nature, Jessie has traveled the world, visiting Europe, Canada, and many States in America. "Traveling gives me self-confidence that I can pass along to my participants."

When the opportunity to return to New Hampshire to be a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, with the added bonus of serving a blindness-specific caseload materialized, Jessie eagerly applied. "The chance to come home, be closer to family, and serve a population that I'm passionate about supporting professionally, made applying for the vacancy within Services for the Blind and Vision Impaired (SBVI), within the New Hampshire Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, a truly appealing prospect. Jessie joined the agency in February of 2021, and she has again been appointed to serve on the New Hampshire State Rehabilitation Council as the VRC representative, continuing her dedication to professional distinction."

In closing, Jessie reflected on her life thus far by saying, "I want to be a source of support to our participants; I try to model, through my own behavior, that blindness can be lived with minimal inconvenience, when people receive good training; and, otherwise, I just want to be a positive, contributing member of society that serves as an effective ambassador for blind people, athletes, and one who can help others achieve their dreams".

NH State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey

Our most recent customer satisfaction score was 78 for the overall agency.

A new *Request for Proposals* for the next customer satisfaction survey was published in August of 2020. Several proposals were received and the *Institute for Community Inclusion, UMass Boston* was selected to conduct the survey. At the time of this publication, the first wave of customers served in 2019-2020 are being surveyed. The second group, those closed in 2020-2021, will be surveyed in February-March of 2022. The final report is expected in June of 2022.

Our priorities for the new customer satisfaction survey will be to determine customer satisfaction with the following:

- VR Services
- Services for Blind & Visual Impaired
- Individuals receiving services from the Older Blind Independent Living program

Partnerships

NH State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

The SRC continues to develop linkages and forge productive relationships with a number of Councils and Boards, including:

- State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB)
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advisory Committee
- Services for Blind and Visual Impaired Advisory Committee
- Governor's Commission on Disability (GCD)
- Granite State Independent Living
- Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)
- Client Assistance Program
- Parent Information Center
- NH Council on Developmental Disabilities
- NH Department of Health and Human Services: Bureau of Developmental Services and the Bureau of Mental Health Services
- University System of New Hampshire

Partnerships

UNH-4U / BRIDGES PROGRAM

UNH-4U is an inclusive two-year model on the University of New Hampshire's Durham campus.

The mission of the UNH-4U/Bridges program is to build capacity for inclusive, authentic campus-life experiences in higher education for young adults with intellectual disabilities that result in credential attainment, competitive, integrated employment outcomes, increased independence, and high quality of life outcomes.

The program is supported by New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation, NH Council on Developmental Disabilities, the John Vance ACCESS Fund of New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, and the Think College National Coordinating Center.

Students experience benefits including:

- Full inclusion and authentic campus life through Continuing Education
- Semesters consisting of 11 credit hours
- Student-centered, strength and occupational goal-based education
- Peer mentors and academic coaches
- Core program components and measurable gains
- Academics & 21st Century Knowledge and Skills
- Career and Professional Development
- Independent living, Social Development, Wellness
- Competitive, integrated employment

The Bridges program is a virtual series designed to prepare young adults with ID and previously eligible for the Individual Education Opportunity Act in pursuit of college and career with important takeaways, including self-discovery, occupational/academic direction, advocacy, confidence with technology, social connections, and furtherance of college and career plans. Bridges is a required for accepted UNH-4U students.

More information can be found at the UNH-4U website: <https://iod.unh.edu/projects/unh-4u>

EMPLOYMENT Leadership Awards



**Congratulations to the winners of
the 2021 Employment Leadership
Awards!**

Celebrating NH businesses who
show leadership in
creating inclusive workplaces.



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



Learn about these businesses and hear Max Barrows, from
Green Mountain Self-Advocates, share his employment experiences - his thoughts on the
benefits of inclusive workplaces.

through our video presentations, now available at [https://
www.youtube.com/channel/UCpQ89AZNbeGL13T-XOvIEWQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpQ89AZNbeGL13T-XOvIEWQ)



EMPLOYMENT LEADERSHIP AWARDS

The NH Department of Education, Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), together with the New Hampshire Council on Developmental Disabilities (DD Council) are co-sponsors of the annual Employment Leadership Awards in NH.

The VR Public Relations Specialist, Jim Piet and the Executive Director of the DD Council, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre are Co-Chairs of the ELA committee. These awards recognize companies and businesses around NH that are leading efforts to create and nurture a diverse and inclusive workforce. We hold this exciting recognition event in October to coincide with National Disability Employment Awareness month.

Nominees are submitted by businesses, NH Vocational Rehabilitation staff and Community Rehabilitation Providers, as well as other New Hampshire disability and mental health organizations and the general public. Nominations are evaluated based on the company's efforts to:

- create opportunities that assist people with all types of disabilities to develop and expand their skills in competitive employment
- adopt inclusive hiring and training practices that allow people with all types of disabilities to fairly compete for employment
- engage community partners to become a more diverse workplace within communities

We recognize and value the commitment and dedication of all the NH businesses supporting inclusive work environments for people with disabilities. We are thrilled to have had many great nominations again this year. This was our 12th year providing this honor. In 2021, we had yet another pool of exemplary recruitment, training and retention of people with disabilities in the five businesses we recognized: JMD Industries, Inc., the Keene Family YMCA, Morgan Records Management, Smiths Medical, and Stackry. Additionally, we would like to thank the members of the Employment Leadership Awards Committee for their steadfast devotion in identifying New Hampshire businesses that are creating opportunities for people with disabilities to have integrated and competitive employment options. Without their contribution of many hours of identifying and vetting these businesses, these awards could not happen.

Contact the SRC

Call: 603-271-3348
Sue Roma, SRC liaison

Fax: 603-271-7095

Write:
Chair, State Rehabilitation Council
NH Vocational Rehabilitation
21 South Fruit Street, Suite 20
Concord, NH 03301

Website:

<https://www.education.nh.gov/who-we-are/deputy-commissioner/bureau-of-vocational-rehabilitation/advisory-councils>

Attend a Meeting or Public Forum:

The State Rehabilitation Council meetings and Public Forums are open to the public. SRC meetings are generally held in October, January, March and June with a special retreat each September/October. Public forums are generally held in February or March. The meeting locations, dates and times are posted on the SRC webpage.

<https://www.education.nh.gov/who-we-are/deputy-commissioner/bureau-of-vocational-rehabilitation/advisory-councils>

Apply for Membership:

If you are interested in becoming a member of the SRC, you can contact Sue Roma, SRC Liaison at 603-271-3348.