

2017

DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION ANNUAL REPORT



COLORADO

Department of
Labor and Employment

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Message from the Director

Dear Colorado Stakeholders,

Our vision at the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is that people with disabilities are essential to the success of Colorado, and our mission is to assist these people in succeeding at work and living independently. Achieving this mission requires lofty goals: providing the highest quality services, operating with fiscal responsibility, continuously improving the ways we do our work, and most importantly listening closely to our stakeholders.

In 2017, big strides were made toward accomplishing these goals:

- 12,169 people were served.
- 2,294 cases were successfully closed.
- \$41.4 million in wages flowed into Colorado's economy from successfully closed cases.
- The Office of Independent Living was created to strengthen the linkage between Colorado's nine Independent Living Centers and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.
- The State Rehabilitation Council led the efforts of state agencies and stakeholder groups to develop a comprehensive Employment First Strategy as prescribed by Senate Bill 16-077.
- The Division made massive changes to policies, systems and procedures, without disrupting services, to maintain compliance and ongoing implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
- Process Improvement Teams identified changes to their jobs that will yield savings of over 6,000 staff hours per year when fully implemented.

Despite these results, our division remains a work in progress, and will likely always be, as we strive to improve the business of vocational rehabilitation. Going into 2018, we continue to grapple with large issues requiring longer-term solutions:

- Increased staff attrition persists through the combination of retirements and staff seeking better positions in a booming economy. Our focus needs to remain on improving both the working environments and the career pathways for our staff.
- The growth in applications for services remains sluggish. Our immediate concern is that there are unmet vocational rehabilitation needs of our stakeholders. However, going forward, we worry about the potential of reduced funding resulting from a declining demand for services. In this context, significant efforts were made to increase the outreach, visibility and image of our division in 2017 and will continue in 2018.
- Changes in the federal administration bring uncertainty to future budgets. This is important because federal grants provide 78% of the division's funding. Although our program has not yet been affected, we continue to develop contingency plans and work toward identifying more cost-efficient ways of delivering high quality services.

In 2017, our division made strong progress. In 2018, we will leverage this progress to greater outcomes and emphasize continuous improvement as our standard. We are committed to quality program results with accountability to our stakeholders: the people we serve, our staff, the legislature and the community.

Sincerely,

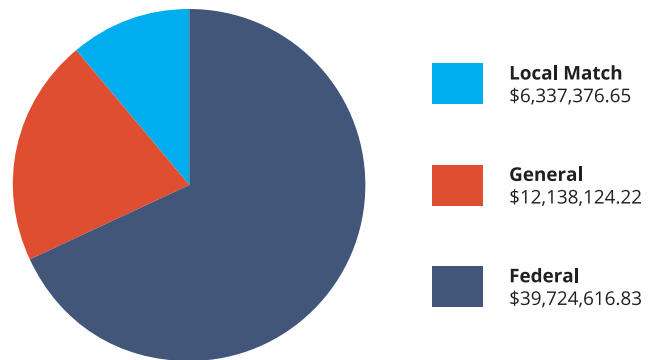
Steve Anton

Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Numbers

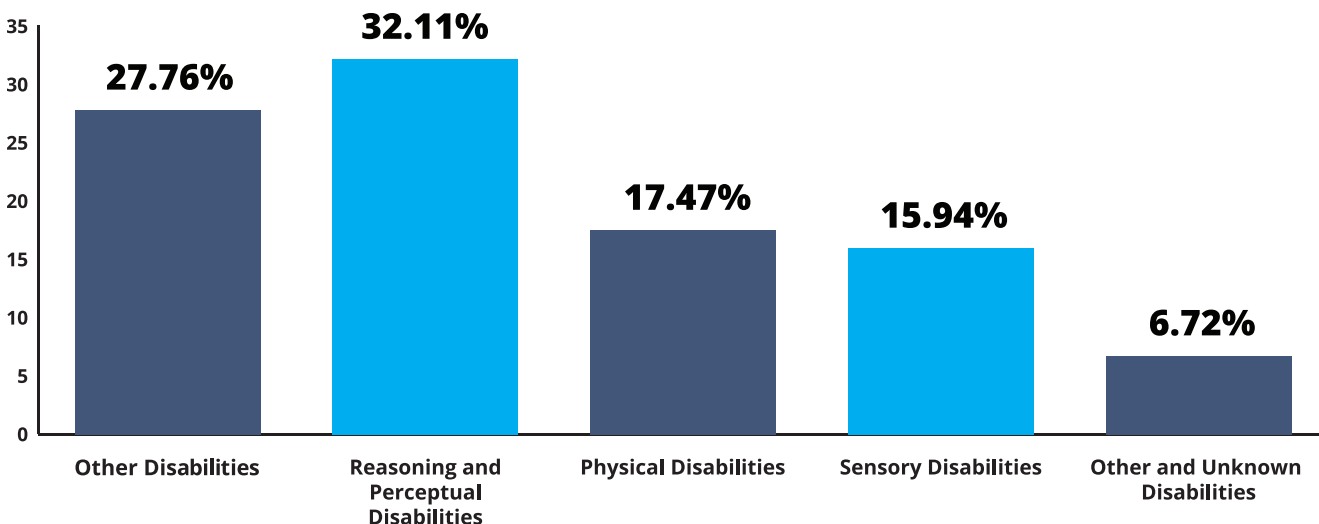
State Fiscal Year 2017

Federal Funds	\$39,724,616.83
Clients Closed Successfully Rehab	2294
Average Hourly Wage	\$12.66
Average Hours Worked Per Week	27.42
Estimated Total Earnings	\$41,400,000
Average Weekly Salary	\$369
Estimated Average Annual Salary	\$19,212



Who are We Assisting?

Persons with	
Interpersonal/Behavioral Disabilities	27.76%
Reasoning and Perceptual Disabilities	32.11%
Physical Disabilities	17.47%
Sensory Disabilities	15.94%
Other Disabilities	6.72%



The Colorado State Rehabilitation Council

Overview

The Colorado State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), a board of governor-appointed volunteers, has a partnership with the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) which is established by 34 CFR 361.16.

Our partnership is based on a common interest in seeing more Coloradans participate in the labor force after receiving services from DVR. CDLE contributes to the partnership by providing an organizational home for DVR. The parameters of the relationship between CDLE and DVR are detailed by 34 CFR 361.13. DVR contributes to the partnership by operating and administering a vocational rehabilitation service system that provides direct service in 26 locations statewide. The SRC contributes to the partnership by undertaking activities to analyze and assess the degree to which the services provided by DVR are effective. We do this by evaluating program and performance data, reviewing proposed changes to DVR's service delivery policies, and gathering input from people receiving services.

The SRC and our associated partnership operate in Colorado under the legal authority of Executive Order B 014 07.

According to 34 CFR 361.17(h)(5) the SRC is required to report on its activities to the governor and to the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration. During the reporting period extending from July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017, the SRC actively pursued its mission and was productive. Following are details of the work the SRC undertook in service of its mission. We have cataloged our work by the statutory mandate it fulfills.

Members

The vitality of the SRC's partnership with CDLE and DVR depends on our shared commitment to engagement. It also depends on the subject matter expertise SRC members bring to their service or cultivate among themselves, the questions they invite DVR to consider and the time they commit. SRC service is a volunteer commitment, and we recognize the significant gift of time each appointee has given.

During the reporting period members of the Colorado State Rehabilitation Council included (in alphabetical order):

Steve Anton, of Highlands Ranch, representing the administration of the Vocational Rehabilitation program (ex-officio)

Katherine Carol, of Denver, representing parents of individuals with disabilities

Julie Deden, of Centennial, representing Community Rehabilitation Program service providers

Julie Farrar, of Denver, representing the Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council

Melissa Fishburn, of Golden, representing the Statewide Independent Living Council

Anna French, of Denver, representing the Client Assistance Program

Lawrence Krause, of Denver, representing the Behavioral Health Advisory Council

Robert Lawhead, of Boulder, representing Business, Industry and Labor

Ryan Odland, of Denver, representing a disability advocacy group

Katie Oliver, of Thornton, representing the Colorado Department of Education advisory panel established under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Susan Richardson, of Denver, representing Business, Industry and Labor

Bobbie Rosa, of Ignacio, representing the Southern Ute Vocational Rehabilitation Program

Jason Rurup, of Aurora, representing Business, Industry and Labor

Beth Schaffner, of Colorado Springs, representing PEAK Parent Center

Amy Smith, of Eckley, representing Coloradans at-large

Stephanie Veck, of Parker, representing the Colorado Workforce Development Council

Bing Walker, of Golden, representing qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Professionals

Leadership

People with leadership roles in addition to membership during the reporting period:

Council Chair: Julie Deden (2016), Anna French (2017)

Council Vice Chairs: Anna French (2016), Larry Krause (2017), Ryan Odland (2017)

Committee Chairs (committees in alphabetical order):

Customer Satisfaction & Program Evaluation: Beth Schaffner (2016 to 2017)

Employment First: Katherine Carol and Robert Lawhead (co-chairs 2016 and 2017)

Executive: Julie Deden (2016), Anna French (2017)

Membership: Julie Farrar (2016 [in part]), Susan Richardson (2016 and 2017 [in part])

Planning, Policy & Advocacy: Julie Deden (2016 and 2017)

Transitions in Council Membership

Julie Farrar, Melissa Fishburn, Beth Schaffner and Stephanie Veck concluded their volunteer service to the Colorado State Rehabilitation Council and, by extension, the people of Colorado during this reporting period. We appreciate the time and talent they lent to our shared mission.

Budget

Pursuant to the requirements of 34 CFR 361.17(8)(i)(1-5) the SRC initiated a resource plan negotiation with DVR. For State Fiscal Year 2017, we requested and received \$51,851 to support our operation. In addition to a modest budget, DVR advanced our success by lending staff support to the effort.

In Kind Support

The Colorado State Rehabilitation Council thanks the Colorado Center for the Blind for providing regular use of the Center's boardroom.



The Work We Accomplished

The Colorado State Rehabilitation Council met four times during the reporting period on:

- October 13, 2016 in Denver
- January 26, 2017 in Littleton
- March 30, 2017 in Fort Collins
- May 25, 2017 in Grand Junction

Forums

The SRC convened forums to gather information to assess customer satisfaction with the services provided by DVR (meeting the statutory requirements established at 34 CFR 361.17[j][2] and 34 CFR 361.17[h][4][i])

When the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act was reauthorized, it placed greater emphasis on delivering services to young people. Given this shift, the SRC set out to garner targeted input from the young people DVR serves. The SRC sponsored two events, one in Fort Collins and the other in Grand Junction.

Despite a robust outreach effort, including making telephone calls, emailing and sending postcards, turnout in both locations was low. In Fort Collins, seven members of the public turned out. There, we were also joined by three staff of DVR. When visiting Grand Junction we were joined by two young people.

What we learned from these events may not have been statistically significant so we cannot draw broader conclusions about whether or not what our guests shared with us is indicative of trends statewide. Those that did attend reminded us of why DVR's success matters in the most personal terms. Here are some insights that stayed with us.

One young man in Fort Collins said, "I think going to work would fulfill my life."

At the same event, the mother of a young person receiving services from DVR, asked the rest of us "How many of you have made friends or met your husband or wife at work?" She went on to express her fear that without an avenue for going to work her son would not build the relationships that would make his life full.

In Grand Junction, we met a young man who was hopeful he could go to work after connecting with the School to Work Alliance Program (SWAP). We also met a man who had decided to access services from the Business Enterprise Program as a means to operate his own business because he wants his eight-year-old daughter to see her father working.

This is why it matters that DVR provides effective services.

Advisory Capacity

The SRC advised CDLE and DVR about its proposed approach to implementing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (which aligns with our obligation under 34 CFR 361.17[h][1][ii]).

On September 12, 2016, the SRC sent a memo to DVR's senior leaders entitled "Proposed Changes to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's Service Delivery Policy Necessary to Implement the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act."

Within the memo the SRC:

- Provided comment on draft proposed language in the revised service delivery policy;
- Posed strategic questions to senior leaders within DVR about Colorado's approach to implementing WIOA, based on our knowledge of the local context; and
- Suggested a structure for dialogue between the SRC and DVR regarding several questions the SRC posed to DVR leadership within the memo to ensure that Colorado's approach to implementing WIOA honors the spirit and the letter of the law.

The correspondence addressed the SRC's analysis of Pre-Employment Transition Services and expressed support for changes to federal law limiting access to subminimum wage placements. It also included seven questions for further discussion between the Council and the Division. The Division responded to each comment made by the SRC regarding the draft proposed language in the revised service delivery policy within its broader written response to all public comments it received. DVR's written response did not address the strategic questions about WIOA implementation posed by the Council. The Council and the Division share responsibility for following up on the initial correspondence with further dialogue. As of the time of this reporting that follow up has not occurred.

Collaboration

The SRC is also responsible for avoiding duplication and enhancing coordination with the Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council, the Colorado Statewide Independent Living Council and the Colorado Workforce Development Council (according to 34 CFR 361.17[h][6] and 34 CFR 361.17[h][7]).

This requirement was not prioritized by the SRC during the reporting period. We made a good-faith effort to comply by fully integrating representatives of the Statewide Independent Living Council, the Colorado Workforce Development Council and the Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council into our work and decision making.

Employment First Advisory Partnership

The SRC's most significant work, convening and administering the Employment First Advisory Partnership, falls under our authority to conduct other activities consistent with our purpose (specified at 34 CFR 361.17[h][8]).

In June 2016, Governor Hickenlooper signed Senate Bill 16-077 "Concerning the Collaborative Multi-Agency Approach to Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment for Persons with Disabilities, And, In Connection Therewith, Advancing an Employment First Policy."

The law, championed by Senator John Kefalas (D-Fort Collins), tasked the SRC with lead agency responsibility for convening and administering the Employment First Advisory Partnership (EFAP). This interagency work group is comprised of representatives of the Colorado Department of Education, the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, the Colorado Department of Higher Education, the Colorado Department of Human Services and people with disabilities, parents of people with disabilities, advocates, service providers and employers. The Employment First Advisory Partnership will be in operation through September 2021.

The EFAP contributors were tasked with developing a strategic plan to decrease barriers to employment and increase employment outcomes to impart the Employment First Policy paradigm to the General Assembly between November 1, 2017 and the first week of January 2018.

From September to December 2016, the SRC's internal Employment First Committee undertook a multi-pronged approach to recruiting contributors to the partnership. We selected members based on their affiliation with a required agency, subject-matter expertise they possessed,

or because of other experiences that contributed to building a well-balanced, representative group. We then set out to recruit other interested stakeholders through a competitive application process.

Contributing members of the Employment First Advisory Partnership included:

Katherine Carol and Robert Lawhead (Co-Chairs), Steve Bell, Marilee Boylan, Bruce Christensen, Candie Dalton, Cassidy Dellamonche, Carl Einhaus, Karen Ferrington, Lisa Franklin, Patricia Henke, Katie Oliver, Beth Schaffner, Jennifer Scilacci, Amy Smith, Stacy Teegardin, Romie Tobin, Adam Tucker, Emelda "Bing" Walker, Julian Wang, Lee Wheeler-Berliner, and Josh Winkler.

Concurrently, while recruitment was underway, we set about doing the administrative work necessary to develop and execute a memorandum of understanding between the agency partner and to contract with Engaged Public for the services of a skilled professional facilitator, Lisa Carlson.

The dedicated leadership of the co-chairs, the skilled facilitation and the excellent participation of the contributing members made progress towards the goal in short order. Partners met on:

- January 24, 2017
-
- February 21, 2017
-
- March 27, 2017
-
- April 11, 2017
-
- May 31, 2017
-
- June 13, 2017

The Employment First Advisory Partnership is on track to offer a carefully thought out, actionable report on time. The SRC is proud of the role we have played in advancing this important work. We remain motivated and focused on supporting the partnership.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Leadership and Contact Information

Administrative Office:

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
 Colorado Department of Labor & Employment
 633 17th Street, Suite 1501
 Denver CO 80202
 Phone: 303.318.8571
 Toll-Free: 866.870.4595
 Fax: 303.318.8569
 Email: cdle_voc.rehab@state.co.us
www.colorado.gov/dvr

Leadership:

Steve Anton
 Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Joleen Schaake
 Interim Deputy, Operations Management

Krista Dann
 Deputy, Field Services

Joelle Brouner
 Director of Community Outreach

Peter Pike
 Manager, Office of Independent Living Services

Carol Feuerbacher
 Manager, Organizational Planning & Development

Jennifer Scilacci
 Manager, Work Supports and Employer Engagement

Julia Zanon
 Manager, Blind & Low Vision Services

Cheryl Carver
 Manager, Youth Services & Transition Unit

DVR Offices:

Region I: Rob Buzogany, Regional Manager

.....
 Canon City – 719.275.7408, ext. 119
 Colorado Springs – 719.635.3585
 Lamar – 719.336.7712
 Limon – 719.775.8819
 Pueblo – 719.544.1406
 Trinidad – 719.220.4354
 Ft. Morgan – 970.867.9401, ext. 105

Region II: Lindsey Pacheco, Regional Manager

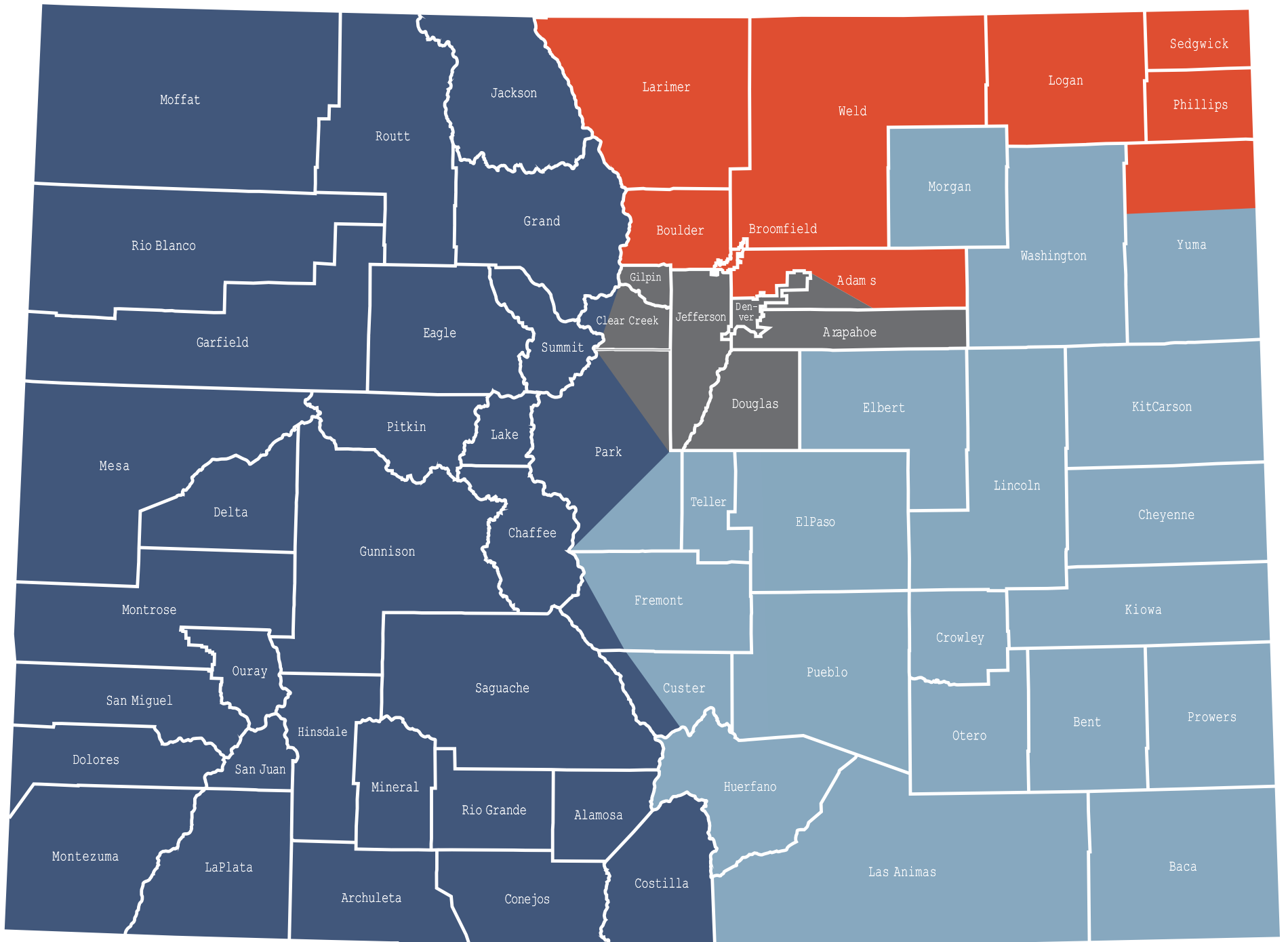
.....
 Aurora – 303.671.4160
 Denver Metro – 303.866.2500
 Golden – 303.866.4121

Region III: Stacy Evans, Regional Manager

.....
 Boulder – 303.444.2816
 Fort Collins – 970.207.6464
 Greeley – 970.353.5409
 Longmont – 303.776.6878
 Northglenn – 303.866.2110
 Sterling – 970.522.3737

Region IV: Andrea Messick, Regional Manager

.....
 Alamosa – 719.589.5158
 Craig – 970.824.9671
 Delta – 970.874.5781
 Durango – 970.247.3161
 Frisco – 970.668.0234
 Glenwood Springs – 970.945.1042
 Grand Junction – 970.248.7103
 Montrose – 970.249.4468
 Salida – 719.530.2585
 Steamboat Springs – 970.871.4853



Field Services

Colorado's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) works in partnership with Coloradans to provide individualized services leading to sustained employment for people with various types and degrees of physical and mental disabilities. Professional staff and extensively trained Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselors are strategically located in offices and local communities throughout Colorado, travelling when necessary to serve the entire state.

DVR's staff is highly committed to excellent customer service and assists individuals with disabilities in obtaining vocational success and increased self-sufficiency through individual assessment and evaluation, vocational counseling and guidance, comprehensive planning, and by providing other services necessary to become successful in employment. Approximately 115 VR Counselors across the state provide one-to-one support during this process and assist customers in addressing barriers and realizing their employment and career goals. To meet the needs of a diverse population, DVR has ensured that there are VR Counselors who are knowledgeable about a variety of disabilities and employment industries throughout the state. DVR also has several staff around the state who are fluent in American Sign Language and Spanish.

Each of DVR's field offices has a supervisor who, in addition to providing leadership, coaching and guidance to the staff, takes the lead in cultivating partnerships with area employers, workforce centers, schools, and other public and private service agencies within the community. DVR works in partnership with the business community to provide services to employers such as disability awareness training, on-site job assessments, referral and support of qualified employees, and professional consultation.

When working with customers across the state who are seeking successful employment, DVR staff continually strives to provide an environment that is welcoming, respectful, and responsive to the needs of Colorado's citizens.

Youth Services and Transition Unit

The implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), has challenged DVR's Youth Services and Transition Unit to focus on a new population of students with disabilities beginning at age 15 for those who are ready to engage with us. Now, more than ever, our collaborative partnerships with local education agencies play a key role in a true continuum of services. These services are being developed with the goal of creating career pathways for students through pre-employment transition services which will lead to higher paying jobs upon graduation.

The unit spent last year becoming Colorado's subject-matter experts on WIOA requirements for services to students and youth. We did this in order to provide training, technical assistance and support to all VR staff to promote a more fluid continuum of services that will help young adults achieve the skills necessary for emerging industry standards. As we enter into the new fiscal year, this knowledge will be shared to help local partnerships identify how to best collaborate with young adults, their family members and other community partners to provide pre-employment transition services and ensure they have access to DVR services.

VR Counselors provide consultation and technical assistance to educators early in the transition process, which assists in identifying those students who qualify to receive pre-employment transition services. Staff also facilitate referrals, determine eligibility, assist students with the selection of suitable employment outcomes, and provide services appropriate to the individual needs of students. The unit strives to ensure partnering takes place at the local level between education and DVR through consistent representation of DVR in the schools. Cohesion is promoted in these local partnerships through our Interagency Agreement with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE).

School to Work Alliance Program

The School to Work Alliance Program (SWAP) is a collaborative initiative with local Colorado school districts and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) that is supported by the Colorado Department of Education and overseen by the Youth Services and Transition Unit to serve young adults. The purpose of SWAP is to assist young adults in making the

transition from school to employment, increase community linkages, and create new patterns of service for young adults within all categories of disabilities. The program's goals include building on current transition planning efforts, creating a career pathway through pre-employment transition services, filling the case management gap for the targeted population, and supporting collaboration between DVR and local school districts/BOCES.

SWAP provided employment-related assistance to 4,975 young adults with disabilities, who experience mild to moderate barriers to employment in fiscal year 2017. These young adults were provided opportunities to practice and improve workplace skills, consider their career interests, and obtain real world work experience. For 675 young adults this led to competitive integrated employment.

Project SEARCH

The Project SEARCH High School Transition Program is a unique, business-led, one-year, school-to-work program that takes place entirely in the workplace. Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and relevant job-skills training through strategically designed internships. At the completion of the training program, students with significant intellectual disabilities are employed in nontraditional, complex and rewarding jobs with a 75 percent success rate. Moreover, the program has brought about changes in business culture that have far-reaching positive effects on attitudes about hiring people with disabilities and the range of jobs in which they can be successful. DVR sits at the table of this multi-agency partnership which includes local employers, school districts, and community service providers, along with the Youth Services and Transition Unit. Colorado currently has four Project SEARCH sites and is exploring growing these partnerships.

In fiscal year 2018, DVR will strive to develop opportunities to partner with education for increased career pathway development that will ultimately better prepare students with disabilities for transition from secondary education to employment and postsecondary education. Through job exploration, work-based learning experiences, post-secondary guidance and counseling, workplace readiness training and instruction in self-advocacy we hope to improve postsecondary outcomes. We believe this will help encourage today's students with disabilities to consider their vocational endeavors and be successful in competitive integrated employment.

ASPIRE

Also part of DVR's Youth Services and Transition Unit is ASPIRE. ASPIRE is a model demonstration project and part of a six-state consortium implementing the Department of Education's PROMISE initiative. This initiative helps to increase employment, education and self-sufficiency of youth with disabilities who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and their families. ASPIRE Colorado serves over 200 youth with disabilities across the state. Youth with disabilities and their families participating in ASPIRE receive increased services, which include intensive case management intervention. ASPIRE uses a holistic approach in working with the whole family to change their perspective on education, employment and independent living.

In June, ASPIRE Colorado helped program participants celebrate their successes through recognition and graduation celebrations held in many locations across the state. ASPIRE families were invited to the celebrations and all participants received a certificate of recognition and a "Keep Calm and ASPIRE On" t-shirt for participating in the project and achieving unique milestones. Each high school graduate also received a \$25 gift card and frame for his or her diploma to recognize this great achievement. Youth were recognized for achieving their personal goals, ranging from obtaining a 4.0 GPA, going to college, obtaining employment, or learning new skills. Students beamed with pride as each case manager announced their names to receive their certificates. Families applauded and cheered as the case managers recognized the youth for their hard work.

The ASPIRE families' eagerness and gratitude for the case managers for assisting them in achieving their goals, giving them hope, and fulfilling their dreams was uplifting. Families shared that if not for ASPIRE, they would not know where they would be today. Many parents mentioned that their children were at risk of dropping out of school and case managers worked with them to identify alternative schools, assist them with their homework, and coached the youth on the importance of staying in school.

Case managers have heard for years that parents want to meet other parents with similar circumstances. Parents want their kids to feel accepted and have the same opportunities as kids without disabilities. In addition, the youth have told the case managers that they want to meet other kids and develop new friendships. ASPIRE has also helped to fulfill these needs, as the events give families and youth the chance to make connections with each other and to form new friendships that will last well beyond the term of ASPIRE.

Blind & Low Vision Services

The Blind and Low Vision Services (BLVS) unit provides vocational rehabilitation services statewide for DVR participants who are blind/vision impaired, as well as manages the Business Enterprise Program, the Personal Adjustment Training program, and the Independent Living for Older Individuals who are Blind grant.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselors who work with blind and vision-impaired participants were successful in assisting 155 clients to achieve their employment goals this past year. The average wage for those in competitive employment is \$15.71 per hour. Types of employment include business managers and operators, medical and health professionals, computer support and customer service representatives, skilled technical trades, counseling and human services, general labor, stocking, and food service occupations. The VR unit is focusing on training new counselors and establishing a solid, stable team this year.



Personal Adjustment Training

DVR provides blindness independence-skills training through Personal Adjustment Training (PAT) at our center located in Denver, as well as from statewide field instructors. This past year, the center graduated 14 clients by providing them training in orientation and mobility, daily living skills, adaptive communication, assistive technology, low vision, and self-defense. The center was able to significantly reduce the average wait time of clients to access center-based services from six months to two months. Field teaching staff in Colorado Springs and Pueblo began a "Mini-PAT" training day which is offered every two months in our Colorado Springs DVR office. This training is modeled after the center-based program in Denver, but on a smaller scale. Mini-PAT can accommodate up to 8 students and bringing the clients together makes a positive difference in their adjustment to vision loss, as they are able to support one another and discuss the issues that are most important to them.

The center-based program hosted a Disability Awareness day in October of 2016 to educate community partners about blindness and visual impairments and inform them about the services available from PAT. Another success for the center was the creation of a four-part series of two-day summer transition workshops that included career exploration, college preparation, transportation, and a chili cook-off. Three students participated this summer and PAT staff are already planning and recruiting students for next summer's workshops!

In May, the Personal Adjustment Training team hosted a vendor presentation to provide information on blindness and visual impairments. The presentation covered a wide variety of topics from common eye diseases to human guide technique to improve the availability and quality of services available to clients who are blind/vision impaired. Over 20 vendors were in attendance. Also in May, the field PAT organized a visit for our blind and low vision clients to the Denver Botanic Gardens. The staff of the Gardens gave a sensory tour, where clients could touch and smell various plants and learn more about plants that grow in our climate in Colorado. In September of 2017, the PAT staff organized and presented a two-day training on deaf-blindness to staff of DVR. This training was co-presented with staff from the Colorado Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and speakers were brought in to provide training in visual aspects, audiological aspects, technology, orientation and mobility techniques, communication techniques, support service provision, and efforts with youth – all with a focus on deaf-blindness. The last day of the training involved a panel of individuals who are deaf-blind. It was a successful training, and all of the participants commented on the value it had in their work life.

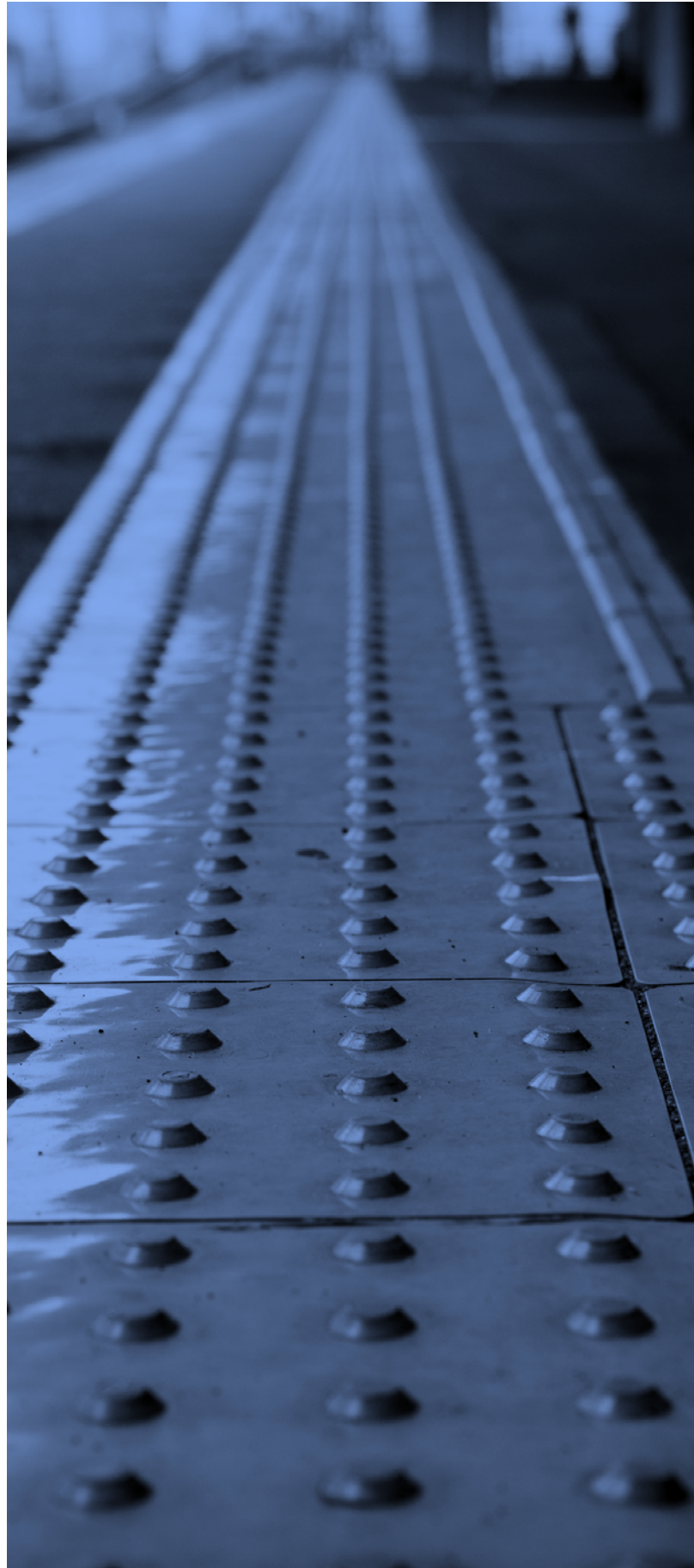
Business Enterprise Program

Under the Randolph-Sheppard Act, federal and state laws give priority to blind individuals to operate and manage food and vending services in federal and state government office buildings and facilities. The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) places qualified legally blind business persons to manage food service operations in these buildings, plus some privately owned facilities. Currently, these facilities consist of large cafeterias, military dining halls, snack bars, convenience stores, and vending machine units. The blind business managers have sole ownership of these business operations.

In January 2017, BEP hired a new trainer with hospitality management experience. The new trainer has reorganized and improved the training curriculum and is driven to keep the BEP entrepreneur spirit alive. BEP is committed to engaging new candidates and has worked diligently with the DVR counselors and PAT program staff to ensure qualified and motivated candidates are referred. There are currently 18 licensed BEP Blind Operators in the State of Colorado. Three new operators were licensed in 2017 and there are five additional candidates in various stages of training who are working toward the competencies and experience needed for licensure.

Independent Living for Older Individuals Who are Blind

For blind and visually impaired Coloradans who are age 55 or older and whose primary goal is to maintain independence in their own home, DVR contracts with six community organizations to provide federal funds to promote independent living services for these individuals. This past year, the community organizations served 3,896 blind/visually impaired consumers through a variety of individual, group, outreach, educational, and referral services.



Self-Employment Program

Colorado has a thriving entrepreneurial spirit. 19 percent of businesses across the state have 19 or fewer employees, 17 percent have 20-99 employees, and 13 percent are businesses falling in the 100-499 range. These businesses all fall within the definition of a small business. Colorado DVR is proud to have 22 counselors dedicated to helping our clients reach their goal of self-employment. Our Rehabilitation Counselors for Entrepreneurship (RCEs) are located throughout the state and focus specifically on helping those clients who express a strong interest in moving into viable self-employment.

The Self-Employment Review Team has reviewed 95 business plans submitted by clients and their counselors over the past year. These plans include a variety of creative business ideas, such as pet sitting, vending machine routes, agriculture, artisans, graphic arts and web design, and house-cleaning services.

RCEs coordinate with business consultants, local Small Business Development Centers (SBDC), and local business librarians to assist clients in refining their business ideas and business plans to be successful for the long term. DVR also works to ensure that our clients are connected with community partners such as SCORE, which offers small business education and mentoring, and the local SBDC when we are preparing to successfully close a case. This ensures that our clients can continue to have long term access to business coaching resources in their community.

Looking ahead, a dedicated and creative team of Rehabilitation Counselors are working to improve the Self-Employment Program, through revisions to policies and procedures with a goal of creating a more nimble program that better meets the needs of clients, stakeholders, and DVR Counselors.



Business Outreach Services

DVR's Business Outreach Specialist (BOS) Team is made up of nine professionals across Colorado with a focus on connecting our state's small, medium, and large businesses with a qualified talent pipeline of individuals with a variety of disabilities. This team offers a unique set of services for employers, including employee recruitment and candidate screening, ADA consultation, disability etiquette and awareness trainings, retention services for existing employees, and support with Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) compliance.

The BOS Team provides in-house services for our counselors and clients. Each day, they prospect for unique job leads for our clients and bring these back to the local offices. The team works with its network of employers to set up internships, paid work experiences, job tours, and informational interviews, both for our youth and adult clients. They share real-time local and national labor market information with DVR counselors and clients to assist in crafting appropriate employment goals. Our team is regularly partnering with other community job developers to increase the placement opportunities for our clients. Meeting with a broad set of community stakeholders is also key to ensuring that our clients and counselors are connected to the most up-to-date career resources possible.

Workforce Partnerships:

This past year we've expanded the focus on outreach and partnership with the Business Services Teams at local Workforce Centers and industry-led sector initiatives. The BOS Team is actively participating in 11 sector partnerships across the state. Two members are part of the Colorado Workforce Development Council's State Technical Assistance Team (STAT) for sector partnerships. Our BOS team regularly attends local Business Services Team meetings, partners to develop employment opportunities in the community, attends job fairs with Workforce Center partners, and serves on the Statewide Business Services Committee. Business Outreach Specialists also participate in Workforce Center Board meetings in several areas of the state. The manager of the Business Outreach Team was invited to speak at a national conference to share the collaboration and participation that this team has with Workforce Centers and sector partnerships.

It's All About the Numbers:

In the past year, the team outreached to 1,652 targeted employers and on average 20 DVR clients were hired within these businesses each month. They also provided 136 disability trainings at no cost to these employers, often helping businesses to meet mandatory diversity requirements. The Business Outreach Specialist team is broadening the reach of DVR by engaging with more than 880 partners over the last year, including the School to Work Alliance Program, local community mental health employment specialists, local Workforce Centers, Department of Corrections, sector initiatives, Community Centered Boards, Independent Living Centers, School Districts, Economic Development, Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) members, county commissioners, Chambers of Commerce, and more.

Successes

DVR's BOS team contributes to the development of work based learning opportunities, supporting students with disabilities to learn about and experience various career pathways. In the summer of 2017, the BOS team developed an opportunity for youth to participate in a job site tour with a local electric bike company. The participating students toured the job site, learned how to repair flat tires, and gained exposure to the various career opportunities within the field of bicycle repair. The students even had an opportunity to ride the electric bikes following their tour.

The BOS team's engagement with business also leads to permanent employment for individuals with disabilities. One individual who recently benefited from this engagement had a long history within the criminal justice system and an interest in working as a dishwasher. The Business Outreach Specialist initially arranged for a paid work experience for the client, allowing him to work on a temporary basis in order to establish recent work history, as well as highlight his skills, motivation, and dedication to being successful within his employment. The client was successful in his temporary position and the employer decided to offer him a permanent position at the restaurant. The employer now views him as one of his best employees.

Office of Independent Living Services

The Office of Independent Living Services oversees the contracts with nine Centers for Independent Living (CILs) delivering services to individuals with disabilities all across Colorado. This marks the first year of operations for the Office and it became fully staffed in November 2016. The Office works cooperatively with all nine CILs serving Colorado and the Governor-appointed Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). The Office aims to:

- Increase the visibility and understanding of the core services delivered by the Colorado CILs
- Develop partnerships between federal agencies, state agencies, advisory councils, community-based service networks, and CILs
- Partner with the CILs to build service capacity
- Serve as the fiscal sponsor for the Colorado Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)
- Partner to develop and monitor the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL)

Over the last year, the Office provided training and technical assistance to ensure federal Uniform Guidance fiscal compliance with all nine CILs through face-to-face training, monthly teleconferences, and conducting five audit compliance technical assistance site visits. Additionally, the Office worked collaboratively with DVR and the nine CILs to implement fiscal policies and resource development activities to demonstrate fiscal compliance and enhance the capacity of the CILs to deliver services to people with disabilities across Colorado.

One of the contract requirements of each CIL is to maintain certification for adhering to the Independent Living philosophy. During the last year, the Office recertified two CILs and all CILs are up to date on certifications.

Service Type	Number of Services Provided	Percent of Overall Services Provided
Information and Referral	10,399	21
Housing, Home Modifications and Shelter Services	9,552	19
Independent Living Skills Training and Life Skills Training	6,550	13
Advocacy/Legal Services	5,291	11
Peer Counseling Services	3,713	7

- Overall, CILs provided 49,591 different services that empowered individuals to achieve self-directed goals and maintain independence.
- Colorado Geographic Area Served – Centers for Independent Living provided services for people with disabilities in 44 Counties across Colorado.
- 1,887 new customers served by Centers for Independent Living in the 2017 State fiscal year.

Colorado SILC (Statewide Independent Living Council)

The Colorado SILC is a Governor-appointed, 15 member group. The majority of its members are people living with disabilities. They volunteer their time to develop and monitor a Statewide Independent Living Plan (SPIL) to ensure people with disabilities in Colorado have access to services and support for living well in their communities with maximum independence. The SPIL is the vehicle that allows CILs to receive federal Part B and Part C funding to provide services and advances independent living for people with disabilities across Colorado. The SILC receives additional support from the Office of Independent Living Services as the fiscal sponsor.

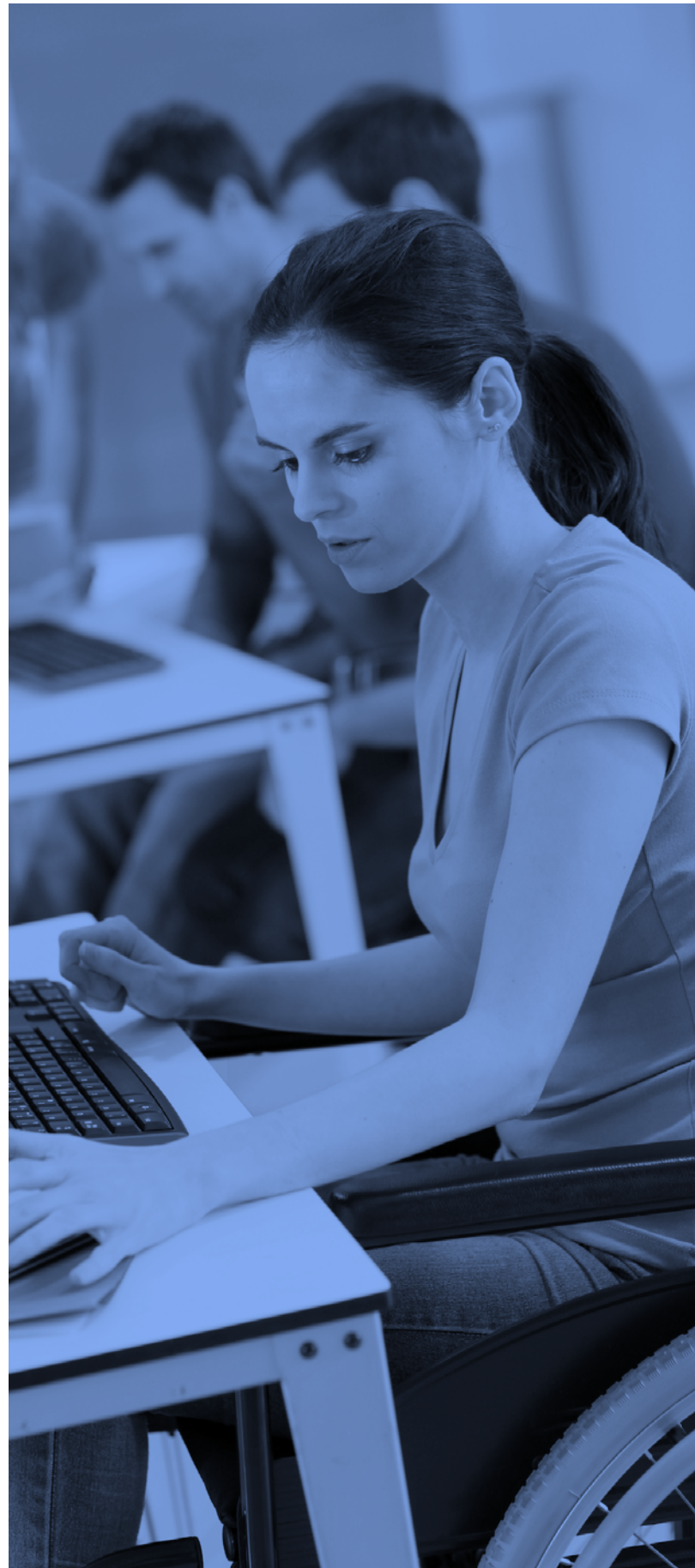
During this past year, the Colorado SILC entered into the first year of the three year cycle of the SPIL. One of the SPIL goals is to examine how to address the needs of underserved populations. As a result, the Colorado SILC established an ad hoc committee focused on addressing the needs of the deaf/hard of hearing communities. This committee identified available resources and services for this population and will be publishing this information in 2018.

Another area of focus for the Colorado SILC is the unmet needs of young adults with disabilities. The Youth Committee, comprised of a majority of youth with disabilities, completed a white paper that details the needs and existing services available for young adults with disabilities in Colorado. Additionally, the Colorado SILC has partnered with key stakeholders to plan and implement the Take Charge! curriculum for youth with disabilities on the Southern Ute Indian Reservation in 2018.

The Colorado SILC also engaged in the planning and development of a Youth Leadership Forum that is anticipated to take place in the summer of 2018. The design of the Youth Leadership Forum is led by young adults with disabilities and aimed to foster and develop advocacy skills and leadership skills for the young adults with disabilities attending the event from around the state.

More information about the Colorado SILC can be found on the website: www.ColoradoSILC.org.

For additional information about these activities, the Office of Independent Living Services can be reached at 303.318.8568.



Successes

Vocational Rehabilitation is the best resource for enhancing and building the diversity of the Colorado labor force, and an integral part of any employer's search for qualified and skilled career employees.

Occupations of Successfully Rehabilitated Clients	Count
Administrative Support Workers	479
Craft Workers	78
Executive/Managerial	64
Laborers & Helpers	285
Operatives	154
Professionals	178
RSA Special Occupations and Miscellaneous	144
Sales Workers	103
Service Workers	490
Technicians	19

Our Clients Are:



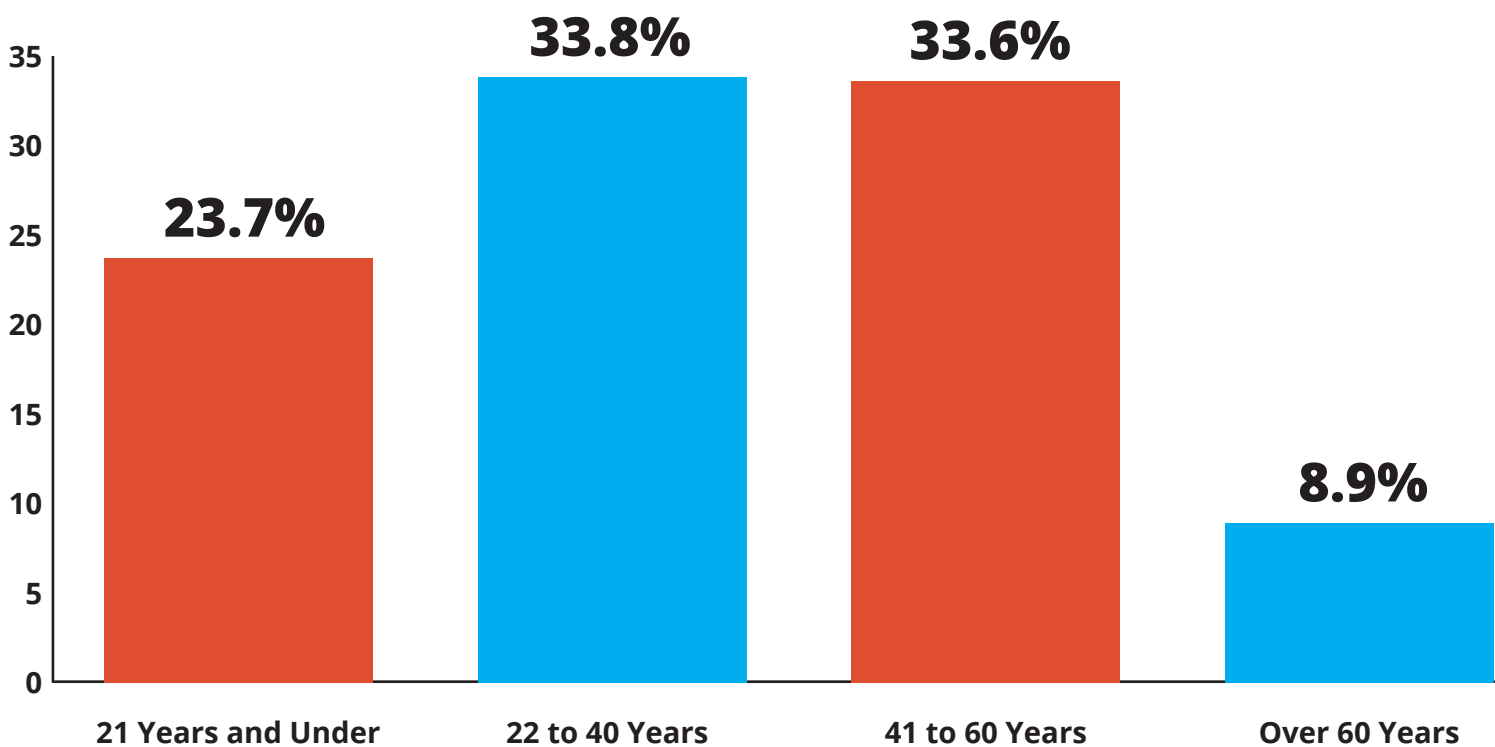
54.50%

Male



45.50%

Female



Success Stories

Benseslao's (BJ) Story:

BJ was referred to DVR and SWAP through his high school Counselor. SWAP and DVR worked with BJ for 3 years to help him job seek and provide him with job readiness skills and self-advocacy skills. He kept to himself, struggled with low self-esteem, was easily overwhelmed, had a history of panic/anxiety attacks, and spent a lot of time with his mom and his grandparents. Within a year of working with SWAP and DVR, BJ began applying for jobs. BJ began interviewing for jobs and not being offered a position right away really affected his self-esteem. However, BJ continued his job search and also decided get his driver's license to increase his independence. SWAP and DVR connected BJ with a Driver's Education Class through the local Community College and he is now comfortable driving.

BJ applied for a position at Sears; he was able to fill out the application on his own as a result of the assistance he received previously from SWAP. He was offered a position as a Delivery, Service, and Installation Representative on the spot. Unfortunately, the position did not work out. BJ was sad and wasn't sure why he was let go from his job, but decided to resume his job search.

BJ attempted to apply at WalMart for a Truck Unloader/Floor Stocker position, but he had trouble completing the online application. SWAP arranged for assistance from the hiring manager in completing the application using the in-store kiosk. The hiring manager also shared with SWAP what BJ could expect during the interview, and SWAP prepared BJ for his interview. After his interview, BJ was hired.

This time, SWAP connected with BJ's supervisor right away to ensure a smooth start. His supervisor felt BJ was doing well throughout his training, but was a bit shy and quiet. SWAP coached him on how to appropriately advocate for himself and to ask for help if he was unsure. SWAP also maintained contact with the hiring manager, who feels BJ is doing a great job. When BJ ran into some minor issues at work, he was able to overcome the problems by asking for extra time to complete the required computer based training. BJ has now been employed for over eight months and continues to be successful. He says his experience has helped him overcome his barriers. He has learned to talk to people, has seen his confidence grow, gets along with his crew members, and has become more social. He has even been offered a position in management, but has decided to continue in his current position for now.

Nathan's Story:

Nathan came to DVR having been unsuccessful in a variety of employment situations due to his disabilities, however he expressed interest in working as a photographer. His counselor, Lacy Anderson, recognized his talent when Nathan shared his portfolio and saw his potential to successfully establish a photography business. Nathan had been pursuing photography primarily as a hobby, but was eager to jump into DVR's Self-Employment program. DVR arranged for Nathan to work with a business consultant to develop a sound business plan and identify the assistance he would need to be successful. Through DVR, Nathan was able to receive assistance in purchasing the equipment he needed in order to work professionally as a photographer, training to ensure accurate bookkeeping, support with establishing his business in Colorado, and assistance with marketing needed to build his business. He also participated in DVR's Supported Employment program, providing him with access to more extensive and ongoing supports to ensure he is able to maintain his self-employment long-term. Nathan's counselor states, "It is very rewarding to see someone like him succeed. He struggled for so long and now he's doing something he loves."

Here is what Nathan has to say about his experience:

My Name is Nathan Greninger. I have been in the DVR Program. There have been many people involved assisting me in the process of making a business plan, brainstorming ideas with professional counsel, and checking in with me to make sure I am on track.

Thank you: Ron, Lacey, Susan, and Chandra. I appreciate you all.

DVR Experience: First, I was given the opportunity to present myself at a local wedding show in Grand Junction. As a result of this wedding show I was able to start with local weddings. I committed to 3 jobs from this event and have had referrals as well. Next, we placed notification ads in the High School paper and yearbook. I shoot many High School senior photos now. DVR helped me get in the door here. I've also started working with churches to do events for families. Quinceaneras have contributed much to my work this summer. As people get to know me and my work, I now work with fitness trainers and help individuals Vlog for their sites!

I continue to work on community projects, magazine entries, and marketing. DVR has assisted in getting me going on my dream. My family is thankful.



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colorado.gov/dvr