



COLORADO

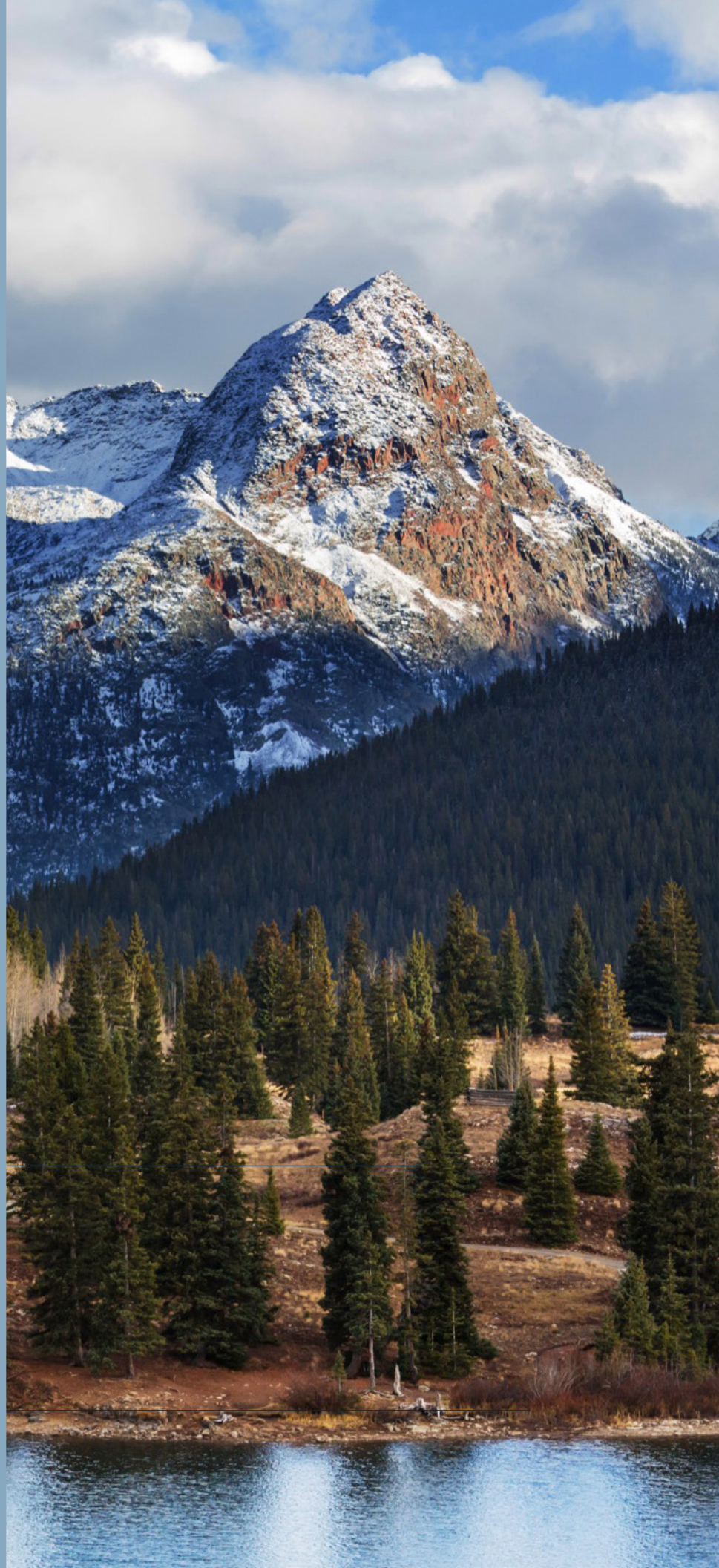
Department of
Labor and Employment

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

2018

ANNUAL REPORT



DVR LEADERSHIP AND CONTACT INFORMATION

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COLORADO

**Department of
Labor and Employment**

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation



DVR

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DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR

Steve Anton



Dear Colorado Stakeholders,
In last year's annual report, I shared the outcomes from our services and noted that the Division was likely to always be a work in progress as we continued to emphasize improving the ways we do business. That emphasis did continue; so in this report, I'll highlight both outcomes and some of the year's big achievements.

HERE'S 2018 BY THE NUMBERS:

15,687

15,687 people were served.

1,857

1,857 client's cases were successfully closed with employment.

7.58%

The average hourly wages for closed cases increased by 7.58%.

\$39.8 m

\$39.8 million in wages flowed into Colorado's economy from successfully closed cases.

HERE'S A SAMPLE OF SOME OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS THAT WILL PROVIDE A FOUNDATION FOR OUR WORK IN 2019:

- The Division was re-organized to improve the alignment and quality of field services; expand capabilities for counselor training and stakeholder communications; and increase the Division's capacity to develop and execute strategies for better services, expanded funding sources and a more robust organizational culture.
- The Employment First Advisory Partnership (EFAP) was folded into the mainstream of the Division's activities, with a focus on collaborating with State Rehabilitation Council and the Departments of Labor and Employment, Health Care Policy and Finance, Human Services, Education and Higher Education to refine and begin implementation of the EFAP recommendations resulting from Employment First legislation in our state.
- In cooperation with the Department of Personnel and Administration, a supplementary pay for performance program was developed and launched to reward counselors for demonstrated skills in exceptional client service.
- The Division completed its response to the Rehabilitation Services Administration's Monitoring Report, with the notable result of having the fewest findings of the 10 states monitored in 2017.
- The Office of Independent Living Services collaborated with the State Independent Living Council and the Independent Living Centers to conduct the first annual Colorado Youth Leadership Forum at Colorado State University.
- And last, but certainly not least, the Division's Process Improvement Effort (PIE) continued to streamline processes and procedures that will make life easier for our counselors and their clients. Over the last two years, the PIE team estimates a savings of over 10,000 counselor hours!

The Division has come a long way, but there's a longer road ahead of us. For 2019, we will rededicate ourselves to the stakeholder trust vested in us and renew our commitment to continuous improvement in the delivery of our services.

SINCERELY,
STEVE ANTON

Director – Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

THE COLORADO STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) advises the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation by evaluating program and performance data; reviewing proposed changes to the Division's service delivery policy, rule or law; gathering input from people receiving services and other activities. In addition, the SRC is identified in state legislation (Senate Bill 16-077) as the lead agency to coordinate the inter-departmental collaboration required of the Employment First Advisory Partnership (EFAP). As such, the SRC has created an internal Employment First Committee to guide and administer the EFAP. As a result, significant progress in implementing the strategies recommended within the Employment First Advisory Partnership Strategic Plan has been made by EFAP agency partners on each of the 2017 recommendations:

- 1** Produce data for all applicable EFAP agency partners that allow measurement of Colorado's progress toward compliance with federal law requiring people with disabilities receive state-funded services in integrated settings (all EFAP agency partners).

Data collection strategies have been outlined by both the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) and the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF). Both departments expect to attain their legislatively-defined responsibilities in this area by the end of FY 2018-19.

- 2** Implement department-wide Employment First policies and practices (CDLE, HCPF, and CDE).
All three agencies have made progress in developing departmental Employment First initiatives.

- 3** Implement a training plan for state service providers on evidence-based practice to expand employment outcomes, in conjunction with employer-led initiatives and networks (all EFAP agency partners).

The Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation/CDLE (DVR) has explored a process to deliver best-practice training for DVR counselors. DVR, in conjunction with HCPF, has begun the process to establish rules guiding the training of vendor staff providing supported employment services.

They also plan to increase efforts to expand implementation of the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of supported employment. Finally, DVR has developed plans to implement best-practice Discovery as an alternative assessment within their fee schedule. HCPF has made progress in developing a cost-reimbursement mechanism for service provider training in best-practice supported employment.

- 4** Implement a communication plan with messaging describing available services that support the achievement of successful employment outcomes for people with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities, which targets employers, educators, people with disabilities and their families (CDLE).

CDLE has created an initial outline of how they would contract for the creation and delivery of such a communication plan.

- 5** Create an Office of Employment First to coordinate cross-departmental efforts to implement Employment First policies, regulations and practices (Colorado).

DVR/CDLE and HCPF have jointly proposed that a Colorado Office of Employment First be established in 2019 through an appropriation with the 2019-20 Governor's proposed budget.

- 6** Develop appropriate funding structures that will increase employment service and support capacity (all EFAP agency partners).

HCPF is exploring a pay-for-performance funding incentive that would reward service agencies that produce competitive integrated employment outcomes.

- 7** Design and coordinate locally-based pilot projects to demonstrate the expansion of employment outcomes for people with disabilities through best-practice employment services and supports implementation (all EFAP agency partners).

DVR/CDLE has completed planning for three local pilot projects for customized employment demonstrations scheduled to begin in late 2018.

- 8** Become a "model employer" for Colorado citizens with disabilities (Colorado).

CDLE has created an initiative to create a transferable state agency hiring model for employing people with disabilities with the intent of exporting that model to other departments within Colorado state government.

FIELD SERVICES

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 to obtain vocational success and increased self-sufficiency through individual assessment & evaluation, vocational counseling and guidance, holistic planning, and provision of many other services necessary to become successful in employment. Approximately 125 VR Counselors across the state provide one-to-one comprehensive support during this process and assist customers to address barriers and realize their employment and career goals and pursue future dreams. 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 strive to provide an environment that is welcoming, respectful, and responsive to the needs of Colorado's citizens.

YOUTH SERVICES AND TRANSITION

The Youth Services and Transition Unit (YSTU) leads DVR to coordinate effective and efficient pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) and transition services for students and youth with disabilities. Regional Lead Counselors serve as trainers and mentors for all counselors providing services to students and youth with disabilities. These Lead Counselors provide training regarding policies, procedures, practices, and processes around transition. This team also ensures community partners and other relevant audiences have access to necessary training and information about the transition services available to students and youth through DVR.

In collaboration with local education agencies, DVR has been able to provide a broad scope of services to prepare students for work activities, including: developing business enterprises that provide exposure to self-employment; "boot camps" focused on developing work readiness skills; exposure to emerging industries; opportunities to explore and learn how to navigate a college campus; and multiple work based learning experiences. These activities are designed to connect back to each student's Individual Education Program and/or Individual Career and Academic Planning to ensure coordinated transition planning for each student.

The School to Work Alliance Program (SWAP) is a collaborative initiative with local Colorado school districts and the Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) that is supported by CDE, overseen by YSTU to serve youth. The purpose of SWAP is to assist young adults in making the transition from school to employment, provide successful employment outcomes, and increase community linkages through new patterns of service for young adults across disabilities. SWAP provided employment-related assistance to over 5,000 young adults with disabilities experiencing mild to moderate barriers to employment between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2018. These youth were provided opportunities to improve work skills, explore career interests, and obtain work experience leading to competitive integrated employment.

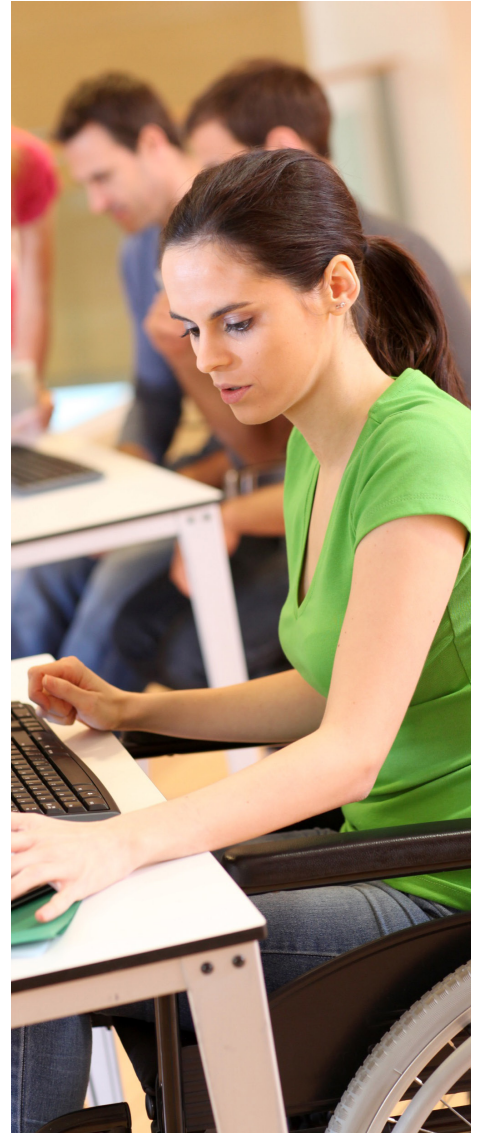
The Project SEARCH High School Transition Program is a unique business-led school-to-work program that takes place entirely at the workplace, facilitating a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and job-skills training. At the completion of the program, students with significant intellectual disabilities are employed in complex and rewarding jobs with a 75% 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. This multi-agency partnership includes local employers, school districts, and community service providers along with YSTU. Colorado currently has 3 Project Search sites and is exploring growing these partnerships.

DVR also partners with the Colorado Department of Education under the guidance of the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) to implement capacity building plans. This interdisciplinary team is focused on creating common messaging to promote effective practices and predictors of in-school and post school success, leading to higher paying jobs upon graduation.

ASPIRE (Achieving Success by Promoting Readiness for Education and Employment) is a model demonstration project and part of a six state consortium implementing the US Department of Education's PROMISE (Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income) initiative, with the goal of increasing employment, education, and self-sufficiency of youth with disabilities who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and their families. Statewide, ASPIRE Colorado serves over 200 youth with disabilities. ASPIRE uses a holistic approach in working with the whole family to change their perspective on education, employment and independent living.

In the spring of 2018, ASPIRE was granted a no-cost extension to continue case management services, parent training, self-determination training, financial education and literacy, and benefits counseling to the youth and families through Feb 28, 2019. ASPIRE is also encouraging families to open ABLE accounts and when families complete the ASPIRE criteria, funds can be deposited into the youth's ABLE account to use after ASPIRE is completed. As the grant comes to a close, families will receive a summary report of the progress the youth and families have made and celebrate milestones such as graduation from high school and technical school, and obtaining employment. Families will also receive information about local resources they can continue to access after the end of the grant.

Project SEARCH students with significant intellectual disabilities are employed in complex and rewarding jobs with a 75% success rate.



BLIND AND LOW VISION SERVICES

Blind and Low Vision Services (BLVS) unit manages vocational rehabilitation services for individuals who are blind/vision impaired; the Business Enterprise Program authorized by the Randolph-Sheppard Act; the Personal Adjustment Training program; and the Independent Living for Older Individuals who are Blind services grant for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

80 individuals who are blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind became competitively employed across the state as a result of the services received from DVR. The wages earned by these individuals ranged from \$10.20 to \$70 per hour, with many jobs paying \$13 to \$30 per hour. Participants are working in a wide variety of careers including management, professional services, engineering, technical, health care, education, social services, clerical/office support and customer service. During the National Federation for the Blind state convention, BLVS hosted training on how to explore the labor market and preparing for a successful job interview.

The Personal Adjustment Training (PAT) program teaches blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind participants how to travel and live independently, access resources in college, orient to a job site, and use assistive and adaptive technology for success with employment. The PAT instructors have expanded youth services to provide training modules on volunteer work-based learning experiences, career exploration, daily living skills, independent travel, and have started a job club. Vision Expos hosted by PAT bring together a wide variety of blind/low vision resources for the community in an easy to access location.

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) oversees the training and licensing of blind operators and manages the operation of federal, state, and private vending, snack bars, cafeterias, convenience stores, and military dining locations across the state. The number of licensed blind operators has increased from 17 last year to 21 over the past year, due to the excellent communication and collaboration between the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and the BEP trainer and manager. The BEP training curriculum has been strengthened to better prepare blind participants to be successful with operating their business locations. A priority of the Business Enterprise Program is to ensure that locations provide opportunity for blind operators to earn living incomes and grow their businesses.

For blind and visually impaired Colorado residents who are age 55 or older and whose primary goal is to maintain independence in their own home, BLVS provides services through contracts with six providers across the state. Over 700 individual consumers received services that include learning how to live with low vision, independent living skills, participating in support groups, accessing and learning how to use assistive technology, and learning how to travel independently. In addition to the individual consumers, the providers have also completed outreach to many more consumers with information and referral resources.

Finally, BLVS manages the Howard Fund, a fund that provides grants to individuals and organizations in Colorado to help them acquire equipment and services directly related to blindness and vision impairment. This past year, the Howard Fund board has approved 11 grants that have included the purchase of assistive technology, low vision aids, adaptive equipment and training.

Wages ranged from \$10.20 to \$70 per hour, with many jobs paying \$13 to \$30 per hour.

Blind operators have increased from 17 last year to 21 over the past year.

Over 700 individual consumers received services that include learning how to live with low vision.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

DVR's Supported Employment program has been focused on developing strategic partnerships internal and external to the organization at state and local levels to build the infrastructure necessary to effectively serve individuals with the most significant disabilities. Colorado's Employment First Advisory Partnership (EFAP) has been instrumental in identifying the gaps within systems, services and training for partners that make up an individual's service team. Colorado DVR is proud of the outcomes of the initial efforts of EFAP and the direction of the Supported Employment program.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PARTNERS & PROGRAMS:

OFFICE OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH (OBH), COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

OBH and DVR have developed the Mental Health Supported Employment Program that operates under a formalized interagency agreement, providing the access to supported employment services to individuals with significant behavioral health disorders. This partnership involves local agreements with twelve Community Mental Health Centers, one non-profit organization, and two private vendors throughout the State to provide supported employment services, including job development, job seeking skills, job coaching, and ongoing support. The program has resulted in increased competitive integrated employment opportunities for these individuals.

OBH and DVR are members of the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) International Learning Community and provide training and support to providers statewide. IPS is the most researched evidenced based practice in the behavioral health industry and leads to higher competitive integrated employment outcomes and is cost effective. The IPS practice principles focus on rapid engagement, integrated team approaches, benefits planning, long term support, and competitive integrated outcomes. IPS also focuses on serving youth with mental health disabilities in employment and education.

Through this partnership, DVR & OBH facilitate mentoring and training through the Mental Health Consortium Group and DVR's Supported Employment Steering Committee for Mental Health, in addition to hosting an annual IPS conference. DVR also participates in monthly technical assistance calls as part of the International IPS Learning Community and the Colorado IPS Leadership Team.

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY LIVING (OCL), COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTHCARE POLICY & FINANCING, AND COMMUNITY CENTERED BOARDS (CCB)

CCBs serving persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) are critical partners in DVR's effort to assure the availability of quality vocational rehabilitation services throughout the state. Many strides have been made to more effectively sequence and coordinate services between DVR and the multiple partners involved in the provision of supported employment services. DVR also has two Lead Counselors who support effective coordination of quality services for individuals requiring supported employment services. These counselors serve as regional leads, providing training, guidance, and support to all counselors in their areas to establish standards of practice with the local CCBs.

DVR & OCL partner each year in developing and facilitating I/DD Roundtable Events, providing training to staff from CCBs, DVR, Education, Advocacy organizations, Independent Living Centers, and Supported Employment Service Provider organizations. These I/DD Roundtables have become a sought out opportunity for education & training for our DVR staff and partners, covering topics such as benefits planning, ABLE accounts, sequencing services from high school to adulthood, and provider transformation.

In partnership with OCL, DVR participates in the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) to discuss strategies to increase individual supported employment opportunities to people with Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. Discussions will include opportunities for youth with disabilities to obtain education and employment outcomes.

DVR has developed a Customized Employment pilot team to create a strategy to implement this needed service delivery model in Colorado. Through partnership with various State agencies, local service providers, and stakeholders, as well as national technical assistance centers, a pilot has been developed to serve individuals with the most significant disabilities transition from non-integrated work settings to integrated work settings by identifying specific tasks the individual can perform, allowing one to work within their strengths. A key component of the pilot is identifying sustainable training approaches for DVR staff and service providers to ensure effective implementation of Customized Employment statewide.

SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Colorado continues to have a thriving entrepreneurial economy and self-employment can offer a pathway to economic independence and self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities. The Self-Employment Training Guide developed by the Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities and the University of Montana has been a helpful resource for Rehabilitation Counselors for Entrepreneurship (RCE) to assist DVR clients in learning about self-employment.

Significant work has been underway to restructure the DVR Self-Employment Program to improve processes, requiring gathering information from DVR counselors, stakeholders, and current and past clients and vendors. Early in 2019, a new training manual, revisions to DVR Service Delivery Policy, and a streamlined process for review of business plans are expected to be implemented, resulting in improved service delivery for individuals pursuing self-employment.

Five Lead Counselors for Entrepreneurship who have extensive expertise in self-employment assist with training RCEs across the state on topics related to successful entrepreneurship, such as Social Security Administration work incentives, marketing plans, business plan structure, tax requirements, digital and social media presence, and AgrAbility.

Forty business plans were considered over the past year and DVR supported clients to develop successful businesses in a variety of markets, including: weighted blankets, life coaching/career counseling, general remodeling services, music promotion, on-line and custom clothing sales, re-sale furniture, healthcare advocacy, custom woodworking, lawn care, down syndrome awareness, drywall installation, custom/artisanal bath products, dog walking and pet sitting businesses, photography, RV transportation, real estate, artists, aesthetician, and horsemanship training.

BUSINESS OUTREACH SERVICES

DVR's Business Outreach Specialist (BOS) Team focuses on connecting businesses with qualified 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 Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) compliance.

The team also works with employers to arrange internships, paid work experiences, job tours, and informational interviews. They share real-time local and national labor market information with DVR counselors and clients to assist in crafting appropriate employment goals. The team is regularly partnering with other community job developers to increase the placement opportunities for DVR clients. Meeting with a broad set of community stakeholders is also key to ensuring that clients and counselors are connected to the most up-to-date career resources possible.

The BOS team actively participates in sector partnerships across the state, and is represented on the Colorado Workforce Development Council's State Technical Assistance Team (STAT) for sector partnerships. The BOS team is integrated into local Workforce Center Business Services teams, partnering to develop employment opportunities in the community, attending job fairs with Workforce Center partners, and serving on the Statewide Business Services Committee.

In the past year, the team outreached to 1,949 targeted employers and on average 18 DVR clients were hired within these businesses each month. They also provided 369 disability awareness trainings and presentations regarding DVR at no cost to employers, often helping businesses to meet mandatory diversity requirements. The Business Outreach Specialist team is broadening the reach of CO DVR by engaging with over 1,045 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!

OFFICE OF INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES

The Office of Independent Living Services (OILS) oversees the contracts with nine Centers for Independent Living (CILs) delivering services to individuals with disabilities all across Colorado. 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 and ensure contract funding follows federal and state fiscal requirements.
- 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)

Overall, CILs provided 68,653 distinct services that empowered individuals to achieve self-directed goals and maintain independence. This represents a 28% increase in services delivered. 2166 new customers were served by Centers for Independent Living in the 2018 State fiscal year. This represents a 13% increase in new customers served from the previous year.

COLORADO STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL (SILC)

The Colorado SILC is a Governor-appointed 15 member group, with the majority being people living with disabilities. Members volunteer their time to develop and monitor a State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) to ensure people with disabilities in Colorado have access to services and support for living well in their communities with maximum independence. The SILC emphasized goals as outlined in the SPIL. These goals were:

- Ensuring the SILC was fully constituted with fifteen active members;
- Working to provide the committees had resources to advance their goals;
- Building relationships with CILs, OILS and other organizations; and
- Focusing on training SILC members in SILC administration and independent living.

One of the largest accomplishments of SILC during this year was the inaugural Colorado Youth Leadership Forum (YLF). The Colorado YLF is an innovative event for Colorado high school juniors or seniors and other young adults under 26 with disabilities. Youth serve as delegates from their communities and are given the opportunity to cultivate their leadership, citizenship, and social skills. The YLF is designed to foster young adult personal growth through self-discovery and experiential learning opportunities to identify and embrace their strengths while planning for their futures.

The Colorado YLF was held at Colorado State University (CSU) in Fort Collins from July 8-12, 2018. Nineteen young adults with disabilities were selected to participate. Throughout the week, delegates learned how to set SMART goals and how to develop an action plan to support goal attainment. The SILC aims to continue support for the Colorado YLF, as it is designed to address unmet needs for young adults with disabilities.

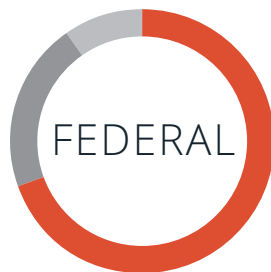
ANNUAL REPORT DATA SUMMARIES

	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>2018</i>
	Total Individuals Served (both VR and YP)	15,687
<i>Applicants and eligible individuals receiving services from DVR</i>	VR Individuals Served	14,437
<i>Potentially eligible students with disabilities receiving only pre-employment transition services from DVR</i>	YP Individuals Served	1,250
	Successful Employment Outcomes (VR)	1,857
<i>Percentage of cases closed after achieving a successful employment outcome</i>	Percentage of Successful Employment Outcomes	53.24%
	Average Wages From Employment outcomes (VR)	\$13.62
	New Applications (VR)	5,937

Clients Closed Successfully Rehab (VR)	1,857
Ave Hourly Wage (VR)	\$13.62
Ave Hours Worked Per Week (VR)	28.4
Estimated Total Earnings (VR)	39.8 Mill
Average Weekly Salary (VR)	\$412.65
Estimated Average Annual Salary (VR)	\$21,458

<i>Disability Type</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Reasoning and Perceptual Disabilities (VR)	30.40%
Interpersonal/Behavioral (VR)	29.76%
Physical Disabilities (VR)	17.42%
Sensory Disabilities (VR)	16.03%
Other and Unknown Disabilities (VR)	6.39%

State Fiscal Year 2018 Source of Program Funding



Federal - \$40,469,290.49



General - \$11,948,349.35



Local Match - \$5,638,469.28

ANNUAL REPORT DATA SUMMARIES

<i>Occupations of Successfully Rehabilitated Clients</i>	<i>Count</i>
Administrative Support Workers (VR)	498
Craft Workers (VR)	83
Executive/Managerial (VR)	71
Laborers & Helpers (VR)	241
Operatives (VR)	164
Other (VR)	2
Professionals (VR)	212
RSA Special Occupations and Miscellaneous (VR)	4
Sales Workers (VR)	88
Service Workers (VR)	465
Technicians (VR)	29

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Male (VR)	54.59%
Female (VR)	45.31%
Did Not Self-Identify (VR)	0.10%

<i>Age Category</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
21 Years and Under (VR)	23.33%
22 to 40 Years (VR)	33.93%
41 to 60 Years (VR)	34.07%
Over 60 Years (VR)	8.67%



2018 Shining Stars of VR Award Winners



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