



COLORADO
Department of
Labor and Employment

COLORADO STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

THE DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

DECEMBER 2020

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01 LETTERS TO COLORADO STAKEHOLDERS

Dear Colorado Stakeholders and Partners,

I AM PROUD TO LEAD AN AGENCY THAT EMPOWERS PROSPERITY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES. Individual lives are changed and the whole state of Colorado is made better when people with disabilities are empowered to be employed and independent. Our dream goal is that DVR working together with partners and stakeholders will close the prosperity gap for people with disabilities by 10 percent in 10 years.

Our vision at the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is “people with disabilities are essential to a working economy that elevates all of Colorado” and our mission is “working together to promote a thriving employment environment with opportunity for every Coloradan with a disability to live independently and prosper.” We believe that anyone with a disability who wants to work, can work, regardless of the type or severity of their disability. We also believe in equity, diversity and inclusion, and work to ensure non-discriminatory practices and equitable opportunities in all of our programs.

Achieving our mission and vision requires us to work closely with our partners and stakeholders to provide high quality customer service, operate with fiscal responsibility, and continuously improve the ways we do our work.

A few highlights from the past year include:

- ❖ **15,806** people were served.
- ❖ **1,946** cases were successfully closed at an average wage of **\$15.61**.
- ❖ DVR focused on increasing the use of **labor market information** that leads to the people we serve becoming employed in opportunity occupations that lead to a career path.
- ❖ We continued to support an **Employment First Philosophy**: we believe that anyone who wants to work, can work, regardless of type or severity of disability. To further support this philosophy, we have implemented structural changes to our agency and continue to support the Employment First Advisory Partnership’s (EFAP) strategic plan in various ways.
- ❖ We re-structured our organization to create the Competitive Integrated Employment Unit, bringing together our supported employment program, benefits counseling, youth transition services and professional development and learning teams under one manager to better support Employment First.
- ❖ DVR contracted with University of Colorado School of Medicine, JFK Partners, to create the [Colorado Office of Employment First](#).
- ❖ DVR received 2 awards from the CO Association of People Supporting Employment First for overall best practice and supporting innovation. We are proud members of CO-Apse, with 9 staff active members in our local chapter.
- ❖ **New Normal**— In modifying standard practices to ensure continuity of services during COVID-19 restrictions, DVR implemented new business practices related to electronic signatures, virtual training, and remote service delivery, resulting in efficiencies that DVR seeks to maintain long term.
- ❖ **SEEKS**: CO DVR is the recipient of a federal research grant, Securing Employment and Economic Security (SEEKS), which has an employment first philosophy.
 - SEEKS is working with 5 Centers for Independent Living. IL staff assist individuals who are applying for SSI or SSDI, connect them with an employment specialist who is also trained in Individual Placement and Support (IPS), customized employment and benefits counseling. These individuals are also referred to DVR for further services.

01 LETTERS TO COLORADO STAKEHOLDERS

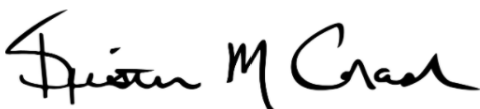
- ❖ We held our first **statewide conference** in 5 years in September 2019, inviting several partners to join us.
- ❖ We continued our commitment to **process improvement**, with two internal workgroups currently focused on creating a framework for pre-employment transition services and to increase our communications and training with our vendors, including a weekly communication to our job development vendors.
- ❖ We partnered with the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade, the Film Commission and the Lt. Governor's Office to create a documentary, "Work's Untapped Resources" geared toward employers to highlight the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. See the [trailer](#).
- ❖ Our **State Advisor on Disability Employment** has worked closely with the Department of Personnel Administration and State Agency HR Directors to promote the hiring of people with disabilities in state employment.
- ❖ **Transformational Wellness:** Our agency has a key focus on wellbeing in the workplace, and we are working with a contractor to implement **Transformational Wellness** throughout our agency.

Our upcoming goals include:

- ❖ A continued focus on improving customer experience, both external and internal.
- ❖ Decreasing our reliance on brick and mortar while continuing to provide the best customer experience to those we serve and our partners. Examples include improving initial engagement with the people we serve and enhancing our ability to utilize electronic signatures.
- ❖ DVR will increase the success of quality employment outcomes measured by maintaining successful closures during the recession at the SFY 2020 level of 1,946 and increase the average wage from \$15.61 to \$16.58 by June 30, 2021.
- ❖ DVR will complete 200 training sessions by June 30, 2021 on Employment First evidence-based and promising practices to empower job seekers to obtain competitive integrated employment.
- ❖ DVR will work to pass legislation that allows for CDLE to pilot a preference for hiring people with disabilities during the 2021 legislative session and if it passes, put in place a pilot by June 30, 2022.
- ❖ Increase skills-based practices by employer partners by providing 60 skills-based practices employer services by June 2021.

We are committed to providing high quality services to all our stakeholders, and look forward to partnering with you to reach our Dream Goal: Partners and stakeholders working together to reduce the prosperity gap of people with disabilities by 10% in 10 years.

Warmly,



Kristin Corash
Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

01 LETTER TO THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

Dear Governor Polis, Commissioner Mark Schultz, and concerned Stakeholders,

As everyone can attest, this has been an incredible year. I feel heartened by the agile and innovative solutions Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has made to keep both staff and clients safe. The DVR leadership and staff are continuing to provide needed employment services and striving to operationalize ways to improve outcomes for people using DVR services under such difficult conditions. The extraordinary flexibility at the state level to ensure clients and employees had what they needed is greatly appreciated.

DVR's innovative strategies including increasing Zoom licenses, allowing for electronic signatures, and expanding the ability to provide technology, enabled DVR to continue partnering with clients to get people working and, at the same time, protecting both client and staff health. Technology has become an essential tool for the work we do. We will continue to explore how DVR can increase technology use to improve access to services and support people to obtain and maintain employment.

Despite this challenging time, as technology use increased, DVR found new ways to reach and connect with clients and the community at large. One community response to COVID 19 was an urgent need for online learning. The Office of Employment First, in partnership with DVR, offered training to 3,077 people with disabilities and their families, service providers and educators, and other interested stakeholders to learn about the state's new Employment First Initiatives in addition to training offering skills and information, which reduce barriers to employment.

Colorado is now a national leader in the Employment First movement. Two federal grants awards, requests to mentor other states in their efforts to implement Employment First principles, demonstrate all partners' and stakeholders' exceptional work. Employment First, defined by the Department of Labor, is a framework for systems change centered on the premise that all people, including individuals with significant disabilities, can fully participate in integrated employment and community life.

The SRC also recognizes that "all means all." Our efforts emphasize the importance of identifying gaps in populations currently served, looking at equity in outcomes across ethnicities, and understanding internal barriers in how DVR hires people with disabilities and people representing the various communities they serve.

DVR and the SRC have committed to ongoing discussions to ensure people from different cultures and ethnicities are engaged and served effectively.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is an essential resource for individuals with disabilities and the Colorado business community. We are excited to present to you the SRC annual report. Please note the DVR program updates, SRC committee work and DVR success stories.

Sincerely,



Marilee C. Boylan
Chair, Colorado State Rehabilitation Council

DVR & SRC LEADERSHIP AND CONTACT INFORMATION

DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & EMPLOYMENT

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EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM:

Kristin Corash

Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Stacy Evans

Deputy, Field Services

Madeline Miller

Deputy, Finance & Operations

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL OFFICERS:

Marilee Boylan

Chair

mboylan13@gmail.com

Ben Wankel

1st Vice Chair

benwankel@hotmail.com

Katherine Carol

2nd Vice Chair

tangoresults@gmail.com



02

**STATE
REHABILITATION
COUNCIL**



STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

State Rehabilitation Council Vision Statement

The Colorado State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) envisions a day when Coloradans with and without disabilities have the necessary resources to fully participate in all aspects of life; and when rates of employment and economic advancement are comparable regardless of perceived or confirmed disability.

SRC Mission Statement

The SRC increases opportunities for Coloradans with disabilities to pursue success as they define it. Our members work in service of equity and access to full participation in all aspects of life, by advocating for the budgetary and programmatic integrity of the vocational rehabilitation program in the Centennial State, a resource for increasing employment and economic advancement.

Purpose of the Council

The Colorado State Rehabilitation Council is established under the authority of Section 105 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended.

The SRC provides guidance at the systemic and policy level that assures the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation assists Coloradoans with disabilities to achieve meaningful employment and maximize individual independence goals. The Council provides DVR with an external, consumer-oriented perspective and advises DVR on the vocational programs, policies, services and other issues that affect Coloradoans with disabilities. The SRC provides consumers, business representatives, service providers and other citizens with a formal mechanism to influence the direction of rehabilitation services in Colorado.

02 STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

SRC Responsibilities

The overall purpose of the council is to work in collaboration and partnership with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to review, analyze, and advise the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) regarding the performance of the agency.

The Council shall:

- ❖ Review, analyze, and advise DVR regarding the performance of the responsibilities of DVR, particularly responsibilities relating to eligibility (including order of selection).
- ❖ In Partnership with DVR, develop, agree to and review state goals and priorities as well as evaluate the effectiveness of the DVR and submit reports of progress to the commissioner.
- ❖ Assist with the creation of the State Plan.
- ❖ When feasible, conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of, and consumer satisfaction with
 - the functions performed by DVR;
 - vocational rehabilitation services provided by DVR and other public and private entities responsible for providing vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities;
 - employment outcomes achieved by eligible individuals receiving services under this title, including the availability of health and other employment benefits in connection with such employment outcomes.
- ❖ Prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor and Commissioner on the status of DVR programs within Colorado and make it available to the public.
- ❖ Coordinate activities with the activities of other councils within the State,
 - including the Statewide Independent Living Council;
 - the advisory panel established under section 612(a)(20) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
 - the State Council on Developmental Disabilities;
 - State mental health planning council;
 - the State workforce development board; and
 - the activities of entities carrying out programs under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998.
- ❖ Provide for coordination and the establishment of working relationships between the DVR and the Statewide Independent Living Council and centers for independent living within the State.
- ❖ Prepare, in conjunction with DVR, a plan for the provision of such resources, including such staff and other personnel.
- ❖ Perform other functions the SRC determines to be appropriate.

02 STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

2020 SRC Members and Membership Categories

NAME	STATUS		OFFICERS	MEMBERSHIP TYPE
Anna French	Former	Voting member throughout SFY 2020		Rep. of Client Assistance Program
Beth Schaffner	Former	Voting member throughout SFY 2020		Rep. of Parent Training & Education Center
Brenda Mosby	Active	Voting member	Chair Customer Satisfaction Committee	Rep. of Business, Industry & Labor
David Noftsker	Active	Voting member		Recipient of VR Services
Katherine Carol	Active	Voting member	2nd Vice Chair, Co-chair SRC Employment First committee	Rep. of Parent or Guardian of a Person with a Disability
Katie Oliver	Active	Voting member		Rep. of Advisory Panel established under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
Lee Wheeler-Berliner	Active	Voting member		Rep. of Colorado Workforce Development Council
Marilee Boylan	Active	Voting member	Chair, Co-chair SRC Employment First committee	At-Large Representative
Mark Kollasch	Active	Voting member		Rep. of Client Assistance Program
Robert Lawhead	Active	Voting member	Co-chair SRC Employment First committee	Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council
Sheena Bassett	Active	Non-voting member	Chair Policy & Education committee	Rep. of VR Counselors
Sherrell Bethel	Active	Voting member		Rep. of Parent Training & Information Center
Stephen Heidenreich	Active	Voting member	Chair Membership committee	Rep. of State Independent Living Council
Kristin Corash	Active	Non-voting member		Director of DVR
Susan Richardson	Active	Voting member		Rep. of Community Rehabilitation Program
Bobbie Rosa	Active	Voting member		Rep. of Tribal VR
Timothy Postlewaite	Active	Voting member		Rep. of a Disability Advocacy Group
Benjamin Wankel	Active	Voting member	1st Vice Chair	Rep. of Business, Industry & Labor
	Vacant			Rep. of Business, Industry & Labor
	Vacant			Rep. of Business, Industry & Labor
	Pending	Voting Member		Rep. of Behavioral Health Planning & Advisory Council

Standing Committees

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

This committee is responsible for continually working to maintain a full, diverse, and engaged SRC with emphasis on representation from the groups identified by RSA. (See graph above for required membership categories.)

CURRENT MEMBERS

- ❖ *Stephen Heidenreich*, Chair
- ❖ *David Noftsker*
- ❖ *Katherine Carol*
- ❖ *Ben Wankel*

2020 MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE WORK SUMMARY

The committee has continued to work toward a full and engaged membership over the last year. Three positions reached the end of their term, requiring re-appointment or the appointment of a new member. The committee planned for this turnover and arrangements were finished timely, ensuring no period of vacancy for these positions.

For the past several years, the SRC has had difficulty maintaining representation from the state planning council for behavioral health. Through ongoing recruitment efforts, a representative has been identified who is currently seeking formal appointment. The committee continues efforts to ensure business, labor & industry have appropriate representation. Additionally, the committee is exploring strategies for improving the diversity of membership to ensure broad representation of those seeking and receiving VR services.

Standing Committees (cont'd)

EMPLOYMENT FIRST COMMITTEE

This committee leads Colorado's Employment First efforts through administration of the Employment First Advisory Partnership (EFAP), also created through Senate Bill 16-077. The Employment First Committee determines EFAP membership, develops monthly EFAP meeting agendas and assures EFAP has adequate resources to fulfill its mission.

CURRENT MEMBERS

- ❖ *Marilee Boylan*, Co-Chair
- ❖ *Katherine Carol*, Co-Chair
- ❖ *Bob Lawhead*, Co-Chair
- ❖ *Stephen Heidenreich*
- ❖ *Katie Oliver*
- ❖ *Beth Schaffner*

2020 EMPLOYMENT FIRST COMMITTEE WORK SUMMARY

Senate Bill 16-077 "Employment First for persons with Disabilities" made the SRC the lead agency in coordinating Employment First-related collaboration within the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment and among additional state agencies (the Colorado Departments of Education, Higher Education, Healthcare Policy and Financing, and Human Services). These efforts were to result in recommendations to CDLE and the other state agencies, as well as to the Colorado General Assembly, to implement Employment First policies and practices. Further, the outcome of these activities is intended to expand employment opportunities for Colorado citizens with disabilities, including individuals with significant disabilities, who may have previously not been considered for competitive integrated employment.

"A critical priority for the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), is to invest in systems change efforts that result in increased community-based, integrated employment opportunities for individuals with significant disabilities. This priority reflects growing support for a national movement called Employment First, a framework for systems change that is centered on the premise that all citizens, including individuals with significant disabilities, are capable of full participation in integrated employment and community life.

"Under this approach, publicly-financed systems are urged to align policies, service delivery practices, and reimbursement structures to commit to integrated employment as the priority option with respect to the use of publicly-financed day and employment services for youth and adults with significant disabilities. ODEP defines integrated employment as work paid directly by employers at the greater of minimum or prevailing wages with commensurate benefits, occurring in a typical work setting where the employee with a disability interacts or has the opportunity to interact continuously with co-workers without disabilities, has an opportunity for advancement and job mobility, and is preferably engaged full-time. Many states have formally committed to the Employment First framework through official executive proclamation or formal legislative action." Accessed from: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/initiatives/employment-first#:~:text=ODEP%20defines%20integrated%20employment%20as,workers%20without%20disabilities%2C%20has%20an>

Standing Committees (cont'd)

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND PROGRAM EVALUATION COMMITTEE

This committee is responsible to review and identify individual and systemic concerns with access to DVR services and overall customer experience, making recommendations for DVR to consider for improvement.

CURRENT MEMBERS

- ❖ *Brenda Mosby*, Chair
- ❖ *Sue Richardson*
- ❖ *Timothy Postlewaite*
- ❖ *Bobbie Rosa*
- ❖ *Beth Schaffner*
- ❖ *Ben Wankel*

2020 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND PROGRAM EVALUATION COMMITTEE WORK SUMMARY

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

The Committee worked throughout the year to develop a customer satisfaction survey to evaluate the experience of people receiving services from DVR. The SRC will implement the survey in November 2020, with analysis of results completed by the end of the year.

PAID WORK EXPERIENCE

The Committee has identified concerns with the consistency and accessibility of DVR's provision of paid work experiences. A result of the concerns raised was a comprehensive program evaluation of paid work experiences conducted by DVR. That program evaluation identified several areas where improvement is needed. The committee will remain engaged with supporting recommendations as appropriate and monitor ongoing implementation to ensure the service is effective.

Standing Committees (cont'd)

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND PROGRAM EVALUATION COMMITTEE (CONT'D) TECHNOLOGY

The Customer Satisfaction Committee recognizes technology plays a vital role in the success for employment of people with disabilities. Due to COVID-19, at-home employment has increased by 31% and the community of people with disabilities has the potential to play a more significant role in terms of contributing to Colorado's economy. The committee sees that technology is playing an even larger role than it was before, which levels the playing field for a significant portion of people who have behavioral health, cognitive, and physical disabilities.

The committee is concerned that despite this new potential, significant barriers will continue to affect those who have a disability, if they are not comfortable and proficient with various forms of technology. The committee has recommended that DVR be more proactive in assessing and improving the technological abilities of people served by DVR by evaluating these skills at the beginning of the process. As DVR increasingly provides vocational rehabilitation services via remote methods, this becomes even more critical.

EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

The Committee is interested in exploring equity and diversity with regard to access to services and staffing within DVR. To help build awareness and start these conversations, the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS) representative delivered a presentation sharing information about the Southern Ute Mountain tribe and vocational rehabilitation services for Native Americans, including the inequities present in the tribal VR system, such as the competitive nature of the AIVRS grants. The committee expects to continue to consider equity and diversity within the vocational rehabilitation system and seek opportunities to assist DVR in removing barriers that exist.

02 STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

Standing Committees (cont'd)

PLANNING, POLICY, AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

This committee is responsible for assisting in the development of Colorado's combined State Plan, analyzing bills presented in the General Assembly which directly relate to the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, and advising on policy and procedure.

CURRENT MEMBERS

- ❖ *Sheena Bassett*, Chair
- ❖ *Mark Kollasch*
- ❖ *Bob Lawhead*
- ❖ *Lee Wheeler-Berliner*

2020 PLANNING, POLICY, AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE WORK SUMMARY

In 2020, the committee convened to review and analyze draft policy changes related to Customized Employment, as well as DVR's practices related to the evaluation of Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE). To increase awareness of SRC members and strengthen the partnership with DVR, the committee initiated a monthly series in which an SRC member is highlighted and recognized for their work as a member of the council. The column is shared through DVR's internal newsletter and stakeholder communications. The Planning, Policy and Education Committee created an educational short presentation on the role and function of the SRC, that has been incorporated into DVR's new counselor onboarding practices. In 2019 the committee drafted the SRC recommendations for the 2020 State Plan. As an update, in 2020 the committee's drafted recommendations were approved, DVR provided responses, and they were incorporated into the 2020 State Plan effective July 1st, 2020.

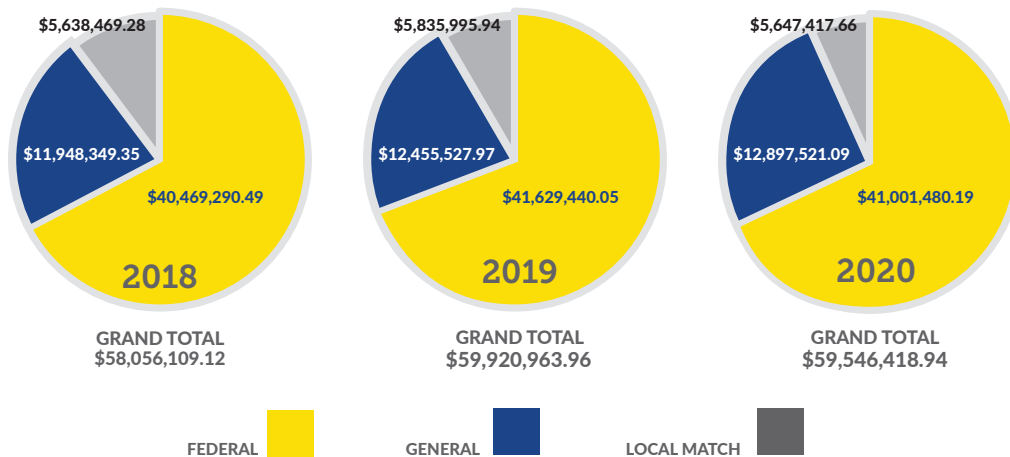
02 STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

Data for Charts & Graphs

Indicator	2018	2019	2020
AVERAGE HOURLY WAGE REPORTED AT PLAN	\$15.81	\$16.35	\$16.87
AVERAGE HOURS WORKED PER WEEK REPORTED AT PLAN	29.13	28.64	28.09
ESTIMATED AGGREGATE TOTAL EARNINGS REPORTED AT PLAN	\$19.12MM	\$19.64MM	\$20.41MM
AVERAGE WEEKLY SALARY REPORTED AT PLAN	\$498.90	\$496.28	\$495.54
ESTIMATED AVERAGE ANNUAL SALARY REPORTED AT PLAN	\$25,943	\$25,807	\$25,768
AVERAGE HOURLY WAGE REPORTED AT CLOSE	\$15.70	\$17.06	\$17.97
AVERAGE HOURS WORKED PER WEEK REPORTED AT CLOSE	30.56	30.77	30.7
ESTIMATED AGGREGATE TOTAL EARNINGS REPORTED AT CLOSE	\$19.40MM	\$21.48MM	\$23.51MM
AVERAGE WEEKLY SALARY REPORTED AT CLOSE	\$506.12	\$542.87	\$570.79
ESTIMATED AVERAGE ANNUAL SALARY REPORTED AT CLOSE	\$26,318	\$28,229	\$29,681
% CHANGE AVERAGE HOURLY WAGE REPORTED AT CLOSE VS PLAN	-0.67%	4.37%	6.50%
% CHANGE AVERAGE HOURS WORKED PER WEEK REPORTED AT CLOSE VS PLAN	4.91%	7.42%	9.30%
% CHANGE ESTIMATED TOTAL EARNINGS REPORTED AT CLOSE VS PLAN	1.45%	9.39%	15.19%

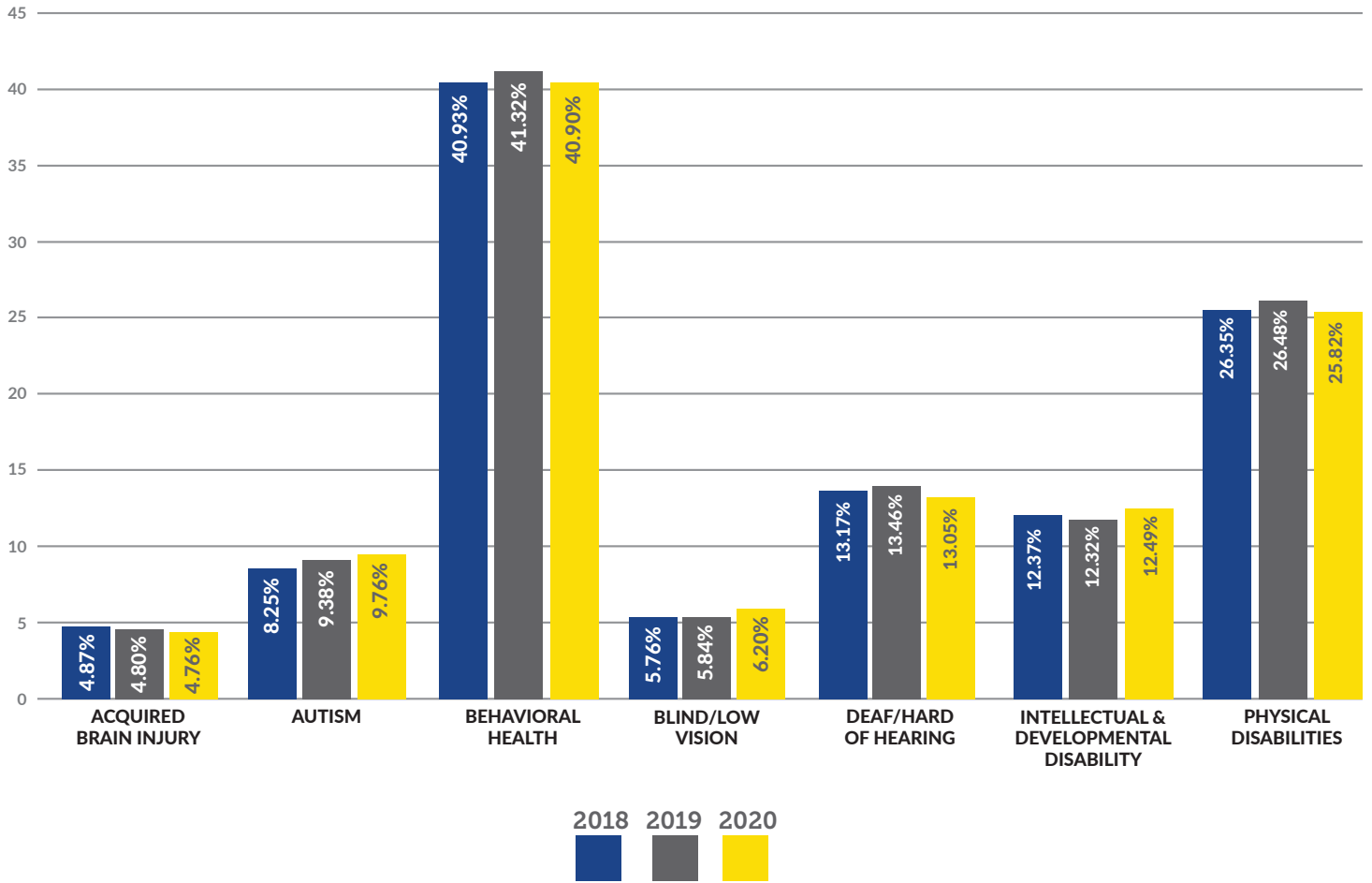


DVR Funding

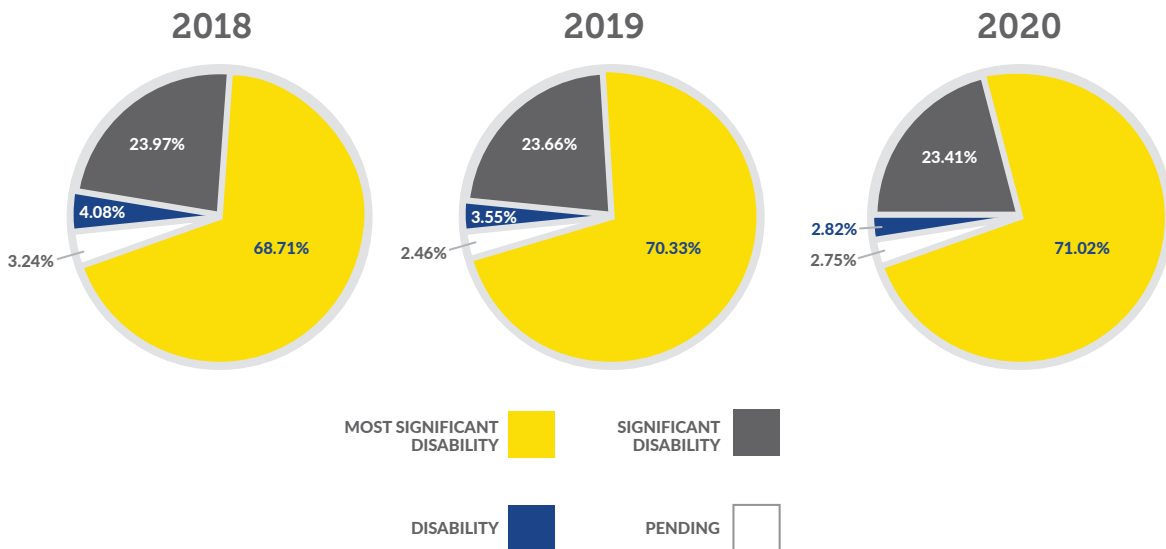


02 STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

Disability Category of Eligible Individuals

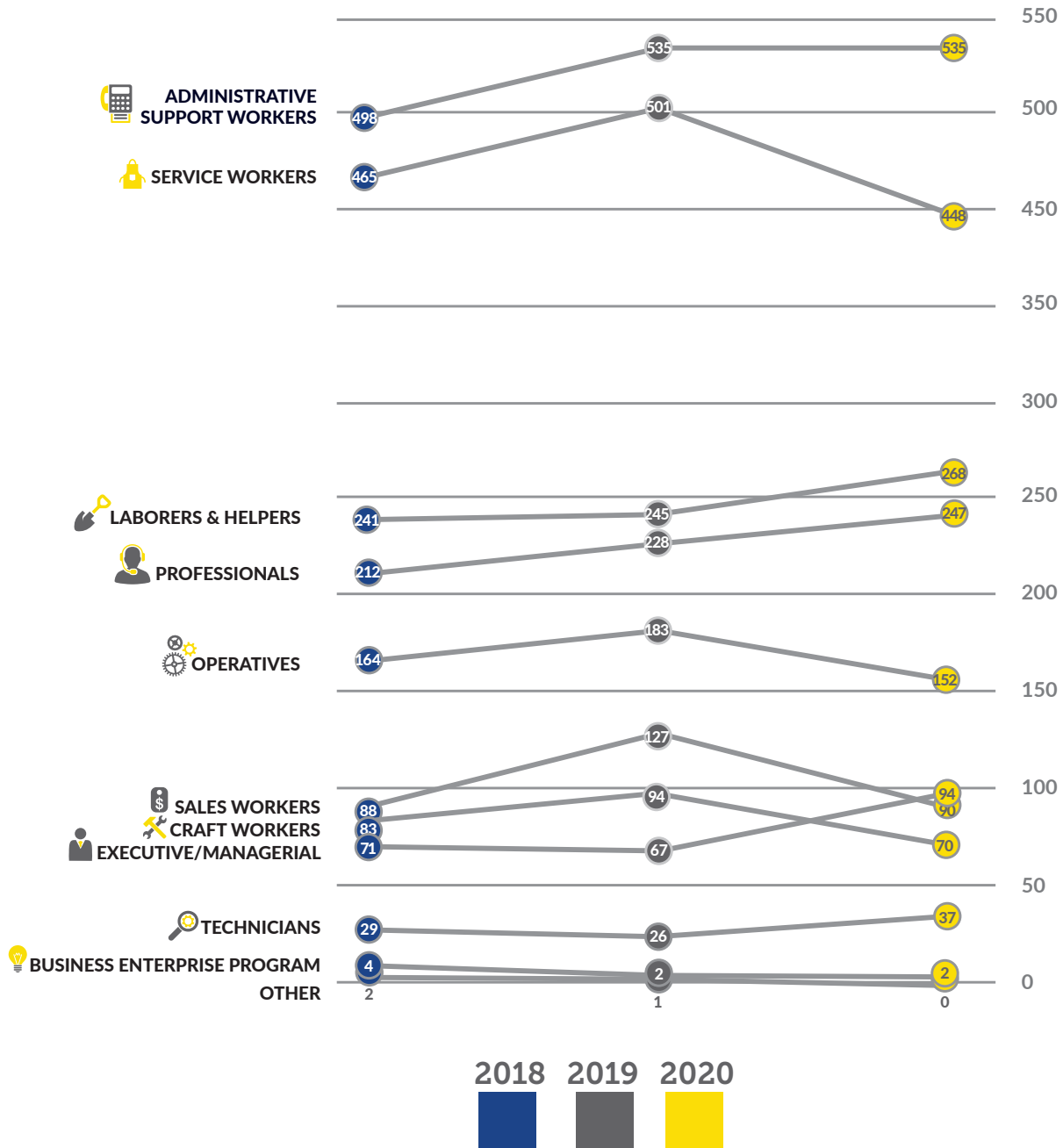


Disability Priority of Eligible Individuals

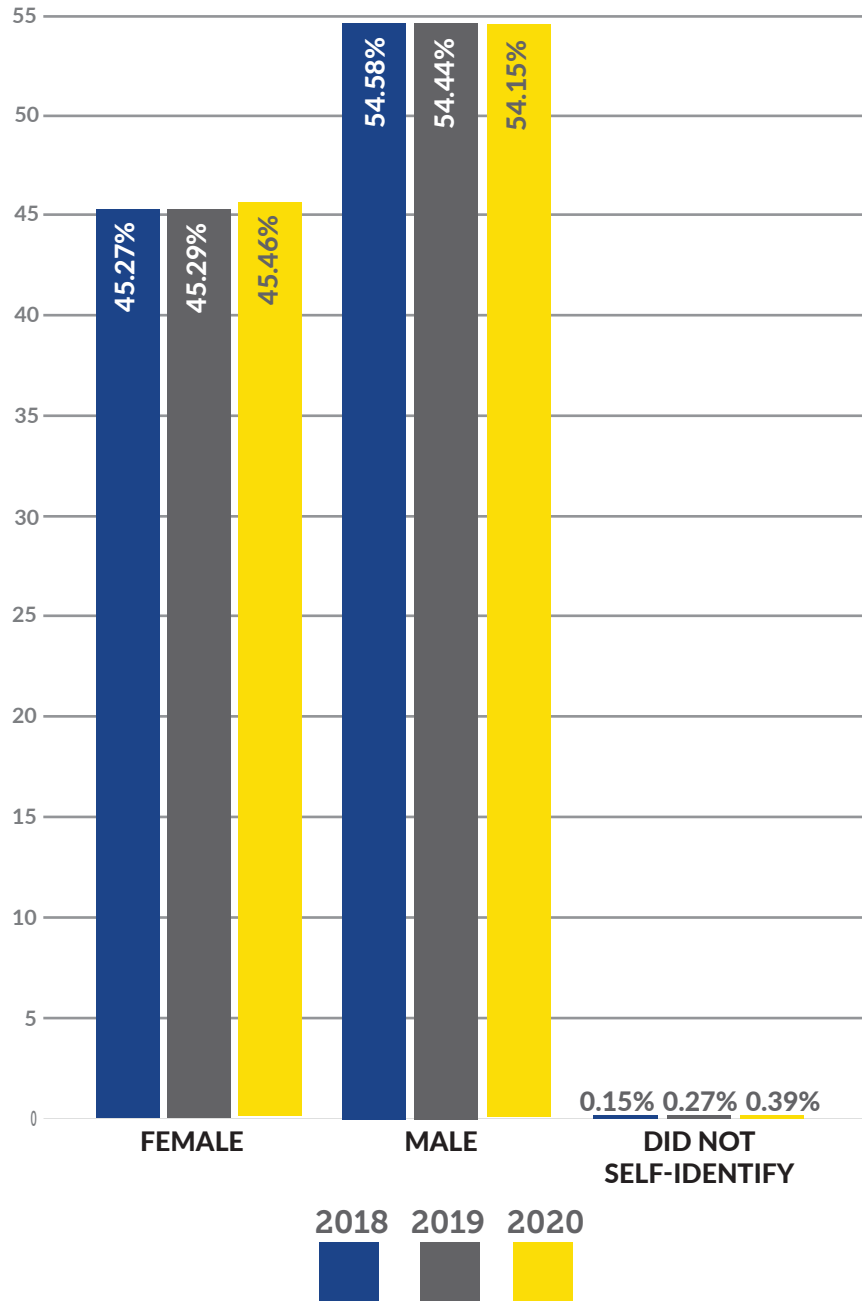


02 STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

Occupations of Successfully Rehabilitated Clients

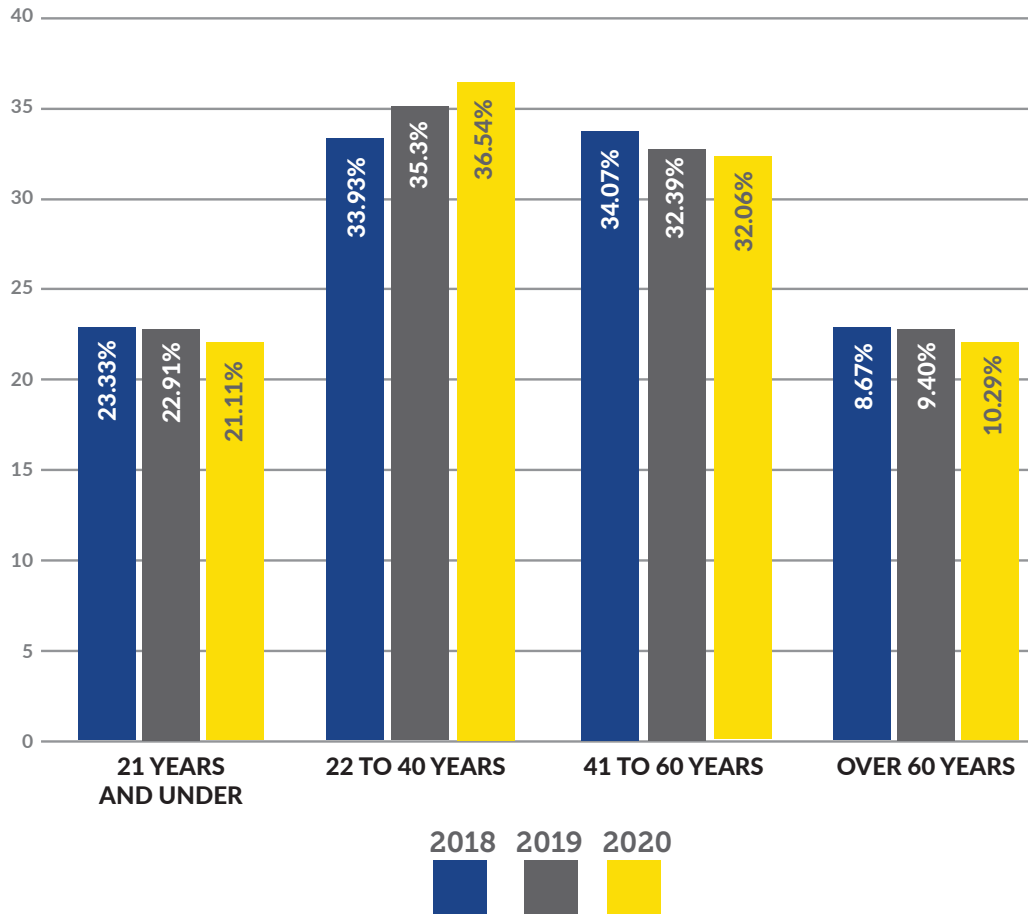


Gender of Applicants & Eligible Individuals

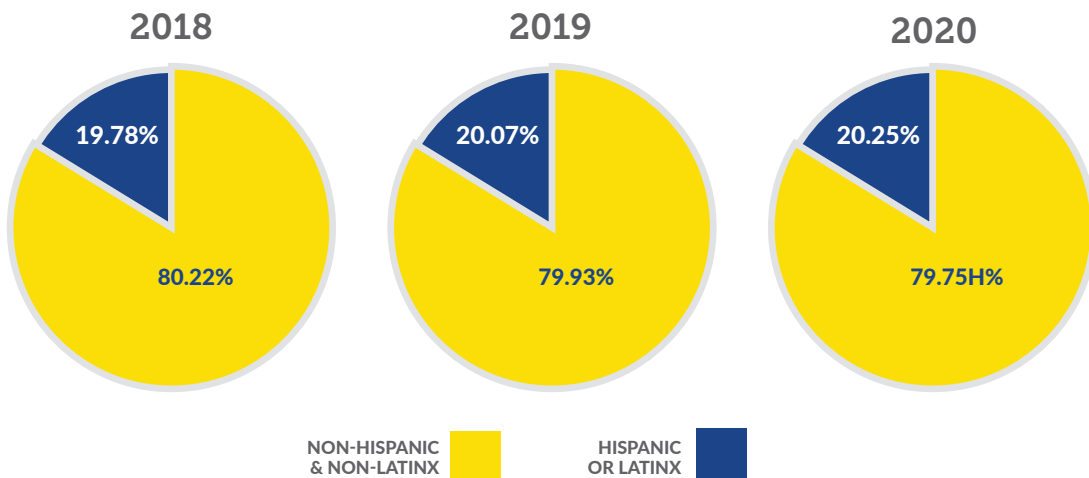


02 STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

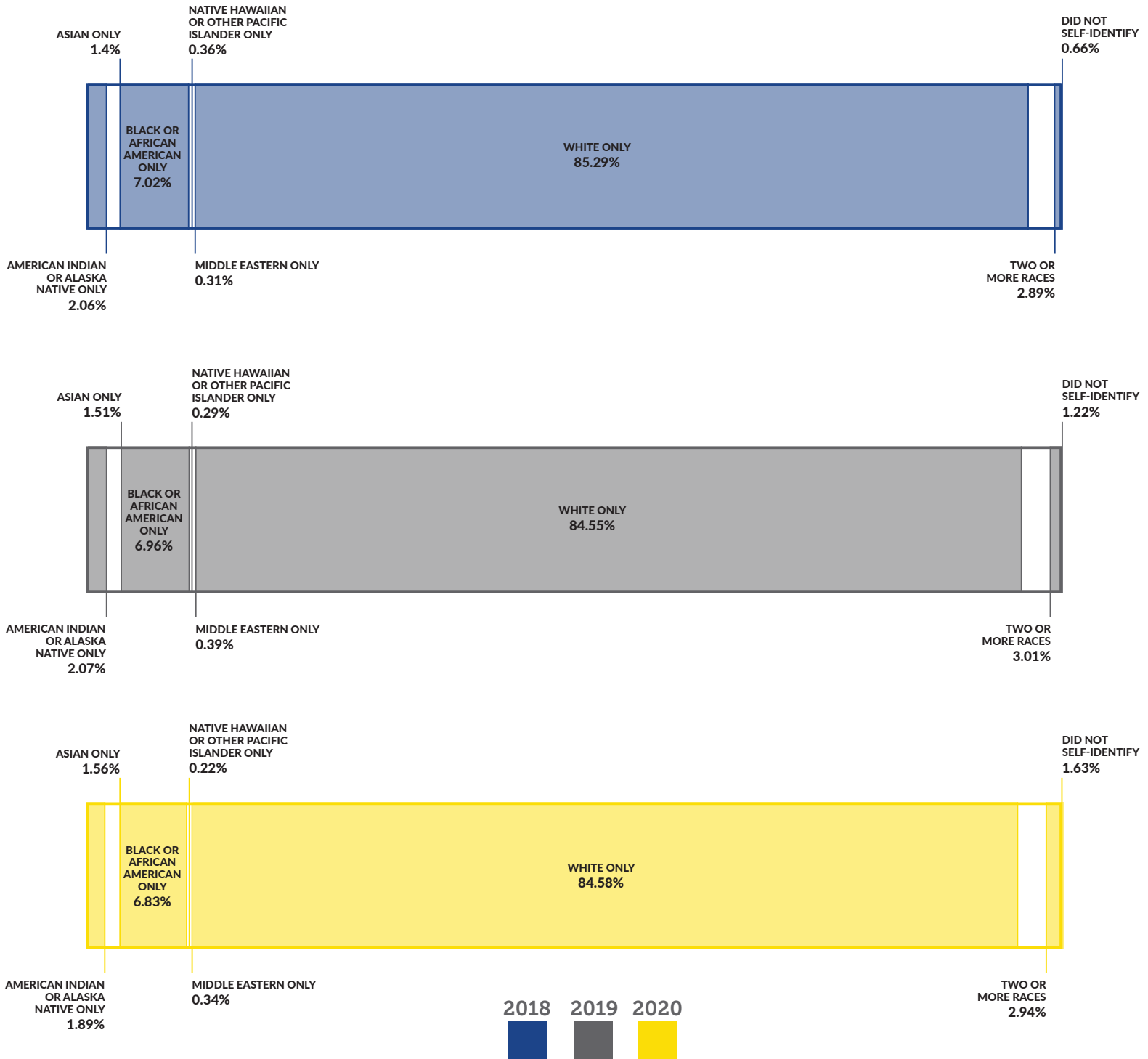
Age of Applicants & Eligible Individuals



Ethnicity of All Individuals Served



Race of All Individuals Served



02 STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

Employment of Individuals Who Were Working Prior to Receiving Services

	2018	2019	2020
AVERAGE HOURLY WAGE REPORTED AT PLAN	\$15.81	\$16.35	\$16.87
AVERAGE HOURS WORKED PER WEEK REPORTED AT PLAN	29.13	28.64	28.09
ESTIMATED AGGREGATE TOTAL EARNINGS REPORTED AT PLAN	\$19.12MM	\$19.64MM	\$20.41MM
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% CHANGE ESTIMATED TOTAL EARNINGS REPORTED AT CLOSE VS PLAN	1.45%	9.39%	15.19%



Employment of Individuals Who Were Not Working Prior to Receiving Services

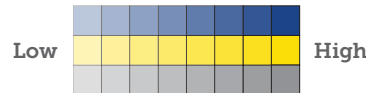
	2018	2019	2020
AVERAGE HOURLY WAGE REPORTED AT CLOSE	\$12.25	\$13.19	\$14.00
AVERAGE HOURS WORKED PER WEEK AT CLOSE	26.97	26.8	26.34
ESTIMATED AGGREGATE TOTAL EARNINGS REPORTED AT CLOSE	\$20.45MM	\$24.12MM	\$23.17MM
AVERAGE WEEKLY SALARY REPORTED AT CLOSE	\$351.14	\$371.74	\$386.04
ESTIMATED AVERAGE ANNUAL SALARY REPORTED AT CLOSE	\$18,259	\$19,330	\$20,074



02 STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

Outcomes by Disability - SFY20

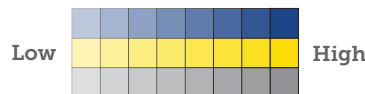
	% of Successful Outcomes	Rehab Rate*	Ave Wage	Ave Hours Per Week	Total Yearly Earnings	Ave Weekly Salary	Ave Annual Salary
ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY	3.96%	49.68%	\$15.09	27.81	\$1.79MM	\$447.68	\$23,279
AUTISM	8.48%	52.88%	\$13.59	24.7	\$3.03MM	\$353.60	\$18,387
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH	31.86%	42.67%	\$14.02	26.67	\$12.68MM	\$393.31	\$20,452
BLIND/LOW VISION	4.88%	50.26%	\$19.10	31.99	\$3.16MM	\$639.54	\$33,256
DEAF/HARD OF HEARING	28.37%	76.99%	\$18.53	30.82	\$16.87MM	\$587.61	\$30,555
INTELLECTUAL & DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY	12.59%	52.80%	\$12.15	18.57	\$2.92MM	\$229.52	\$11,935
PHYSICAL DISABILITIES	18.86%	44.38%	\$15.95	27.32	\$8.76MM	\$459.05	\$23,871
OTHER	21.79%	54.71%	\$13.58	28.96	\$8.94MM	\$405.35	\$21,078



* Rehab Rate is the percentage of individuals closed with a Successful Outcomes from all individuals who exit after receiving vocational rehabilitation services.

Outcomes by Race - SFY20

	% of Successful Outcomes	Rehab Rate*	Ave Wage	Ave Hours Per Week	Total Yearly Earnings	Ave Weekly Salary	Ave Annual Salary
AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKAN NATIVE ONLY	1.80%	43.75%	\$14.52	28.83	\$.83MM	\$456.96	\$23,762
ASIAN ONLY	1.34%	63.41%	\$14.56	29.62	\$.62MM	\$455.87	\$23,705
BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN ONLY	6.78%	53.23%	\$14.17	28.69	\$2.87MM	\$418.02	\$21,737
MIDDLE EASTERN OR ARAB ONLY	0.36%	63.64%	\$15.37	29.14	\$.16MM	\$437.29	\$22,739
NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER ONLY	0.26%	62.50%	\$12.50	25.8	\$.09MM	\$331.00	\$17,212
WHITE ONLY	86.43%	54.24%	\$15.83	28.12	\$40.97MM	\$468.40	\$24,357
TWO OR MORE RACES	2.21%	42.57%	\$14.20	23.86	\$.76MM	\$340.09	\$17,685
DID NOT SELF-IDENTIFY	0.82%	35.56%	\$14.05	30.31	\$.38MM	\$458.81	\$23,858



* Rehab Rate is the percentage of individuals closed with a Successful Outcomes from all individuals who exit after receiving vocational rehabilitation services.

02 STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

Outcomes by Ethnicity - SFY20

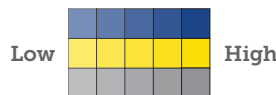
	% of Successful Outcomes	Rehab Rate*	Ave Wage	Ave Hours Per Week	Total Yearly Earnings	Ave Weekly Salary	Ave Annual Salary
HISPANIC OR LATINO	19.17%	54.61%	\$14.44	29.55	\$8.62MM	\$444.36	\$23,107
NON-HISPANIC AND NON-LATINO	80.83%	53.29%	\$15.89	27.77	\$38.05MM	\$465.23	\$24,192



* Rehab Rate is the percentage of individuals closed with a Successful Outcomes from all individuals who exit after receiving vocational rehabilitation services.

Outcomes by DVR Service Region - SFY20

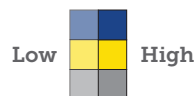
	% of Successful Outcomes	Rehab Rate*	Ave Wage	Ave Hours Per Week	Total Yearly Earnings	Ave Weekly Salary	Ave Annual Salary
BLIND AND LOW VISION SERVICES (STATEWIDE)	2.72%	46.49%	\$21.47	33.58	\$2.04MM	\$740.69	\$38,516
REGION 1 - SOUTHEASTERN AND EASTERN COLORADO	17.42%	47.81%	\$14.53	28.41	\$7.70MM	\$436.65	\$22,706
REGION 2 - DENVER METRO	31.81%	60.27%	\$15.68	28.28	\$15.0MM	\$466.13	\$24,239
REGION 3 - NORTH METRO, BOULDER, NORTHERN COLORADO	28.57%	49.78%	\$15.49	27.97	\$13.33MM	\$461.20	\$23,982
REGION 4 - MOUNTAIN, SAN LUIS VALLEY, WESTERN SLOPE, DURANGO	19.48%	56.74%	\$15.85	27.02	\$8.60MM	\$436.18	\$22,681



* Rehab Rate is the percentage of individuals closed with a Successful Outcomes from all individuals who exit after receiving vocational rehabilitation services.

Outcomes of Individuals Reporting Homelessness - SFY 20

	# of Successful Outcomes	% of Successful Outcomes	Rehab Rate*	Ave Wage	Ave Hours Per Week	Total Yearly Earnings	Ave Weekly Salary	Ave Annual Salary
IS HOMELESS	62	3.19%	44.93%	\$15.72	29.98	\$1.58MM	\$490.15	\$25,488
IS NOT HOMELESS	1884	96.81%	53.87%	\$15.61	28.05	\$45.09MM	\$460.28	\$23,934



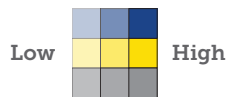
* Rehab Rate is the percentage of individuals closed with a Successful Outcomes from all individuals who exit after receiving vocational rehabilitation services.

02 STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

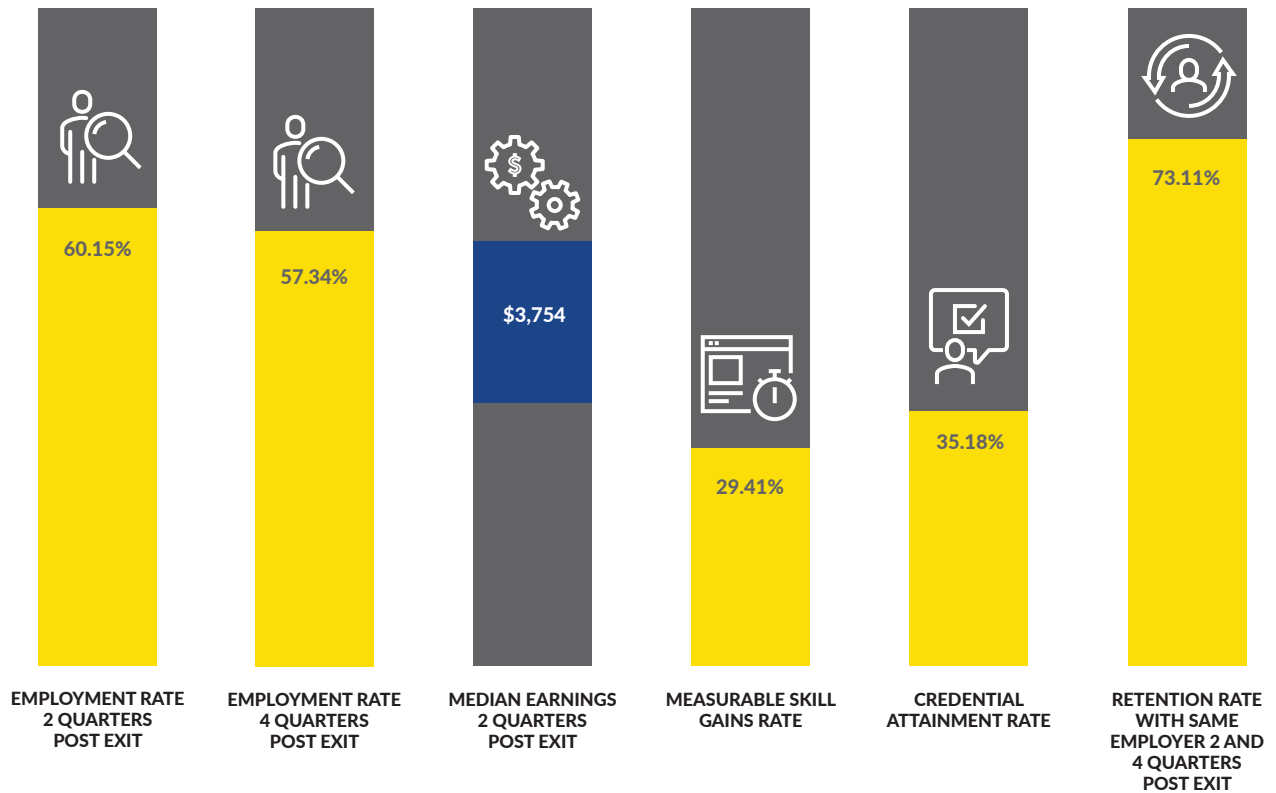
Outcomes of Individuals Reporting Criminal Background - SFY20

	# of Successful Outcomes	% of Successful Outcomes	Rehab Rate*	Ave Wage	Ave Hours Per Week	Total Yearly Earnings	Ave Weekly Salary	Ave Annual Salary
DID NOT SELF-IDENTIFY	90	4.62%	54.22%	\$14.53	28.18	\$2.03MM	\$434.19	\$22,578
SELF-REPORT OF CRIMINAL OFFENSE HISTORY	240	12.33%	40.47%	\$14.20	28.65	\$5.29MM	\$424.02	\$22,049
SELF-REPORT OF NO CRIMINAL OFFENSE HISTORY	1616	83.04%	56.19%	\$15.88	28.03	\$39.35MM	\$468.26	\$24,350

* Rehab Rate is the percentage of individuals closed with a Successful Outcomes from all individuals who exit after receiving vocational rehabilitation services.



Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act Common Performance Measures



2019



03

DVR GOALS & STRATEGIES



DVR GOALS & STRATEGIES

Colorado's 2020-2023 Combined State Plan was approved in June 2020, taking effect July 1, 2020. In the VR Services Portion of the Plan, DVR identified the following goals: _____

1. *DVR will work with partners and stakeholders to reduce the prosperity gap for people with disabilities by increasing quality employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The following priorities and strategies will support this goal to reduce the prosperity gap for people with disabilities by increasing the employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.*

- a)** DVR will promote the rapid engagement of job seekers.
- b)** DVR will explore innovative opportunities to ensure continuous operation at full counselor capacity, despite inevitable situations of staff turnover, in order to improve the customer experience and support achievement of quality employment outcomes.
- c)** DVR will improve vocational counseling and guidance efforts to assist job seekers to develop goals that will lead to quality employment outcomes within key industries.
- d)** DVR will work with the State Rehabilitation Council to identify key data points, segmented at the appropriate levels, to monitor and track progress of all eligible individuals, including those with the most significant disabilities.
- e)** DVR will explore opportunities to develop a baseline measure of the overall customer experience and use this information to consider actions that will improve the customer experience.
- f)** DVR will develop and engage in outreach and awareness campaigns to improve access to the vocational rehabilitation program by individuals who are currently unserved or underserved.

03 DVR GOALS & STRATEGIES

2. DVR will create a culture of growth and development to support staff retention and high quality service delivery to individuals with disabilities. The following priorities and strategies will support the goal to create a culture of growth and development to support staff retention and high quality service delivery to individuals with disabilities.

- a)*** DVR supervisors will assist staff to develop actionable and individualized growth and development goals, demonstrating commitment to highly skilled and engaged staff.
- b)*** DVR will pilot State as Model Employer strategies, building a more diverse and effective workforce, improving overall program quality and developing internal expertise, enabling DVR to provide technical assistance and support to other businesses regarding inclusive hiring practices.
- c)*** DVR will coordinate an internal staff committee to advise leadership on opportunities to improve the organizational culture, leading to the growth, development, and engagement of staff at all levels.

3. DVR will support the implementation of Employment First in Colorado, through the Office of Employment First and DVR's Employment First Initiatives. The following priorities and strategies will support the implementation of Employment First in Colorado, through the Office of Employment First and DVR's Employment First Initiatives.

- a)*** DVR will monitor and support the ongoing development of the Office of Employment First, in partnership with the University of Colorado Medical School, JFK Partners; the Colorado Office of Employment First; the Office of Employment First Advisory Committee; and the Employment First Advisory Partnership (EFAP).
- b)*** DVR will effectively utilize Employment First staff positions, including the State Advisory on Disability Employment, Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities Supported Employment Trainer/Coordinator, Behavioral Health Supported Employment Trainer/Coordinator, and Benefits Planning Coordinator.
- c)*** DVR will support the State Rehabilitation Council to effectively coordinate the EFAP and support Colorado's progress on EFAP priorities and recommendations.



04

FIELD SERVICES

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, traveling 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 123 VR Counselors across the state provide individualized vocational rehabilitation services during this process and assist customers to address employment barriers and realize their 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. All VR Counselors hold a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or a closely related field, participate in an extensive DVR Training Academy upon hire, and have opportunities for a variety of continuing education necessary to ensure their ongoing professional development. DVR also has several staff around the state who are fluent in American Sign Language and Spanish; other language needs are met through use interpreting services to ensure effective communication.

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.

04 FIELD SERVICES

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Services

DVR supports individuals with disabilities to prepare for, obtain, advance in, and maintain employment by providing a range of services based on individual employment needs and goals.

Rehabilitation Counselors work closely with each person to determine an employment goal and identify and arrange for the services that will be needed to achieve this goal.

Services that may be provided to youth and adults through DVR:

- ❖ One-on-one vocational rehabilitation counseling and guidance;
- ❖ Pre-employment Transition Services to students with disabilities;
- ❖ Physical and mental restoration services;
- ❖ Training services, including vocational, academic, and personal adjustment;
- ❖ Job related services, including, job-seeking skills training, job placement, and job coaching;
- ❖ Specialized services for individuals who are blind, deaf, and deaf-blind, including interpreter services, note-taking services, and reader services;
- ❖ Rehabilitation technology services, including assistive technology devices, assistive technology services, and rehabilitation engineering services to address barriers encountered with employment;
- ❖ Supportive services, such as maintenance, transportation, personal assistance services, and services to family members may also be provided if necessary.

04 FIELD SERVICES

The Youth Services and Transition Unit (YSTU)

The Youth Services and Transition Unit (YSTU) leads DVR to coordinate effective and efficient pre-employment transition services (PreETS) 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. DVR continues to explore more strategic approaches to outreach and service delivery to support better access. The YSTU team will be expanding next quarter to include a second youth services manager whose focus will be ensuring PreETS are available statewide to those choosing to participate and promoting youth with significant disabilities have the right to engage in employment at or above minimum wage in an integrated environment. This position will also be responsible for developing and maintaining collaborative working partnerships with community intermediaries that result in enhanced and increased PreETS services to students with disabilities promoting Employment First initiatives.

DVR continues to be open to new and innovative partnerships with local education agencies as well as service providers who have expressed a desire to contribute to the development of career pathways for students with disabilities. Service providers have demonstrated great resiliency under COVID and a willingness to identify safe and effective ways to move forward with activities including business enterprises, work readiness boot camps, youth leadership forums and more. All the while, continuing to coordinate with each student's Individual Education Program and/or Individual Career and Academic Planning.

DVR IS CURRENTLY PURSUING A PARTNERSHIP WITH YOUNG AMERICANS' AMERITOWNE ON THE ROAD.

This portable financial literacy program was designed to reach remote rural communities and smaller schools. The program, which was originally designed for middle school aged students was successfully piloted in a rural setting after modifying the curriculum for high school students with disabilities but never expanded. Through this partnership, we hope to revitalize those efforts and make this essential work readiness skill opportunity available to more students with disabilities.

Over the next year, DVR will be rolling out the Emerging Youth Model as a tool for both internal and external partners to use. The Emerging Youth Model is an online guide to assist DVR staff navigate PreETS services by identifying skills to develop and providing outcomes, goals and steps to reach them, along with connecting curriculum, activities, resources, fee schedule and collaboration opportunities to each skill area. This tool will be located on My Colorado Journey (www.mycoloradojourney.com), a free, statewide platform that connects job seekers to work, education, support services and action planning.

04 FIELD SERVICES

Other efforts on the horizon include a partnership with Career Technical Education/Alternative Cooperative Education (CTE/ACE), the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and the National Alliance for Partnership in Equity (NAPE) that will be piloted in the school year 2021-22. The pilot will be modeled after Delaware's program designed to close the gap in CTE career pathways for students with disabilities. Through curriculum modification and tool development we hope to make CTE programs accessible to students with disabilities, provide necessary support to educators and increase post-secondary outcomes through industry recognized certifications.

UTILIZING THE SCHOOL TO WORK ALLIANCE PROGRAM (SWAP) model as a mechanism to develop a sustainable partnership, we have made proposals to both the approved and Department of Youth Service (DYS) facilities to bring PreETS to their students. Programming would be focused on the delivery of skills attainment through PreETS allowing for students who come and go to develop necessary skills when they are available to participate. There would also be a focus on cross system training to bring better understanding to each system about one another for improved collaboration and an emphasis on helping students stay connected with DVR when they return to their home districts or exit out.

The model of SWAP is also the foundation of a second proposal to districts for a pilot next school year that would serve youth with significant disabilities. SWAP would be responsible for the delivery of PreETS to this population in addition to working through the Discovery Process and providing benefits counseling.

While these models address individualized supports in terms of delivering vocational rehabilitation services to youth with significant disabilities, there is a need to lay a strong foundation. DVR, CDE and OEF have partnered this school year to provide 1:1 intensive district support to ensure there are collaborative efforts focused on serving students with more significant needs. Outcomes being worked towards are focused on increasing work based learning opportunities for this population by promoting promising practices that are evidence based, assisting in partnership development and providing support and consultation around collaboration. This includes targeted training and state-wide training.

The School to Work Alliance Program (SWAP) is a collaborative partnership between DVR and local school districts or BOCES, with support from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and administered by YSTU. SWAP assists young adults in making the transition from school to work, through increased community linkages and new patterns of service leading to successful employment outcomes. SWAP served over 4,500 young adults with disabilities experiencing mild to moderate barriers to employment between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020. These youth improved work skills, explored their career interests, and obtained work experience leading to competitive integrated employment.

04 FIELD SERVICES

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, including community centered boards, along with YSTU. Colorado currently has 3 Project SEARCH sites and continues to explore growing these partnerships.

DVR ALSO PARTNERS WITH CDE 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. Goals this year continue to build upon a partnership between CDE's Exceptional Student Services Unit to create a pipeline to career readiness success for students with disabilities engaged in CTE/ACE with special attention to rural and under-served geographic areas of Colorado. The team has also identified a need to create usable tools for local partnership, family members and youth. Through a combined partnership with Labor, Office of Behavioral Health, Health Care Policy and Financing, Office of Employment First (OEF) we are developing a sequencing of services model. This model will be presented in a series of community listening sessions designed to promote the development of local interagency transition teams and steer them towards action creating their own sequence of services. These interagency transition teams will be invited to the 2021 Transition Leadership Institute where we will work on memorandums of understanding to promote their sustainability. This will lay the groundwork for our desire over the next 5 years to facilitate a statewide transition conference that eventually includes all transition partners across disciplines, beginning with the inclusion of relevant DVR staff to the Education Teams.

Together with CDE and OEF we are creating a series of young adult brochures. As each brochure is finalized, a webinar that encompasses the content of the brochures is being held to introduce the concepts. To date, two brochures and webinars have been completed on the following topics: "How do we get to Employment" and "Preparing Young Adults for Employment in a COVID-19 World".



05

**BLIND & LOW
VISION SERVICES**

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; the Independent Living for Older Individuals who are Blind services grant for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; and the Howard Fund.

52 individuals who are blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind became competitively employed across the state as a result of the services received from DVR. Participants are working in a wide variety of careers including management, floral design, professional services, law, technical, health care, education, social services, clerical/office support and customer service. In an effort to improve services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired residing in Region IV, DVR identified specific Counselors to serve individuals who are blind or visually impaired. The Counselors identified traveled to Colorado Center for the Blind to engage in an intensive training. The Counselors also engaged in a training hosted by BLVS staff. The training was provided to both Counselors and vendors in Region IV. BLVS continues to work towards increasing the skill set of Rehabilitation Counselors serving the Blind.

The Personal Adjustment Training (PAT) Program

The Personal Adjustment Training (PAT) Program teaches individuals who are blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind 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 Unit has exhibited impressive flexibility in transitioning services from nearly 100% in-person training (pre-covid) to nearly 100% remote training during the pandemic. Virtual groups for support and training are now offered on a regular basis to all BLVS clients. PAT instructors have shown creativity and flexibility in making sure training, job retention and overall client services have not been interrupted during this challenging time. In the fall of 2019, job club activities and volunteer experiences continued to be provided by the PAT unit's Pre-Employment Transition specialist to students who are blind/visually impaired. During the summer of 2020, services went virtual. The PAT unit's Pre-Employment Transition specialist offered weekly online workshops for Pre-Employment Transition students. These workshops included discussion, activities, and guest speakers from the Colorado community. Topics included: career exploration, adaptive recreation, daily living skills, transportation methods, and financial literacy.

04 BLIND & LOW VISION SERVICES

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP)

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 Business Enterprise Program currently has three individuals participating in training. The number of licensed blind operators has increased from 22 last year to 23 over the past year, due to the excellent communication and collaboration between the vocational rehabilitation counselors, the Business Enterprise Program trainer, Program Manager, and continued support and active participation provided by the committee of blind vendors. The Business Enterprise Program created two new opportunities to expand income potential for operators by establishing two new locations; Cheyenne Mountain State Park and Byron Rodgers vending route. 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.

OIB

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 seven providers across the state. 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 17 grants that have included the purchase of assistive technology, low vision aids, adaptive equipment and training.



06

EMPLOYMENT FIRST



EMPLOYMENT FIRST

DVR believes that anyone who wants to work can work, and employment should be the first and preferred service option for individuals with disabilities. DVR has continued to focus on developing a variety of strategic partnerships 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.

Supported Employment Partners & Programs:

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 recently added a new I/DD Supported Employment Coordinator/Trainer to support DVR staff to effectively implement Employment First principles with individuals with I/DD.

DVR & OCL partner each year providing training and facilitating opportunities for partnership across agencies and community organizations. Over the past year, DVR partnered closely with OCL on the implementation of Senate Bill 18-145, addressing the minimum qualifications of providers of supported employment services.

DVR has worked closely with the Colorado Office of Employment First to develop a Customized Employment Program and 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 customized employment services and processes have 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 customized employment service planning is identifying sustainable training approaches for DVR staff and service providers to ensure effective implementation of Customized Employment statewide, and development of a fidelity model to ensure the service is achieving increased competitive and integrated employment outcomes for the people DVR serves who have the most significant disabilities.

06 EMPLOYMENT FIRST

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

OBH and DVR has developed the Mental Health Supported Employment Program that operates under a formalized interagency agreement, providing access to supported employment services to individuals with significant behavioral health disorders. This partnership involves local agreements with fourteen Community Mental Health Centers, one non-profit organization, and one private vendor 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 evidence 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 servicing 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 DVRs 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.

DVR recently added a new Behavioral Health Supported Employment Coordinator/Trainer to support DVR staff to effectively implement Employment First principles with individuals with behavioral health needs.





SELF-EMPLOYMENT



SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Colorado has a thriving entrepreneurial economy, ranked 5th in the country for start-ups, 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 (RTC): Rural 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 completed to restructure the DVR Self-Employment Program to improve processes. Stakeholder meetings were held across the state as well as surveys, gathering information from DVR counselors, stakeholders, and current and past clients and vendors. A new training and procedural manual, revisions to DVR Service Delivery Policy, updated Fee Schedule, more opportunities for youth and supported self-employment, and a streamlined process for review of business plans were implemented by February 2020, resulting in improved service delivery for individuals pursuing self-employment as well as consistency of processes for our vendors. Individuals are now involved in the review of their proposed business plans, allowing for direct feedback and their voice.

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.

Over 35 new business plans were reviewed by the full Review Panel over the past year, with twenty-five business concepts moving forward in the self-employment process. DVR supported clients to develop successful businesses in a variety of markets, including: mediation, mobile dog grooming, cattle, pet loss grief counseling, photography, organization & decluttering, selling berries, residential treatment, mobile mechanics, estate planning law practice, art supply store, custom hats, cosmetology, public speaking, art sales, jewelry and more!



BUSINESS RELATIONS AND OUTREACH SERVICES



BUSINESS RELATIONS & OUTREACH SERVICES

DVR's Business Relations Unit (BRU) focuses on connecting businesses with qualified individuals with a variety of disabilities. The BRU offers a unique set of services for employers at a local, state, and national level; including employee recruitment and candidate screening; comprehensive needs analysis, ADA consultation, disability etiquette and awareness training; retention services for existing employees, as well as the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) compliance.

The BRU also works with employers to arrange internships, paid work experiences, job tours, and informational interviews for both general job seekers as well as transition-age youth. The BRU shares real-time local and national labor market information with DVR counselors and individuals we serve to assist in crafting appropriate employment goals. In addition, the BRU is regularly partnering with community job developers to increase the placement opportunities for the individuals DVR serves. Ongoing engagement with a broad set of community stakeholders is also key to ensuring that both the individuals we serve and counselors are connected to the most up-to-date career resources possible.

The BRU is also active in participating 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 BRU is integrated into local Workforce Center Business Services Teams with the goal of partnering to develop employment opportunities in the community for individuals across the greater workforce development system. The BRU is actively engaged with the Colorado Office of Apprenticeships toward increasing exposure to, development of, and participation in apprenticeship opportunities for individuals with disabilities across the state. The BRU is also represented on the CDLE Business and Career Services Executive Committee with the purpose of cross-system integration and partnership of both Workforce and DVR resources at the state and local levels.

During State Fiscal year 2020, the BRU outreached to 2923 (increase from 2370) targeted employers with 481 (increase from 195) individuals served by DVR having been hired within these businesses throughout the year. The BRU also provided 490 (increase from 341) unique training offerings at no cost to these employers, often helping businesses to meet mandatory diversity requirements. The BRU also provided 160 (increase from 151) unique retention services in order to ensure individuals with disabilities remained within the workforce. In addition, the BRU is broadening the reach of CO DVR by engaging with over 1236 (increase from 989) 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.



09

**OFFICE OF INDEPENDENT
LIVING SERVICES**



OFFICE OF INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES

The Office of Independent Living Services (Office) executes and oversees the contracts the State has with nine non profit organizations certified as Centers for Independent Living (CIL) serving people with disabilities in all 64 counties. The Office also is the fiscal sponsor of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). All three allies, CILs, SILC, and the Office, make up the Colorado CIL network. The Colorado CIL network works collaboratively to provide an array of Independent Living services supporting people with disabilities to live independently in their community of choice.

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;
- ❖ Partner to develop and monitor the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL).

The Colorado CIL network was awarded a five year research grant - Securing Employment and Economic Keys to Stability (SEEKS). This research project will work with people who are applying for SSA disability benefits while concurrently receiving services from an employment specialist to obtain employment and a certified benefits counselor. SEEKS aims to increase understanding of what helps individuals with disabilities

- ❖ Improve employment and education outcomes;
- ❖ Increase monthly income; and
- ❖ Decrease social isolation.

In State Fiscal Year 2019, CIL network on average served 2743 consumers per month across the state. The CILs serve individuals aged 0-5 through 60+ years old. This network is unique in that they service people with any disability. Combined, the Colorado CIL network delivered over 56,000 services during the year.

Colorado SILC (Statewide Independent Living Council)

THE COLORADO SILC IS A GOVERNOR-APPOINTED 15 MEMBER COUNCIL WITH THE MAJORITY OF MEMBERS HAVING LIVED EXPERIENCE AS A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY. The Statewide Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) guides the CIL network to address the needs of people with disabilities across Colorado. This year, the SILC completed an extension of the existing SPIL through September 30, 2020 and submitted a new three-SPIL to the Administration on Community Living, which is effective October 1, 2020.

The SPIL identified several goals:

- ❖ Developing a strong and effective CIL Network;
- ❖ Increasing the CIL influence in state and national systems advocacy efforts to ensure public policies represent all members of the disability community;
- ❖ Increasing outreach, community education, and employment efforts; and
- ❖ Exploring flexibilities within the law that would grant Colorado more authority in following Federal Uniform Guidance due to the ratio of State to Federal funding.

The SILC maintained their focus on planning the next Colorado Youth Leadership Forum (YLF). Colorado YLF is an innovative event for Colorado high school juniors, seniors, and young adults under age 26 with disabilities. Youth serve as delegates from their communities and are given the opportunity to cultivate their leadership, citizenship, social skills, educational opportunities, and employment exploration. Despite needing to cancel the event in 2020 due to the pandemic, the work of the YLF continued.

The youth alumni from the previous two YLFs have continued to meet via the SILC's Youth Committee. There they continue to receive training (disability awareness, benefits planning, group facilitation, etc.). The alumni coordinate events throughout the year to provide peer support and growth opportunities. The youth alumni continued to demonstrate leadership by their attendance at the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) conference in Washington DC. as well as being selected to speak at the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) annual conference held in Grand Rapids, Michigan.



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CELEBRATING SUCCESS



10 CELEBRATING SUCCESS

Dr. James Peth, Professor at Colorado State University, Food Science and Human Nutrition



JAMES IS SIMPLY AN AMAZING PERSON WHO EXEMPLIFIES perseverance! Despite all that he has faced (quadriplegia, personal challenges, financial constraints, issues with insurance, personal care, etc.) he forged through, obtained his PhD and was hired as a professor at CSU. James was able to access assistance from DVR to complete his training, access needed assistive technology, and other support services along the way, but his success would not have been possible without his drive and determination. This is an example of an ideal partnership between DVR and an individual we serve, resulting in a great outcome! For more information on Dr. Peth, see [this article](#).

Daniel Parson, Business Owner, Alamosa

DANIEL PARSON'S START-UP BUSINESS, [Valley Art Supply and Gallery](#) has been a great success story for our Alamosa District agency. Daniel worked with his local vocational rehabilitation counselor, Estevan Lujan, for training sponsorship to help earn his undergraduate degree in Graphic Design from the local Adams State University. Immediately following his program completion in May 2019, Daniel began working on his self employment goal to open an art supply store. Daniel, because of his college background, was able to do most of the business plan on his own with some assistance from a DVR self employment consultant. Daniel's self employment business plan funding was approved in January of 2020. DVR hit some struggles with the onset of COVID-19 and was finally able to assist Daniel in opening the doors to his business in August of 2020. Daniel is earning a stable profit and we expect to see his business continue to thrive. Daniel and his business received an [innovation technology](#) award for a new business from the First Southwest Community fund, which also awarded him \$1500. Daniel is off to an excellent start as a new business!