



Colorado State  
Rehabilitation  
Council's

# 2022 Annual Report

## Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

December 2022



**COLORADO**  
Division of Vocational  
Rehabilitation  
Department of Labor and Employment



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part **1**

# Letters to the Governor & Key Stakeholders



## Dear 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 supported to achieve employment and independence. 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.

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, inclusion and access, and work to ensure non-discriminatory practices and equitable opportunities in all of our programs. DVR is working to make the state of Colorado a model employer for people with disabilities.

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:

- ▶ 15,841 individuals accessed DVR (including pre-employment transition services)
- ▶ 1,855 individuals had successful employment outcomes at an average wage of \$17.53
- ▶ 172 skills-based hiring trainings were given to employers across CO and our Business Relations Team is now considered Train-the-Trainer certified in [Skills-Based Hiring](#) concepts via Skillful.
- ▶ Our new 4 Disciplines of Execution (4DX) goal was focused on increasing the percentage of individuals we serve who sign an IPE. This goal relates to our agency's priority of improving our customer service, both internally and externally, and we ended the year with 49.5% of the individuals who apply for services signing an IPE.
- ▶ Dream Goal update:
  - ▶▶ Reduce the employment gap for people with disabilities from 41.0% in 2017 by 10%, to 36.9%, or less by 2027. In 2021, the employment gap was reduced to 36.7%, already exceeding the 10 year goal.
  - ▶▶ Reduce the median earnings gap for people with disabilities from 35.5% in 2017 to 32.0% or less by 2027. In 2021, the median earnings gap was reduced to 28.6%, already exceeding the 10 year goal.
  - ▶▶ Increase the people with disabilities who earn above 150% of the poverty guideline, by reducing the poverty gap from 13.7% to 12.3% or less by 2027. In 2021, the poverty gap was reduced to 10.4%, already exceeding the 10 year goal.
- ▶ DVR received the Community Impact Award from the CO School of Public Health, Center for Health, Work and Environment. DVR is a Total Worker Health leader at the individual, unit, organization and community levels.

- › The Disability Hiring Preference Pilot launched on March 1st, 2022 and is housed in CDLE. New applicants with disabilities who apply for a job at the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE), may be eligible to receive preference in the application process. This preference is similar to the Veterans' Preference currently in place, creating improved opportunities for eligible individuals to interview for state jobs for which they meet minimum qualifications.
- › The Disability Program Navigator (DPN) is a collaboration with DVR and 4 workforce centers to leverage funding in new ways to increase equitable, diverse and inclusive opportunities for job seekers with disabilities. The program has already shown its success with most workforce centers across the state committing to joining the DPN program by October, 2022.

DVR has continued to operate through a hybrid environment that allows us to meet the people we serve where they are, whether online or in person, in the office or a library, school, mental health center, a partner's location or some other convenient place. Our use of Adobe Sign and Box (content management) allows more flexibility in providing our services virtually or in the community.

## Other Successes

**Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Access (EDIA):** Our Department has a strong focus on creating affinity groups (including one for people with lived experience of disability), education on EDI and developing fun activities. Some of these include an EDI Art Project, Cultural Recipes, and posters featuring the diversity of the Executive Team. In DVR, we have hired a position that is focused on ensuring all our documents and website are accessible. We are working to translate all our documents to Spanish and have updated them to reflect gender neutrality.

**Employment First:** "DVR is an active participant in both the national Supported Employment and Customized Employment Communities of Practice where we collaborate with national leaders on best practices. These communities have led to CO holding additional Technical Assistance sessions with other states on implementing supported employment/Customized Employment services, determining Competitive Integrated Employment, and meeting with legislative and policy development teams to assist with sharing what is working in CO and our successes. DVR is also an active member of the international Individualized Placement and Supports (IPS) leadership team where we collaborate with IPS leaders around the world on best IPS implementation strategies and practices.

**NDEAM:** We had a very successful celebration in October, presenting awards to four individuals/employers who are doing exemplary work in creating and implementing programs that result in people with disabilities being employed. The Lieutenant Governor presented the awards virtually. DVR's Business Relations Unit sponsored our second Employer Week during the last week of October 2021, featuring thirteen employers who shared information about their business, what they look for in employees, and more - all virtually. In addition, the Business Relations team held 3 virtual lunch and learns geared for employers and job seekers, and DVR sponsored an additional 4 lunch and learns that were open to all state employees and the public.

## Addressing Human Resource Needs

We continue to identify areas of improvement and need within our agency in how we can better serve and support our staff and the individuals we serve through new positions and strategies:

**Youth Trainer/Coordinator:** 2 new positions have been approved that will focus on providing training and coordination on Pre-ETS and Employment First as well as School to Work Initiatives.

**Business Outreach Supervisor:** a new position supervising the 9 Business Outreach Specialists in CO, with other duties focused on working with Government and Corporate Employers, Registered Apprenticeships and supporting the Business Relations Manager.

**State as a Model Employer Development Specialist (SAME):** this position continues outreach and education to the state agencies in CO with a goal of promoting the hiring and retention of state employees with disabilities. A virtual, asynchronous disability etiquette training was developed specifically for state agencies and was very well received.

**Strategic Staffing Pilot:** DVR Leadership has been working to fill vacant positions. When we haven't been able to fill Counselor I positions we have filled those positions with interns and we are now using an interdisciplinary team model with Initial Engagement and Eligibility Technicians in a number of districts to improve customer service and enable staff to more efficiently manage cases.

**Culture:** In April of 2022, DVR began our new Achievement in Motion (AIM) Mentoring Program. Our goal is to connect new employees with mentors across the state and across positions to foster a sense of belonging, understanding of policy and procedures, and navigating within a government organization.

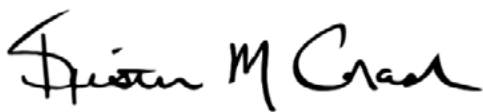
## Upcoming Strategies

- › DVR will increase the success of quality employment outcomes measured by increasing the number of successful employment outcomes from 1,855 to 2,080 and increase the average wage from \$17.53 to \$18.21 by June 30, 2023.
- › Increase skills-based practices by employer partners by providing 190 skills-based practices employer services by June 30, 2023.
- › Employer EDIA Challenge and Commitment: DVR is challenging all employers to commit to hiring and retaining employees with disabilities. DVR's Business Relations Team and all our staff commit to supporting businesses through individualized training, providing resources and connecting them with our talent pool of job seekers.
- › Join chambers of commerce that represent people of color and intentionally outreach to people of color to create a more diverse staff that represents the customers we serve in CO.
- › Vendor Relations: Our Quality Services team will begin creating consistent training for all vendors across the state and aims to increase quality vendor recruitment. We will also implement a new background check policy for all vendors who provide direct services.

## 1 Letters to the Governor & Key Stakeholders

- › DVR's Youth Services and Transition Unit will implement two new coordinator/trainer positions and a learning management system to help ensure that 3,250 students with disabilities receive at least one pre-employment transition service (Pre-ETS) by June 30, 2023.
- › DVR received funding in order to evaluate our agency's Employment First efforts and we will be working with the Institute of Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts to perform this specific work.
- › We continue to look for ways to streamline our business practices and increase both efficiency and effectiveness. With that, we have submitted a budget request for a new case management system.
- › Over the next year, we will research and implement methods and procedures to ensure we are providing documents and communications, including our website, that are accessible to individuals of all reading levels.

Regards,



**Kristin Corash**

Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

## Dear Mr. Governor, Ms. Commissioner, and Key Stakeholders

By way of unanimous agreement, 2022 has been a prosperous year, as Colorado's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Colorado's State Rehabilitation Council have demonstrated an unrelenting commitment to building an inclusive workforce in the state of Colorado.

The main focus of this year has been the incorporation of equity, diversity, and inclusion within the SRC. The Council picked up where it left off in 2021, as Council members participated in a series of 3 equity, diversity, and inclusion training sessions. The Council also worked to modify their meeting structure at the recommendation of prospective business representatives in order to make participation in the Council more inclusive for members of the private sector. The Executive Committee has worked to incorporate specific meeting expectations and procedures for both full Council and committee meetings to establish equitable participation opportunities for members while ensuring respectful communications and adherence to the allotted times outlined on the agendas. Moreover, in post-COVID-19 era, the Council is actively working to promote hybrid meeting strategies to allow members to meet in person and/or virtually.

With support of both the Executive Committee and Policy Committee, the SRC prioritized a review of their vision and mission statements to ensure more equitable language was utilized and more clearly written statements aligned with their work as a Council. The Executive Committee is also actively working to develop and finalize the rubrics for their initiative of becoming a high performing board, which they hope to implement more formally throughout the next year.

Throughout this last year, the Customer Satisfaction Committee solidified their commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion with the goal of providing the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation with policy recommendations that lead to the more equitable interactions through the use of self-assessments to help counselors become more culturally competent in their interactions with the individuals they serve.

In an effort to assist in the collaboration between the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the State Rehabilitation Council, the Employment First Committee has worked diligently on improving recruitment efforts to effectively increase membership within the Employment First Advisory Partnership. Additionally, Colorado APSE hosted the National APSE conference in Denver and the State Rehabilitation Council was able to provide the funds for three members to attend the conference. The Committee also submitted a subminimum wage report to the general assembly.

The efforts put forth by the committees of the State Rehabilitation Council aim to enhance the quality of policy recommendations in which the Council is responsible for providing the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation on an annual basis. The SRC continues to be committed when it comes to being a proactive partner to DVR, aiming to perfect the rehabilitative services offered to disabled Coloradans.

Sincerely,

**Timothy Postlewaite**

Chair, Colorado State Rehabilitation Council





part **2**

# DVR & SRC Leadership



# DVR & SRC Leadership and Contact Information

## Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Colorado Department of Labor & Employment

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633 17th Street, Suite 500 | Denver, CO 80202  
Phone: 303.318.8571 | Toll Free: 866.870.4595 | Fax: 303.866.2111  
Email: [cdle\\_voc.rehab@state.co.us](mailto:cdle_voc.rehab@state.co.us) | [www.colorado.gov/dvr](http://www.colorado.gov/dvr)

### Executive Leadership Team

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#### **Kristin Corash**

Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

#### **Stacy Evans**

Assistant Director, Field Services

#### **Suzanne Ablor**

Assistant Director, Finance & Operations

### State Rehabilitation Council Officers

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#### **Timothy Postlewaite**

Chair | [t.writer90@gmail.com](mailto:t.writer90@gmail.com)

#### **Sherrell Bethel**

Vice Chair | [sbethel@peakparent.org](mailto:sbethel@peakparent.org)

#### **Mark Kollasch**

Chair Elect | [mkollasch@disabilitylawco.org](mailto:mkollasch@disabilitylawco.org)





part **3**

# State Rehabilitation Council

# State Rehabilitation Council

## SRC Vision Statement

The Colorado State Rehabilitation Council envisions a day when Coloradans, regardless of disability, have equitable opportunities for employment, economic advancement, and the tools and resources, such as services through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, to lead and participate in all aspects of a high-quality life.

## SRC Mission Statement

Colorado State Rehabilitation Council reviews, analyzes, advises, and partners with Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to effectively deliver services that are equitable, inclusive, and lead to quality of life for Coloradans with disabilities through competitive integrated employment, community integration, and independent living.

## 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 Coloradans with disabilities to achieve meaningful employment and maximize individual independence goals. The Council provides DVR with an external, customer-oriented perspective and advises DVR on the vocational programs, policies, services and other issues that affect Coloradans with disabilities. The SRC provides people receiving services, business representatives, service providers and other citizens with a formal mechanism to influence the direction of rehabilitation services in Colorado.





## 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 customer 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; and
  - ▶▶ Employment outcomes achieved by eligible individuals receiving services from DVR, 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 behavioral 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.
- ▶ The Council shall 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.

## 2022 SRC Members and Membership Categories

Name	Status		Officers during SFY21	Membership type
Bobbie Rosa	Former	Voting member throughout SFY2022		Tribal VR
Brenda Mosby	Active	Voting member		Current or Former Recipient of Services
Charlotte Morgan	Active	Voting member		Statewide Independent Living Council
Jennifer Mendenhall	Active	Voting member		Parent or Guardian of a Person with a Disability
Joan LaBelle	Former	Voting member throughout SFY2022		Statewide Independent Living Council
Joelle Brouner	Active	Voting member		Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council
John Bailey	Active	Voting member		At-Large Representative
Josh Davies	Active	Voting member		Business, Industry, & Labor
Katie Oliver	Active	Voting member		Advisory Panel established under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
Kristin Corash	Active	Non-voting		Director of DVR
Lisa Taylor	Active	Voting member		Colorado Workforce Development Council
Lloyd Lewis	Active	Voting member		Business, Industry, & Labor
Lorraine Hull	Former	Voting member throughout SFY2022		Behavioral Health Planning Council
Marilee Boylan	Former	Voting member throughout SFY2022		At-Large Representative
Mark Kollasch	Active	Voting member	Chair Elect; Co-chair Policy Committee	Client Assistance Program
Naomi Gonzales	Active	Voting member		Business, Industry, & Labor
Ricky Wade	Active	Non-voting		Qualified Rehabilitation Counselor
Shantelle Rockman	Active	Voting member	Chair Employment First Committee	Community Rehabilitation Program
Sherrell Bethel	Active	Voting member	Vice Chair; Chair Customer Satisfaction Committee	Parent Training & Information Center
Susan Richardson	Former	Voting member throughout SFY2022		Community Rehabilitation Program
Timothy Postlewaite	Active	Voting member	Chair; Co-chair Policy Committee	Disability Advocacy Group
Yolanda Webb	Active	Voting member		Business, Industry, & Labor



## Standing Committees

### Executive Committee

**High performing boards rubric:** The Executive Committee dedicated time and effort to researching and creating self-evaluation tools for the State Rehabilitation Council. In order to promote and cultivate growth in Council expectations and goals, the committee created rubrics for individual members to evaluate their participation, understanding, and contributions in SRC meetings. Additionally, the committee has created outlines that will allow the other SRC committees to evaluate their meetings and committee work in the upcoming year. To ensure the full SRC is continuing to meet their expectations, a rubric was also developed that lists the SRC's ongoing membership obligation and other basic requirements.

The intent in developing these rubrics focuses on engaging SRC membership while also developing ongoing communication between Council members and leadership. The rubrics also strive to encourage members to engage before, during, and after SRC meetings to ensure their questions are answered and their accommodation needs are met.

**Orientation/Onboarding:** According to the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils, it takes an average of two years for new SRC members to feel confident in their work on the Council. To help new SRC members better understand their roles and responsibilities on the Council, the Executive Committee reviewed and revised the orientation process this year. Along with discussing regulatory requirements, new members were given a document on what they should expect for their first year, an explanation of responsibilities for each committee with their current goals for the year, and a deeper understanding of the purpose of the Council.

**Recruitment:** The Executive Committee worked hard throughout the year to fulfill all vacant positions

on the Council, with only two positions remaining unfilled at this time. Council leadership met with prospective applicants to gain an understanding of their passion in working with individuals with disabilities towards seeking competitive integrated employment, community integration, and independent living prior to finalizing their recommendations to the Governor for appointment. Due to the ever-evolving changes in Council membership, the Executive Committee will continue their recruitment efforts indefinitely so vacancies remain minimal and adequate representation from stakeholders and community partners are fulfilled on the Council.

**APSE:** The Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) is the only national organization focused exclusively on Employment First to facilitate the full inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace and community. APSE recognizes that everyone has abilities to contribute to the workforce and that work should be recognized and rewarded with fair pay. Employment adds meaning to every life and workplaces and communities are enhanced when they embrace differences.

Employment First means that employment in the general workforce should be the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities receiving assistance from publicly-funded systems. Simply put, Employment First means real jobs for real wages. Colorado has officially been an Employment First state since the passage of SB16-077 in 2016. In June of 2022, Colorado APSE had the privilege of hosting the National APSE conference in Denver. The conference housed over 500 participants. Thanks to SRC funding, three SRC members were able to attend: Marilee Boylan, Brenda Mosby and Jen Mendenhall.

## Employment First Committee

Senate Bill 16-077 “Employment First for persons with Disabilities” made the SRC lead agency in coordinating Employment First-related collaboration within 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 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.

The SRC Employment First 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

- Shantelle Rockman** – Chair
- John Bailey**
- Josh Davies**
- Katie Oliver**
- Kristin Corash**
- Naomi Gonzales**
- Yolanda Webb**

## 2022 Employment First Committee Work Summary

### Accomplishments

- › Drafted and passed Bylaws for the EFAP
- › Collaborated with the Customer Satisfaction/ Program Evaluation Committee in hosting a group of business panelists to gather input on their partnership experience with DVR and their opinions on ways to enable the SRC to attract and gain business representation on the SRC
- › Reviewed and provided feedback regarding the DVR website in marketing to the business community
- › Brainstormed with the DVR Business Outreach Specialists (BOS) to understand current training of the BOS positions and ways to further connect to the business community
- › Colorado APSE hosted the National APSE conference in Denver. With SRC funding, three individuals were able to attend: Marilee Boylan, Brenda Mosby, and Jen Mendenhall
- › EFAP established recruitment efforts and created an orientation presentation
- › EFAP drafted an MOU with our six state agency partners
- › Submitted subminimum wage report to the General Assembly
- › Disability Program Navigator (DPN) pilot - 4 workforce regions participated and increased the number of individuals who are enrolled in the workforce programs and DVR

**Recommendations:** Colorado is entering into an Employment Provider shortage crisis as a result and impact from the COVID-19 pandemic. We recommend DVR actively partner with the Workforce Centers to attract potential professionals to create a pipeline of new employment providers. In addition, it may

be helpful to create a how to video or mentoring program for potential DVR Employment vendors. Many people may be interested in this type of

flexible and meaningful work, but do not know that it either exists as a potential type of work or how to work through the logistics of becoming a vendor.

## Customer Satisfaction and Program Evaluation Committee

The Customer Satisfaction Committee is the lead workgroup for the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) and partners with DVR to complete CSNA activities. This committee is responsible for reviewing, analyzing and bringing forward recommendations related to the overall customer experience. The committee evaluates program and performance data to evaluate the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program, advising the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation on service improvement to adequately meet the needs of Coloradans with disabilities in achieving their employment goals.

### Current Members

- Sherrell Bethel** – Chair
- Brenda Mosby**
- Joelle Brouner**
- John Bailey**
- Lloyd Lewis**

### 2022 Customer Satisfaction and Program Evaluation Committee Work Summary

**Customer Satisfaction Survey:** This year is the committee’s third year completing the Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey. The first two years of this survey will serve as a baseline. The results from this year’s survey will identify trends and provide a clearer picture of how the people served by DVR have identified strengths and areas of improvement throughout the DVR process. The committee will be able to incorporate the survey findings into recommendations for DVR, determine areas of focus for the CSNA, and provide direction for the committee’s strategic focus for 2023.

**Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment:** The Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) is required every three years. With the most recent CSNA completion in 2021, the committee’s goal for 2022 was to determine methods to conduct and capture information for the CSNA annually. The committee has an interest in populations that are typically unserved or underserved. This





### 3 State Rehabilitation Council

year's focus has been on ensuring that the desire to help these populations is addressed effectively and not unintentionally creating more barriers to employment. The committee will be deliberate in its approach to seeking out knowledgeable subject matter experts (SME) working in the field. That SME, along with surveys and focus groups, will educate and guide the committee to understand the barriers to employment and how DVR can help bridge those gaps.

**Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:** This year the SRC participated in a series of 3 equity, diversity, and inclusion training sessions to support the Council's continued efforts towards an inclusive and diverse Council, which will in turn support the Council to ensure recommendations to DVR support inclusive and equitable services for people with disabilities. From these training sessions, the Customer

Satisfaction Committee, along with support from the Executive Committee, determined priorities for forging and sustaining inclusive board leadership and building awareness of the impact of invisible and unintentional expressions of biases, privilege, and the systemic patterns of oppression. These training sessions highlighted ways this Council can increase accessibility both virtually and during hybrid meetings, aided in modifying the meeting structure to ensure inclusivity of our business representatives, and incorporated meeting expectations and procedures to establish equitable participation opportunities for the SRC. The Council also learned that a more detailed and organized onboarding process needed to be provided to new members, so they feel confident and knowledgeable to participate in discussions from their initial appointment.



## Planning, Policy, and Education Committee

This committee is responsible for assisting in the development of Colorado’s combined State Plan, working with DVR to set up public meetings, 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

- Timothy Postlewaite – Co-Chair
- Mark Kollasch – Co-Chair
- Jennifer Mendenhall
- Lisa Taylor
- Ricky Wade

### 2022 Planning, Policy, and Education Committee Work Summary

**Policy Review:** In 2022, the committee convened to review and analyze many policies and practices related to DVR’s service delivery. The Policy Committee focused extensive review on access to technology and digital literacy concerns for individuals served by DVR. This led to recommendations of creating greater capacity to address these needs through collaboration with workforce centers, ensuring accessibility for all individuals throughout the process, and looking at local community needs and resources. This topic will continue to be an area of review into the next year. Along with these areas, the committee regularly engaged in reviewing and commenting on proposed DVR policy changes.

**Educational Topics:** In an effort to continue education on matters related to DVR and disabilities in the workplace, the committee organized

educational speakers to present on a variety of topics. The committee worked with subject matter experts to provide information and answer questions in the quarterly full SRC meetings. The topics for this year included sequencing of DVR’s services, an introduction to DVR, DVR vendors, and the State as a model employer. The Policy Committee will continue to seek feedback from SRC members on the areas of interest they’d like for future educational topics.

**Legislative Review:** The committee also reviewed bills throughout the legislative session, and a response letter was developed to address inclusion of people with disabilities in a specific bill. Similar to legislation that the committee addressed last year, House Bill 22-1196 had the goal of investigating the status of pay equity in relation to protected categories. However, while certain protected categories were listed in the bill’s language, disability was not specifically addressed. As a result, the Policy Committee created a letter that recommended specifically including people with disabilities in the study and within the group conducting the study. The Policy Committee did receive a response to the letter noting that the study and group conducting the study would be including disability specifically.

**Additional Committee Work:** The committee continues to recommend updates and changes to the SRC website. SRC members continue to update their biographies as membership changes and grows, and a “Getting Involved” tab was added so that interested individuals have a way to contribute to the SRC.





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# DVR By the Numbers

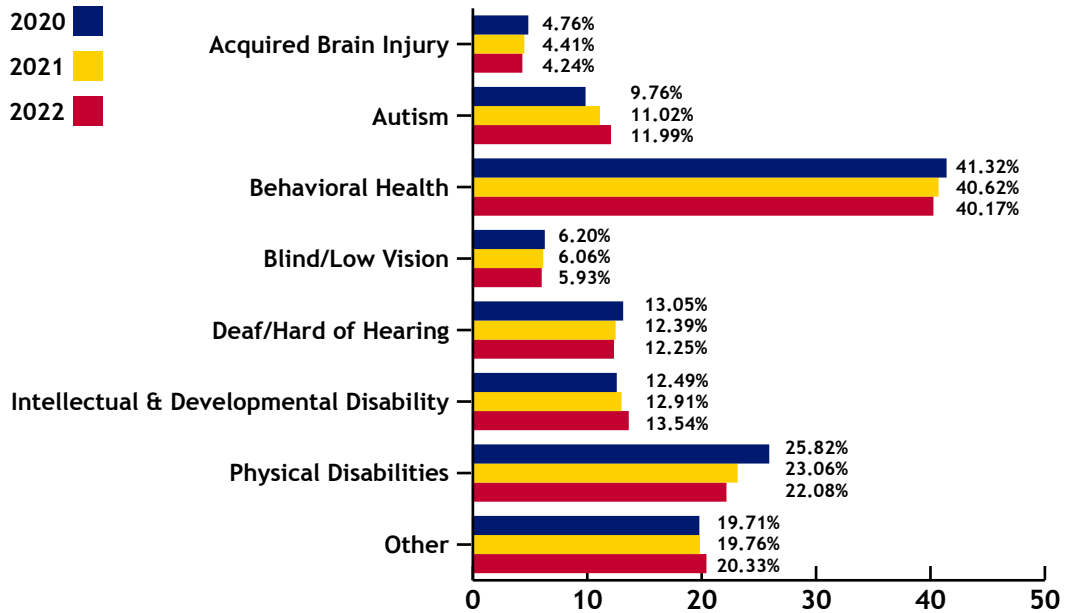
## DVR By The Numbers

Indicator	SFY20/PY19	SFY21/PY20	SFY22/PY21
Total Individuals Served (both VR and YP)	15,806	15,230	15,841
VR Individuals Served	13,702	12,776	12,884
New Applications (VR)	5,293	4,776	5,180
Successful Employment Outcomes (VR)	1,946	1,515	1,855
Rehabilitation Rate (VR)*	53.54%	47.87%	52.46%
Average Wages From Employment outcomes (VR)	\$15.61	\$16.65	\$17.53
SSI/SSDI at Application	2,054	1,695	1,932
SSI/SSDI at Successful Close	679	469	615
Potentially Eligible (YP) Individuals Served	2,104	2,454	2,997

*\* Percentage of individuals closed after receiving services under an IPE who achieved a successful employment outcome.*

Colorado Labor Market Info	Jun-20	Jun-21	Jun-22
Private Nonfarm Payroll Average Hourly Wage	\$30.34	\$31.58	\$34.21
Private Nonfarm Payroll Average Hours Per Week	33.7	33.9	33.2

## Disability Category

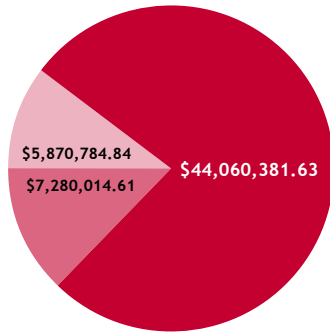


Disability Category	2020	2021	2022
Acquired Brain Injury	4.76%	4.41%	4.24%
Autism	9.76%	11.02%	11.99%
Behavioral Health	41.32%	40.62%	40.17%
Blind/Low Vision	6.20%	6.06%	5.93%
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	13.05%	12.39%	12.25%
Intellectual & Developmental Disability	12.49%	12.91%	13.54%
Physical Disabilities	25.82%	23.06%	22.08%
Other	19.71%	19.76%	20.33%



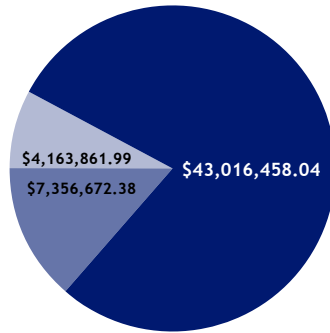
## DVR Funding

2020 Total Funding  
\$57,211,181.08



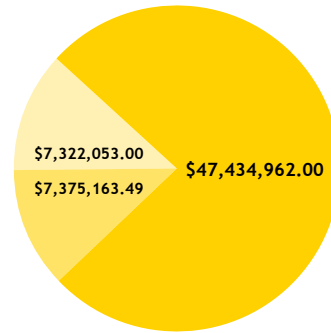
- Federal
- General
- Local Match

2021 Total Funding  
\$54,536,992.41



- Federal
- General
- Local Match

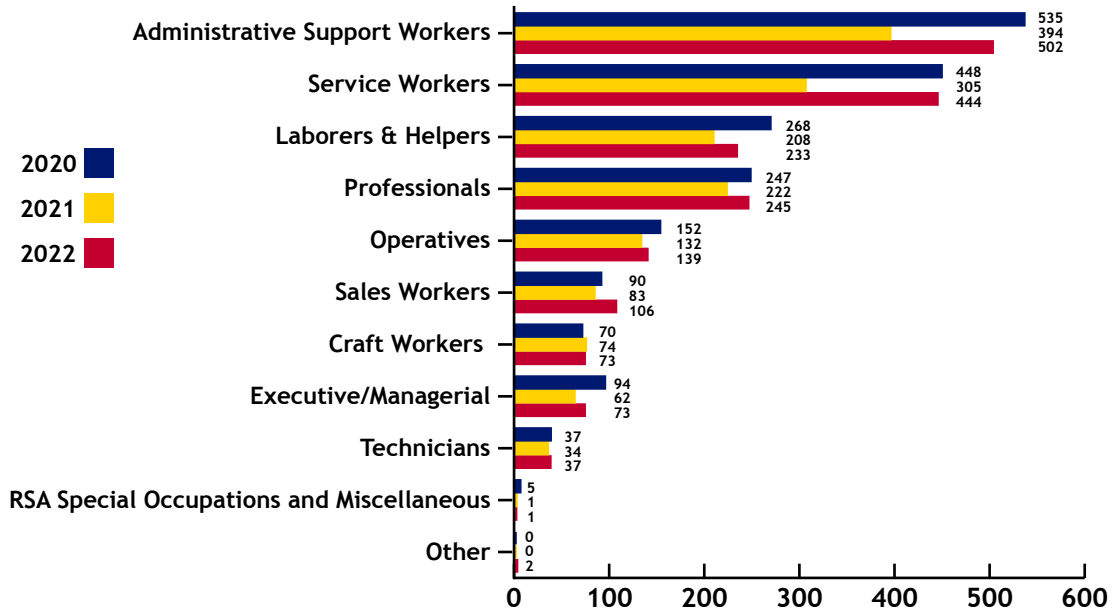
2022 Total Funding  
\$62,132,178.49



- Federal
- General
- Local Match

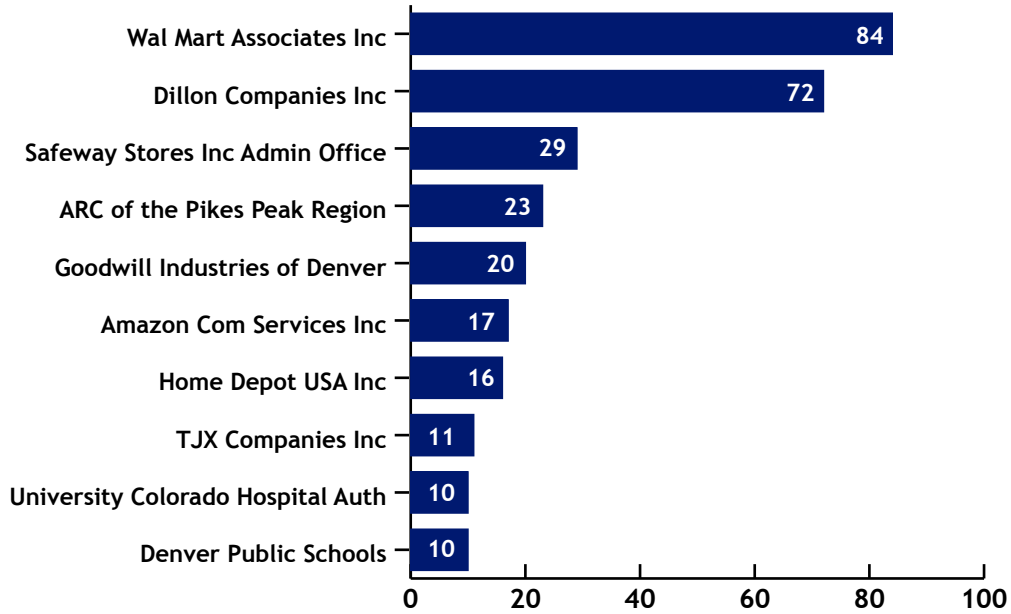
DVR Funding	2020	2021	2022
Federal	\$44,060,381.63	\$43,016,458.04	\$47,434,962.00
General	\$7,280,014.61	\$7,356,672.38	\$7,375,163.49
Local Match	\$5,870,784.84	\$4,163,861.99	\$7,322,053.00
Grand Total	\$57,211,181.08	\$54,536,992.41	\$62,132,178.49

## Occupations of Successfully Rehabilitated Clients



Occupations of Successfully Rehabilitated Clients	2020	2021	2022
Administrative Support Workers	535	394	502
Service Workers	448	305	444
Laborers & Helpers	268	208	233
Professionals	247	222	245
Operatives	152	132	139
Sales Workers	90	83	106
Craft Workers	70	74	73
Executive/Managerial	94	62	73
Technicians	37	34	37
RSA Special Occupations and Miscellaneous	5	1	1
Other	0	0	2

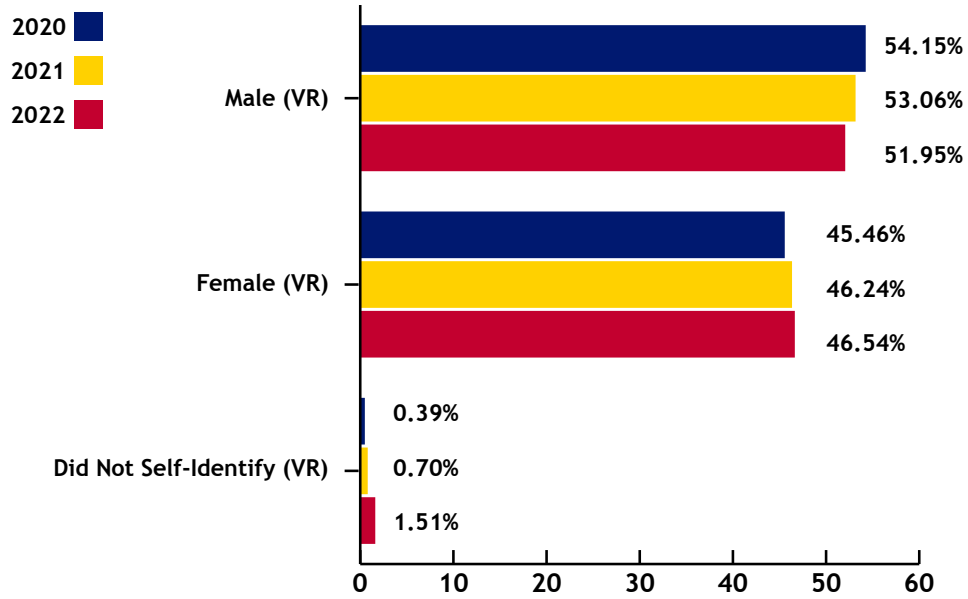
## Top Ten Employers SFY22/PY21



Top 10 Employers - SFY22/PY21	Employments
Wal Mart Associates Inc	84
Dillon Companies Inc	72
Safeway Stores Inc Admin Office	29
ARC of the Pikes Peak Region	23
Goodwill Industries of Denver	20
Amazon Com Services Inc	17
Home Depot USA Inc	16
TJX Companies Inc	11
University Colorado Hospital Auth	10
Denver Public Schools	10

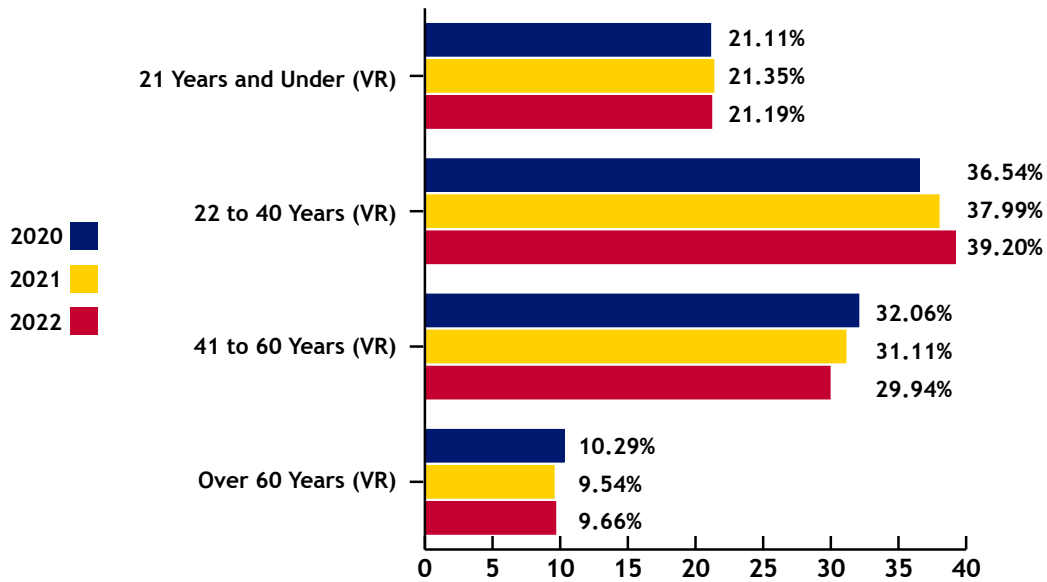


## Gender



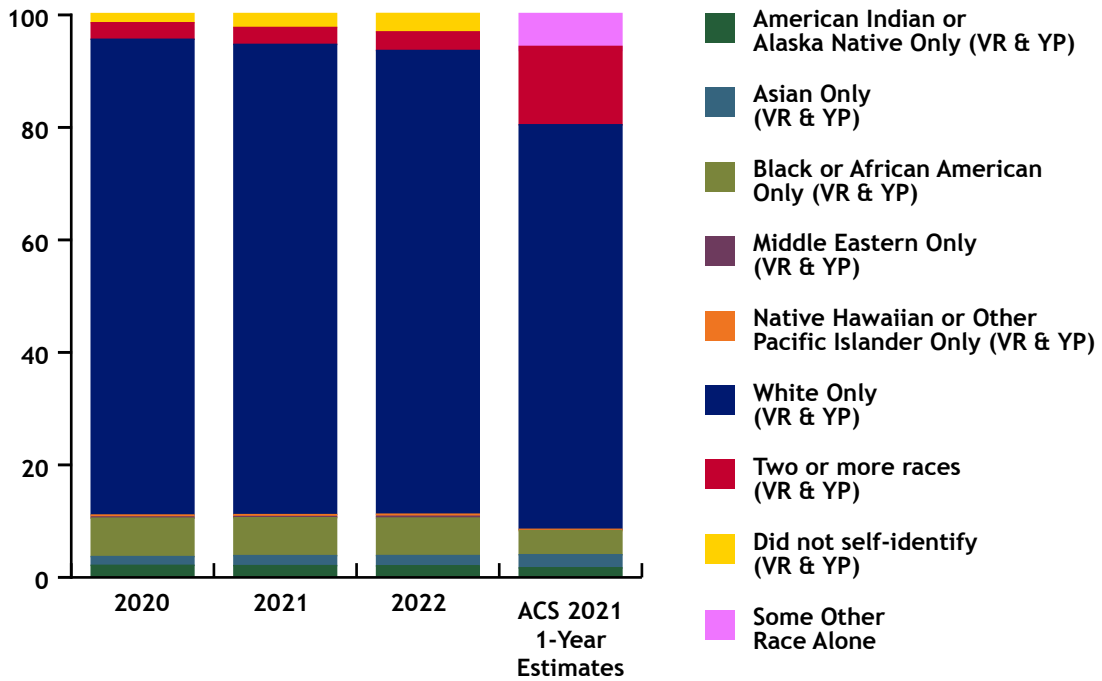
Gender	2020	2021	2022
Male (VR)	54.15%	53.06%	51.95%
Female (VR)	45.46%	46.24%	46.54%
Did Not Self-Identify (VR)	0.39%	0.70%	1.51%

## Age Category



Age Category	2020	2021	2022
21 Years and Under (VR)	21.11%	21.35%	21.19%
22 to 40 Years (VR)	36.54%	37.99%	39.20%
41 to 60 Years (VR)	32.06%	31.11%	29.94%
Over 60 Years (VR)	10.29%	9.54%	9.66%

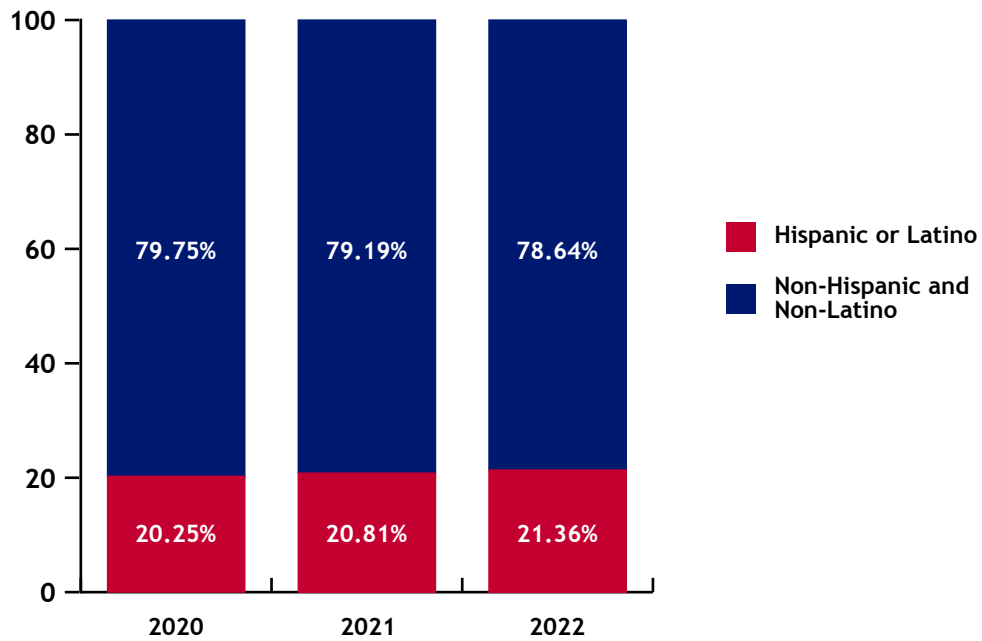
## Racial Identities of People Served



Race	2020	2021	2022	ACS 2021 1-Year Estimates
American Indian or Alaska Native Only (VR & YP)	1.89%	1.84%	1.79%	1.43%
Asian Only (VR & YP)	1.56%	1.78%	1.84%	2.35%
Black or African American Only (VR & YP)	6.83%	6.74%	6.67%	4.28%
Middle Eastern Only (VR & YP)	0.22%	0.21%	0.32%	0.00%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Only (VR & YP)	0.34%	0.34%	0.37%	0.24%
White Only (VR & YP)	84.58%	83.60%	82.44%	71.92%
Two or more races (VR & YP)	2.94%	3.01%	3.31%	13.93%
Did not self-identify (VR & YP)	1.63%	2.48%	3.27%	0.00%
Some Other Race Alone				5.85%



## Ethnicities of People Served



Ethnicity	2020	2021	2022
Hispanic or Latino	20.25%	20.81%	21.36%
Non-Hispanic and Non-Latino	79.75%	79.19%	78.64%

## Successful Closures

Successful Closures	2020	2021	2022
Individuals Closed Successfully Rehabilitated	1946	1515	1855
%Working at Plan	40.70%	43.43%	39.19%
%Not Working at Plan	59.30%	56.57%	60.81%
Average Wages From Employment outcomes	\$15.61	\$16.65	\$17.53
Ave Hours Worked Per Week at Successful Closure	28.1	29.2	28.0
Estimated Total Earnings	\$46.67MM	\$40.23MM	\$49.38MM
Average Weekly Salary	\$461.23	\$510.69	\$511.95
Estimated Average Annual Salary	\$23,984	\$26,556	\$26,621

## Earnings for Those Working at Plan

Earnings For Those Working at Plan	At Plan 2022	At Close 2022	Change
Ave Hourly Wage	\$17.92	\$19.78	10.40%
Ave Hours Worked Per Week	29.02	31.19	7.50%
Estimated Total Earnings	\$20.80MM	\$23.75MM	14.21%
Average Weekly Salary	\$550.15	\$628.32	14.21%
Estimated Average Annual Salary	\$28,608	\$32,673	14.21%

## Earnings for Those Not Working at Plan

Earnings For Those Not Working at Plan	2022
Ave Hourly Wage	\$16.09
Ave Hours Worked Per Week	26.01
Estimated Total Earnings	\$25.63MM
Average Weekly Salary	\$436.94
Estimated Average Annual Salary	\$22,721

## Outcomes by Disability Category—PY21

Disability Category Stats – PY21	Successful Outcomes	Rehab Rate	Ave Wage	Ave Hours Per Week	Total Yearly Earnings	Ave Weekly Salary	Ave Annual Salary
Acquired Brain Injury	3.18%	46.09%	\$20.08	25.42	\$1.45MM	\$473.96	\$24,646
Autism	11.11%	50.86%	\$14.70	24.3	\$4.0MM	\$373.80	\$19,438
Behavioral Health	31.81%	42.88%	\$16.76	26.99	\$14.68MM	\$478.54	\$24,884
Blind/Low Vision	4.53%	44.21%	\$19.79	29.63	\$2.55MM	\$582.93	\$30,312
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	24.42%	76.91%	\$20.63	32.23	\$15.95MM	\$676.95	\$35,201
Intellectual & Developmental Disability	13.91%	52.33%	\$13.84	18.09	\$3.45MM	\$256.88	\$13,358
Physical Disabilities	17.57%	42.50%	\$17.95	25.98	\$8.21MM	\$484.42	\$25,190
Other	23.72%	54.93%	\$15.49	28.96	\$10.63MM	\$464.78	\$24,169

## Outcomes by Racial Identity—PY21

Race Stats – PY21	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	1.13%	36.21%	\$17.95	33	\$.65MM	\$590.79	\$30,721
Asian only	1.89%	53.85%	\$16.87	27.37	\$.91MM	\$499.25	\$25,961
Black or African American only	6.79%	54.31%	\$17.26	29.75	\$3.48MM	\$530.52	\$27,587
Middle Eastern or Arab only	0.54%	90.91%	\$18.74	25.4	\$.26MM	\$495.55	\$25,768
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander only	0.43%	66.67%	\$13.83	29.62	\$.17MM	\$414.71	\$21,565
White only	84.37%	52.75%	\$17.54	27.79	\$41.30MM	\$507.51	\$26,391
Two or More Races	2.32%	41.75%	\$16.36	25.51	\$.97MM	\$432.01	\$22,464
Did not self-identify	2.53%	53.41%	\$19.74	32.51	\$1.66MM	\$677.34	\$35,222



## Outcomes by Ethnicity—PY21

Ethnicity Stats – PY21	Successful Outcomes	Rehab Rate	Ave Wage	Ave Hours Per Week	Total Yearly Earnings	Ave Weekly Salary	Ave Annual Salary
Hispanic or Latino	19.41%	53.33%	\$16.74	29.94	\$9.61MM	\$513.18	\$26,685
Non-Hispanic and Non-Latino	80.59%	52.25%	\$17.73	27.58	\$39.78MM	\$511.65	\$26,606

## Outcomes by Service Region—PY21

Region Stats - PY21	Successful Outcomes	Rehab Rate	Ave Wage	Ave Hours Per Week	Total Yearly Earnings	Ave Weekly Salary	Ave Annual Salary
BLVS Region (Blind and Low Vision Services-Statewide)	3.02%	40.88%	\$20.61	31.46	\$1.83MM	\$629.22	\$32,719
Region 1 (Eastern Plains, Colorado Springs, Pueblo)	14.99%	41.62%	\$16.46	29.32	\$7.26MM	\$502.36	\$26,123
Region 2 (Denver Metropolitan Area)	36.93%	63.90%	\$17.95	27.89	\$18.85MM	\$529.23	\$27,520
Region 3 (North Denver Metro and Northern Colorado)	29.16%	50.61%	\$17.59	27.09	\$14.07MM	\$500.27	\$26,014
Region 4 (Western Slope)	15.90%	50.00%	\$16.89	28.27	\$7.36MM	\$480.02	\$24,961

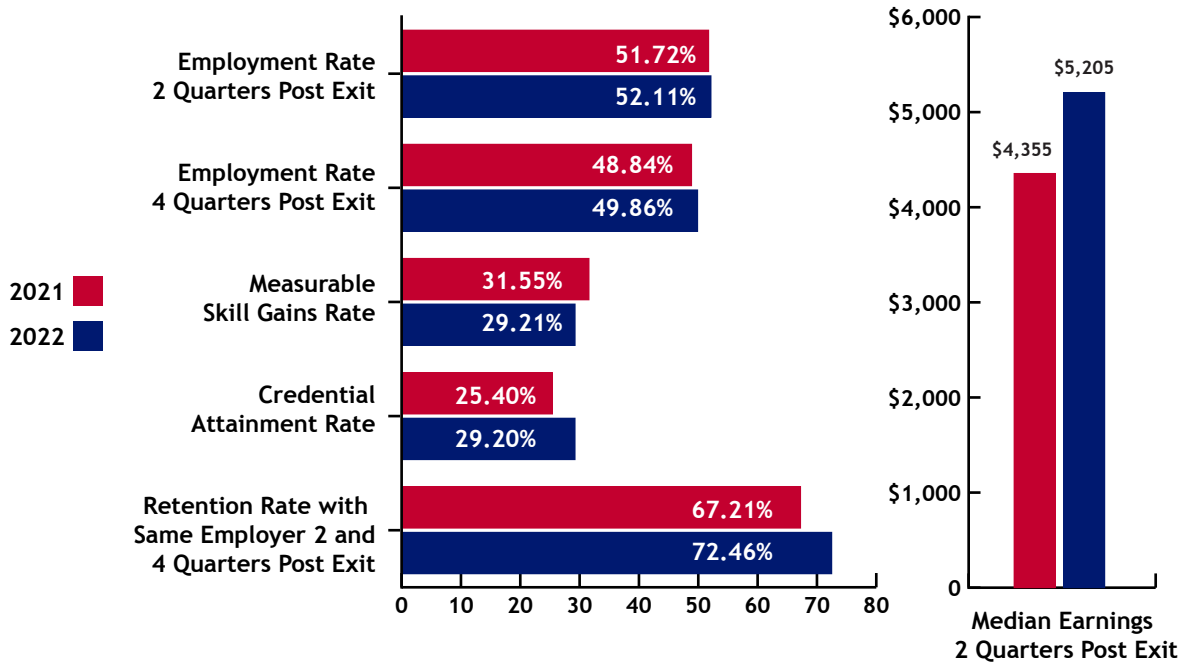
## Outcomes of Individuals Reporting Homelessness—PY21

Homeless Stats - PY21	Successful Outcomes	Rehab Rate	Ave Wage	Ave Hours Per Week	Total Yearly Earnings	Ave Weekly Salary	Ave Annual Salary
Did not self-identify	0.00%						
Is homeless	1.83%	34.00%	\$18.09	31.44	\$1.05MM	\$595.86	\$30,985
Is not homeless	98.17%	53.00%	\$17.52	27.98	\$48.33MM	\$510.38	\$26,540

## Outcomes of Individuals Reporting Ex-Offender—PY21

Exoffender Stats – PY21	Successful Outcomes	Rehab Rate	Ave Wage	Ave Hours Per Week	Total Yearly Earnings	Ave Weekly Salary	Ave Annual Salary
Did not self-identify	4.15%	50.66%	\$17.11	26.31	\$1.89MM	\$471.68	\$24,528
Has a criminal offense history	10.51%	38.61%	\$16.65	30.22	\$5.27MM	\$520.18	\$27,050
No criminal offense history	85.34%	54.98%	\$17.66	27.85	\$42.22MM	\$512.89	\$26,670

## Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act Common Performance Measures



WIOA CPM	2021	2022
Employment Rate 2 Quarters Post Exit	51.72%	52.11%
Employment Rate 4 Quarters Post Exit	48.84%	49.86%
Measurable Skill Gains Rate	31.55%	29.21%
Credential Attainment Rate	25.40%	29.20%
Retention Rate with Same Employer 2 and 4 Quarters Post Exit	67.21%	72.46%
Median Earnings 2 Quarters Post Exit	\$4,355	\$5,205



part **5**

# DVR 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 treatment
- › 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.



## DVR Goals and Strategies

Colorado’s 2020-2023 Combined State Plan was approved in June 2020, taking effect July 1, 2020. The two-year modification was approved in June 2022, taking effect July 1, 2022. In the VR Services Portion of the Plan, DVR identified the following priorities focused on the people receiving DVR services, DVR staff, and DVR partners:

- › **People We Serve:** DVR innovates with intention to improve individualized and person-centered services and supports that lead to increased prosperity through a dual customer approach.
- › **Staff:** DVR’s leaders support and equip DVR staff to be agile and able to integrate positive change, while proactively providing staff strategies to foster flexible, efficient service delivery.
- › **Partners:** DVR adapts to processes, technologies, and disciplines that help staff create and enhance relationships with our communities, vendors, employer partners, stakeholders, and the people we serve.

Aligned with these priorities, DVR has identified the following goals:

- › 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.
- › DVR will increase the percentage of applicants who reach an IPE to 54.8% by July 31, 2023, reducing the attrition of applicants who exit the VR program before ever receiving services under a plan for employment.
- › DVR will retain 90% of staff for 24 months or longer by June 30, 2023.
- › DVR will increase the number of successful closures and the average wages of individuals closed successfully, annually.
- › DVR will meet or exceed negotiated targets for WIOA Common Performance Measures.

## 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 the use of 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. DVR recently adopted a hybrid approach to service delivery to best meet the needs of individuals by providing services virtually, in the community or in person.

## 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. The unit consists of two Youth Services and Transition managers each managing the youth programs and services to include transition services, the School to Work Alliance Program (SWAP), Project Search, Pre-Employment Transition Services and Employment First for young adults.

In 2021, to further support the capacity needs for services to potentially eligible students with disabilities, YSTU proposed a realignment of existing field positions to assist in serving this population. The new role of Pre-ETS Technicians within our field offices coordinate and provide direct Pre-ETS to potentially eligible students with disabilities within their assigned community. The Pre-ETS Technician role has aided in expediting Pre-ETS to students with disabilities beginning at age 15 and ensuring ongoing engagement in services. Pre-ETS Technicians currently serve potentially eligible students with disabilities in Colorado Springs, Northglenn, Greeley and Longmont, while VR Counselors continue to ensure these services are available elsewhere in the state.

YSTU is working towards ensuring Colorado's youth with disabilities are able to easily access services and materials. As part of this effort the website was revamped to include audience specific information for youth, family members, educators and service providers. Additionally, YSTU developed new marketing materials including a new youth services rack card and a youth services video featuring youth with disabilities that have previously been or are currently being served by DVR.

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 Plan. The Pre-ETS Community of Practice continues to serve as a network for



service providers of Pre-ETS and as a mechanism to promote quality services.

Looking ahead into SFY23, the Youth Services team will expand to include two new Statewide Trainer/ Coordinators for School to Work Initiatives and Pre-ETS/Employment First respectively. These two new roles will enhance the quality and diversity of services available to youth with disabilities in Colorado through the provision of on-demand training for students with disabilities and service providers. Additionally, these new roles will be integral for the provision of ongoing support and guidance for DVR staff that collaborate with youth and local education partners.

### **Project SEARCH**

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. This year we have expanded from 5 to 7 sites with support from the Colorado Office of Employment First and we continue to explore growing these partnerships.

### **School to Work Alliance Program**

The School to Work Alliance Program (SWAP) is a collaborative partnership between DVR and local school districts or Boards of Cooperative Education Services (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. In SFY22 there were 39 SWAP contracts covering 68% of Colorado’s districts. SWAP served 3,384 youth with disabilities experiencing mild to moderate barriers to employment between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022. Of those youth served, 2,712 received



Pre-ETS and 1,481 were placed into individualized plans for employment. These youth improved work skills, explored their career interests, and obtained work experience leading to competitive integrated employment. In SFY22, SWAP contributed to 324 successfully rehabilitated outcomes for DVR, accounting for 17% of DVR’s overall successfully rehabilitated outcomes.

**Enhanced Services Pilot**

Seven districts entered a pilot with DVR which created a new position under the SWAP contracts. These newly created positions would be charged with establishing evidence-based and promising practices to improve post school outcomes through Pre-ETS and vocational rehabilitation services for students with more significant needs by:

- › Creating/expanding work-based learning opportunities that are customized using Discovery
- › Creating/expanding pre-employment transition services
- › Accessing and expanding student participation in alternative vocational programming
- › Promoting work-home life transferable skills to instill the values and importance of work with families using Discovery
- › Promoting a shift in culture with educators around future work skills while preparing these students for the world of work through benefits counseling

The positions spent the first year in intensive training to become certified in Discovery, as well as Benefits Counseling, and will begin implementing these skills in year two of the pilot.

**Division of Youth Services**

Youth committed by the District Court to the custody of the Colorado Department of Human

Services (CDHS), Division of Youth Services (DYS) has historically been an underserved population for Colorado’s DVR. Last year, YSTU partnered with DHS in an effort to jointly develop an innovative model that targeted youth with disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities, to bring Pre-ETS to these youth. Using the SWAP model, our goal was to build a bridge between the two state entities that would:

- › Contribute to career pathway enhancement
- › Equip DHS with the knowledge and skills to make appropriate referrals of potentially eligible students
- › Equip DHS to make appropriate linkages back to students’ home district and local DVR office for continuation of services
- › Equip DVR Counselors with the knowledge and skills to assure the continuation of VR services after students are discharged from DHS facilities

**Sequencing of Services (SoS)**

Colorado YSTU piloted their new Sequencing of Services Framework to support families, educators and service providers working with students and youth with disabilities developed by a state level Interagency Transition Team in four different locations in SFY22. As a result of those efforts, those four partnerships saw an increased collaboration among local partners to support students and youth with disabilities move toward their post-secondary visions for life after high school. Through the rediscovery of local interagency transition teams, workbooks were created to identify what programming and services across a continuum of ages are available to students and youth, as well as roles and responsibilities of agencies in providing these services. These four pilot sites will move into SFY23 implementing memorandums of understanding for sustainability and using the workbook with 8-12 students while YSTU begins onboarding other locations.

## Blind and Low Vision Services

The 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.

During this time of the pandemic, with many businesses permanently or temporarily closing, 56 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 cumulative average hourly wage at closure was \$20.61. Participants are working in a wide variety of careers, including: management; food service; finance; mechanics; sales; massage therapy; construction; education; social services; clerical/office support; engineering; and customer service. In an effort to improve services to youth, BLVS is exploring a change in the current model of how BLVS serves youth. BLVS continues to work toward increasing the skill set of Rehabilitation Counselors serving the Blind.

### Personal Adjustment Training

Remote services within our Personal Adjustment Training (PAT) program continue to be a preferred modality for many people we serve and, more often than not, compliment the in-person PAT provided. We continue to provide virtual groups for support and training on a regular basis to all BLVS clients. Our PAT Unit has seen a steady increase in the number of individuals served through this hybrid model over the course of the last three years. BLVS leaders have sought feedback from the people we serve, PAT staff and BLVS stakeholders in changing the PAT Center service delivery to that of a hybrid,

intensive workshop model. In August, PAT piloted this model and it proved to be a success based on the positive feedback of those we served, as well as staff. Additionally, the PAT unit is in the process of updating the Assistive Technology lab in order to keep up with current technology, and this updated lab will help staff provide more training workshops in the future. The team will continue to improve this model based on feedback received in the coming year.

During the summer of 2022, the PAT unit's Pre-Employment Transition specialist offered several 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. It remains challenging to recruit youth during the summer months as many are looking for a break from school. While PAT services for PreETS students remain regional with PAT staff throughout the state, PAT staff are in process of developing a more effective plan for providing summer PreETS workshops and learning experiences.

### Business Enterprise Program

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) has experienced a significant amount of change this past year, and more change is expected moving forward as the State Licensing Agency (SLA) and the Colorado Elected Committee (CEC) look for innovative ways to grow the program. Throughout SFY22, the program experienced significant staff turnover, but have been fortunate to welcome new team members aboard. With active participation from the CEC, the program has filled several vacant positions and will soon hire a new BEP Manager.

The SLA continues to engage in active participation with the CEC and, together, have made it a priority to address state administrative rules and policies. This important work will lay the foundation for Colorado’s BEP to become one of the most progressive, innovative and successful programs in the nation. It will take great effort to achieve this, and the enthusiasm and commitment from both the SLA and CEC will drive this work forward.

While there are still a significant number of state and federal employees working remotely, some have begun to return to buildings. BPE opened new locations at the Veterans Affairs Office building, Sterling Department of Corrections, and Rocky Mountain Research Center. A total of 19 Operators are working to date. Set aside funds have begun increasing, with 10% more set aside funds collected during the first quarter of state fiscal year 2023 compared to the first quarter last year. These are funds that support the program and are vital to its success. While the program is moving in the right direction, there is still a lot of work ahead of this dedicated team.

### Independent Living for Older Individuals who are Blind

The Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) program has continued to provide quality and caring services to individuals statewide who are age 55 and older, are blind or visually impaired, and whose primary goal is to regain or maintain independence in their own home.

Virtual services became available during the pandemic and many individuals continue to prefer this option. This is especially helpful to those with barriers to accessing reliable transportation services.

OIB Technical Assistance Center hosted a national conference in Denver in May 2022. Staff were able to take advantage of this opportunity to share practices, resources, technical advancements, and insights that will help improve services here in Colorado as well as throughout the US.

DVR continues to collaborate with the seven subrecipients throughout the state. As the current contract year draws to a close, DVR will seek applications for the next contract cycle in the spring of 2023, for which new organizations and existing subrecipients will have an opportunity to apply.

### Howard Fund

The Howard Fund 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 board approved 13 grants that have included the purchase of assistive technology, low vision aids, adaptive equipment, training, and conference registration.





## Employment First

DVR believes that anyone who wants to work can work, and employment should be the first and preferred 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 to achieve competitive integrated employment outcomes. 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. DVR had a goal of completing 200 Employment First Trainings and Technical Assistance Activities to support understanding and development of best practices to support all Coloradans with their competitive integrated employment goals. The Competitive Integrated Employment Unit was able to complete 245 Employment First training and technical activities during SFY22.

### 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. Continued focus on quality services and outcomes for the people seeking supported employment services has been promoted and assisted by DVR's Supported Employment Coordinator/Trainer.

DVR & OCL partner each year providing training and facilitating opportunities for partnership across agencies and community organizations. DVR and OCL completed 20 virtual roundtables, with support from the Colorado Office of Employment First, for Community Centered Boards and local DVR offices to provide information and updates, foster collaboration, and generate discussion for best practices. Over the past year, DVR also continued to partner closely with OCL on the implementation of Senate Bill 18-145, addressing the minimum qualifications of providers of supported employment services. In addition, DVR created a Customized Employment Performance-Based Certification Guidance website to guide training entities on what the curriculum must address, as well as guide DVR providers on the qualifications and process of performance-based certification.

DVR worked in partnership with the Colorado Office of Employment First and Allan Bergman to do a comprehensive review of Customized Employment rates. Based on the result of this review, DVR was able to propose and implement a rate increase to reflect the time and intensity of providing customized employment services for individuals being served through DVR. In response to the State of Colorado phasing out subminimum wage, DVR, in collaboration with HCPF, conducted a customized employment pilot through the Washington Initiative for Supported Employment (WISE). This pilot was offered specifically to entities that currently paid or recently phased out of sub minimum wage, certifying 16 different providers to offer customized employment to individuals with the most significant employment needs moving away from subminimum work toward competitive integrated employment. A key component of building capacity for a Customized Employment Program is identifying sustainable training approaches for DVR staff and service providers to ensure effective implementation of

Customized Employment statewide. As a result, there has been an increase in provider certification options with the recent addition of WISE. There are now three Customized Employment certification options for prospective providers to choose from, allowing providers to choose the training that will best meet their needs.

### **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.

## **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 the individuals served in learning about self-employment as well as the newly formed Center on Self-Employment.

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, 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.

Continued focus on quality services and outcomes for the people we serve seeking supported employment services has been promoted and assisted by DVR's Supported Employment Coordinator/Trainer.

Our streamlined self-employment program allows individuals interested in being entrepreneurs to move more quickly to business start-up. DVR's goal is to identify any skills gaps early on so that the individual can be the most successful in all aspects of operating their business, from accounting to marketing. The individuals DVR serves are able to present their business concept during the business plan approval process, allowing for their direct feedback and voice. DVR's Self-Employment team has been participating in a national community of practice on self-employment, allowing for further learning and implementation of best practices from around the country. Five Lead

Counselors for Entrepreneurship (RCE) 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.

DVR served 260 individuals during the reporting period in our self-employment program, which is an increase of 48 individuals from the previous year. 119 individuals achieved a successful outcome, averaging \$1,987/month in earnings. DVR supported individuals in developing successful businesses in a variety of markets, including: authors, painting, plumbing, farming/ranching, IT consulting, graphic arts and design, food truck and custom bike saddles.

## **Business Relations and Outreach Services**

DVR's Business Relations Unit (BRU) utilizes a dual customer approach to connect 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 key to ensuring that both the individuals DVR serves and counselors are connected to the most up-to-date career resources possible.

The BRU is 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 Colorado's State Apprenticeship Agency (SAS) 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.

The BRU has also implemented a new strategic priority to their service delivery model toward promoting and implementing Skills-Based Hiring Practices with businesses statewide. During SFY22, the BRU has continued its focus on delivering skills-based hiring services statewide by continuing to ensure all former and current Unit members received training as a certified trainer for skills-based hiring, including continued professional development toward enhancing the Unit's working knowledge within the discipline. As a result, during SFY22, the BRU trained 172 business customers on one of the core competencies of Skills-Based Hiring, far surpassing the established annual goal of 108

businesses trained. For SFY22, the BRU has set a goal of training 190 business customers on the Skills-Based Hiring Philosophy statewide.

The BRU also added a new full-time position focused solely in the direct service of business outreach services to State Government entities, titled the State As a Model Employer (SAME) Development Specialist. The SAME Development Specialist position has been focused on engaging State Departments to learn about their workplace culture, current recruitment and retention strategies, as well as professional development opportunities to develop individualized collaboration goals for each Department, with the goal of recruiting and retaining more individuals with disabilities into state government careers. This includes collaborating on, and when appropriate, sharing best practice strategies learned through CDLE's current Disability Hiring Preference Pilot. During this fiscal year, the SAME Development Specialist work has seen results such as training all 600 employees with the Department of Motor Vehicles as well as over 200 staff from the Department of Personnel and Administration, Adult Protective Services, and the Department of Regulatory Agencies on best practices in Disability Awareness and Etiquette. This training has also been developed into a self-paced learning module that has been made a required annual training for all staff with the Department

of Motor Vehicles and is being used as an option to integrate this training content into the learning management processes already established within State Departments, making accessing the content more simple and efficient for State Employees at all levels, and statewide.

Additionally, the BRU served 4028 targeted employers with 619 individuals served by DVR having been hired within these businesses throughout the year. The BRU also provided 821 unique training offerings at no cost to these employers, often helping businesses to meet mandatory diversity requirements. The BRU provided 203 unique retention services in order to ensure individuals with disabilities remained within the workforce. In addition, the BRU is broadening the reach of Colorado DVR by engaging with partner organizations for the purpose of assisting the people we serve with exploring, obtaining, retaining, and advancing in employment. These organizations include, but are not limited to, 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 primary role of DVR's Office of Independent Living Services (Office) is to execute and oversee contracts with all nine of Colorado's certified Centers for Independent Living (CILs). These contracts provide state and federal funding to CILs in order for them to provide independent living services at no-cost to Coloradans of any age, who self-identify as having any disability, living in any of Colorado's 64 counties. CILs are unique in that they must operate in adherence to "independent living philosophy" as it is outlined in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The Office verifies that CILs adhere to this philosophy through a thorough review and certification process, where the Office validates (among many other things) that over 50% of CIL staff and CIL board members are, themselves, people with disabilities - this cornerstone of independent living philosophy ensures CIL consumers are being served by people with similar lived-experience. Consumers are empowered to make informed decisions about which independent living services can help them achieve their own self-identified goals. These goals, called independent living goals, vary greatly by individual, but all lend themselves to aiding people with disabilities to live as independently as possible in the community of their choosing.

In SFY22, Colorado's CIL network served an average of 2,329 consumers per month. During this time, CILs worked with the State, their local governments, and other service-provider agencies and organizations on COVID-19 related public health initiatives. Initiatives included emergency planning, creating accessible vaccination sites, and the dissemination of accessible information to people with disabilities. Additionally, the CILs provided 21,740 Information and Referral services during the Federal FY21. These services include answering questions from the general public, agencies and businesses, families, and people with disabilities.

In addition to the work they do with the CILs, the Office works to:

- › Increase the visibility and understanding of the independent living services delivered by the 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 compliance with federal and state fiscal requirements
- › Serve as the fiscal sponsor for the governor-appointed Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), whose role is to develop and monitor Colorado's federally required State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL)
- › Administer a federally funded five-year research study called Securing Employment and Economic Keys to Stability (SEEKS)

### Securing Employment and Economic Keys to Stability (SEEKS)

The Office has just completed year three of a five-year federally funded research study called SEEKS, where CILs and other certified vendors are administering a three-pronged service-based intervention. Enrollees in the study are people with disabilities aged 18-60 who are applying for SSA disability benefits while concurrently working or seeking employment with a trained employment specialist and certified benefits counselor. At this time, 129 individuals have been enrolled in the study, and participants are surveyed every six months to determine the effect the intervention has had on their:

- › Employment and education outcomes,
- › Monthly income, and
- › Feelings of social isolation.

As the administrators of the grant and study, the Office meets quarterly with the SEEKS Advisory Team in order to ensure all study related procedures, data collection points, services, and messaging are informed by a myriad of relevant subject matter experts. The Advisory Team includes representatives from the disability community (individuals with lived-experience), Social Security Administration, Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration, National SOAR TA Center, Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, Colorado Disability Determination Services, Colorado Workforce Development Council, JFK Partners (University Center of Excellence on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities {UCEDD}), Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council, Colorado APSE, various community based organizations, and the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. A primary focus of this team over the last year has been to be intentional about ensuring people of color and other marginalized groups with disabilities are at the table as the team advises on the direction of the study and with project recruitment efforts.

### Colorado SILC

The Colorado SILC is a federally mandated, Governor-appointed, 15-member council whose primary objective is to write, implement, and monitor a State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL). Keeping in line with independent living philosophy, over 50% of the members of the council must be individuals with lived experience as a person with a disability. In the last year, the SILC has nominated six new candidates who represent diverse disability types, cultural groups, and geographical regions of Colorado. Through the work they do developing and implementing the SPIL, the SILC aims to advance independent living in Colorado. Currently, the SILC is working with stakeholders to gather feedback for the next SPIL that must be developed. Colorado's SILC is now federally recognized as 501(c)(3). To help aid in the transition from Governor-appointed

Council to Governor-appointed non-profit, the SILC hired an Executive Coordinator and is developing the infrastructure it needs to transition into an autonomous 501(c)(3).

The goals set forth in the currently approved SPIL (FFY 2021 - FFY 2023) are as follows:

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

During the year, the SILC met quarterly to fulfill its responsibilities in monitoring the SPIL. They held meetings virtually and began hybrid meetings as well. One of the highlights was planning and organizing for the first Colorado Youth Leadership Forum in three years scheduled for August 2022. The CO-YLF is an innovative, four-day conference for Colorado high school juniors, seniors, and young adults under 26 with disabilities, aimed at preparing attendees for their transition into adulthood. Students serve as delegates from their communities and are given the opportunity to cultivate their potential leadership, citizenship, and social skills.



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# Celebrating Success



## Celebrating Success

### Meet Gabe



Gabe’s employment journey began when he was in transition services before he turned 21 through Jefferson County Schools. Gabe gained volunteer experience during transition at Einstein’s bagels, the Holiday Inn, the Arc Thrift Store, and a local athletic training business. Gabe also began work on a resume. After Gabe transitioned out after turning 21, Gabe got started with a day program at Stepping Stones. And soon after that Gabe with the help of his family, got connected with DVR. Gabe’s DVR counselor was very personable and met with Gabe and his family at a local coffee shop to learn all about his interest which was in working at a grocery store to then develop his personalized plan to get a job. [Learn more about Gabe](#) and [watch his success story video](#).

### Meet Dusty

After already establishing a career in construction for 13 years, Dusty’s life was turned upside down when he suffered a broken leg. Dusty knew his career in construction and climbing ladders was over but didn’t realize the impact his injury would have on his life. As a result of the injury, Dusty became addicted to pain medication and ended up with a felony on his record because of it. Having no job, a slowly healing broken leg and now being addicted to drugs, Dusty also ended up suffering from depression and was homeless. There were days when Dusty contemplated whether he wanted to wake up the next morning and he had to figure out how to make that not happen. [Learn more about Dusty’s employment journey](#) and [watch his success story video](#) or [this short snippet of how “employment changes everything”](#).

### Meet Ty



Hello my name is Ty and I’m a person with disabilities, I grew up in the mental health system and was told I was going to spend the rest of my life behind bars. I had very little hope for the future and my dream of becoming independent. However, DVR has helped me move to my dream, first helping me get an associates and then a bachelor degree and then helping me find a job! They continue to support me in realizing my dream. Today, I have my first full time job, they help me with everything extra I needed with school and making sure I was prepared for work, they help me with benefits counseling and job coaching. I firmly believe if they can help me then anyone can pursue their goal of independence with the right support. [Watch Ty’s success story video](#).