



Colorado State Rehabilitation Council's

# 2022-2023 Annual Report









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

**The Division  
of Vocational  
Rehabilitation**

December 2023

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Part

01

Letters to the Governor  
& Colorado Stakeholders

## Dear Stakeholders and Partners,

DVR embraces new opportunities that empower 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.

We believe that anyone with a disability who wants to work, can work, regardless of the type or severity of their disability. We want to change our culture so that everyone shares this belief. We also believe in equity, diversity, inclusion and access. We 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.

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.

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:

- › **15,745** unique individuals received services from DVR, totalling 16,574 cases
- › **3,391** individuals received pre-employment transition services, surpassing DVR's goal of 3,250
- › The people served by DVR achieved **1,875** successful employment outcomes at an average hourly wage of **\$18.73**
- › **195** 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 4 Disciplines of Execution (4DX) goal was focused on increasing the percentage of individuals we serve who sign an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). This goal relates to our agency's priority of improving our customer service, both internally and externally, and we ended the year with **54.8%** of the individuals who apply for services signing an IPE up from **49.5%** in the previous year.

## 01 Letters to the Governor & Colorado Stakeholders

### Other Successes:

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**Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management (VRTAC-QM):** DVR has been working with the VRTAC-QM. We finalized a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) in December 2022, which will help guide our strategic planning process. The focus of DVR's technical assistance is on the fiscal management of our VR grant. DVR will work with the VRTAC-QM over the next few years to develop or improve policies, procedures, and processes to better manage our VR dollars. Our goal is to develop process improvements that empower our staff and enable DVR to fully utilize available dollars in allowable ways and to produce accurate reporting. Less than a year into our technical assistance and DVR is already in the process of modifying the quarterly authorization process and eliminating the regional budgets in Aware. Additionally, VRTAC-QM provided a presentation on fiscal basics to all DVR staff.

**Disability Innovation Fund Grant (DIF Grant):** DVR received notification in September 2023 that we have been awarded the Disability Innovation Fund grant for the amount requested in our application: \$14,116,234.89. This five-year grant provides Colorado with an opportunity to develop a seamless model of collaborative services to youth with disabilities leading to Competitive Integrated Employment. The model demonstration project we proposed will: (1) Provide opportunities for secondary education, vocational rehabilitation, and local community partners to receive technical assistance and guidance to discover and collaborate with their community resources for students to achieve successful Post-School Outcomes. (2) Expand the availability of and access to vocational services with a grant-funded dedicated DVR Counselor housed full time in select local school districts. (3) Provide training directly to family members of students with disabilities in the district or Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) to provide them with vital tools to support students' successful achievement of Post-School Outcomes. (4) Implement a dynamic website geared specifically towards the employment and post-secondary needs of students with disabilities and their families.

**SSA Interventional Cooperative Agreement Program (ICAP):** DVR submitted an application in July 2023 to participate in the ICAP and our award was announced in September. This program promotes self-sufficiency by helping people enter, stay in, or return to the labor force, including youth; and assisting claimants in underserved communities apply for or appeal decisions on claims for Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income benefits.

**Disability Program Navigator Project (DPN):** Colorado is the only state implementing the Navigator Program through collaborative contracts with our Workforce Centers. The DPN is a contracted program between DVR and Workforce Centers, to staff a Navigator within the Workforce Center who is responsible for cross-system alignment, service navigation and braiding; as well as increasing co-enrollment opportunities. In its second year the DPN was located in all but two Workforce Areas across Colorado. As a result of this program DVR increased co-enrollments from 30 to 114. Watch [this short video](#) on collaboration success between a local Navigator and a VR Counselor.

**“DVR received notification in September 2023 that we have been awarded the Disability Innovation Fund grant for the amount requested in our application: \$14,116,234.89.”**

## 01 Letters to the Governor & Colorado Stakeholders

**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. We also have an Equity Task Force in our Division that will make recommendations to senior leadership on EDI for DVR. 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.

- › **Spanish Translation:** We have completed a project to translate many of our key documents for the people we serve.
- › **GoodMaps:** We are proud to announce that we have gone live with a new application that will help those who are blind or have low vision effectively and independently navigate our Denver Metro Field Office.
- › **Aira:** This year the State of Colorado implemented Aira which is a visual interpretation service for individuals experiencing vision loss. This service allows Coloradans with vision loss to have a visual interpreter at the push of a button to help with navigational and tasks that require visual assistance.

**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.

- › **Elimination Of Subminimum Wage Employment:** Colorado is proud to say that all individuals working in our state are working real jobs for real pay. There are no longer any individuals earning subminimum wage in Colorado. The two final entities that hold subminimum wage certificates will allow those certificates to expire.
- › **National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network (NEON) Grant:** Colorado was selected as one of eleven states to receive a NEON grant. This grant is focused on increasing benefits counseling in Colorado, as a gateway to increasing competitive integrated employment for people with disabilities. The network partners of NEON have participated in focus groups to develop messaging about how benefits counseling can help individuals with disabilities work and keep benefits. Three goals/outcomes have been established: (1) Develop and disseminate simple and understandable messaging about Benefits Planning. (2) Establish a research question to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of Benefits Planning services. (3) Develop a statewide plan to increase awareness of Benefits Planning for: business, families, people with disabilities, state agencies, service providers, schools.

**“Colorado is proud to say that all individuals working in our state are working real jobs for real pay.”**

## 01 Letters to the Governor & Colorado Stakeholders

**VR Trainers Community of Practice:** The Professional Learning and Development Unit within DVR is actively involved in facilitating an ongoing VR Trainers Community of Practice. In this group, trainers from multiple states share best practices for policy interpretation, training new hires, and training in remote settings. It has been a great opportunity to share resources with other states in our region, and brainstorm with trainers who share our same concerns and interests.

### Addressing Human Resource Needs

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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:

**Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP):** Our Business Relations Unit is working closely with Colorado's new RAP to ensure that people with disabilities have equal opportunities to participate in apprenticeships and that employers recognize the valuable talent that people with disabilities can provide in apprenticeship programs.

**Skills-Based Hiring:** DVR's Business Relations Unit continues to be a state leader in the provision of Skills-Based Hiring services to business partners statewide, including collaboration on professional development and initiatives with the Markle Foundation (Skillful) and with Skills-Based Hiring professionals across the State. DVR exceeded its goal to increase the number of skills-based hiring trainings by providing 195 trainings as of June 2023.

**New positions:** DVR requested and received two positions to support Disability Employment First Collaboration of State agencies with the goal of working across state agencies to ensure government programs and policies support employment for all Coloradans with disabilities who want to work.

**Staffing:** 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.

**Retention and Recruitment:** DVR has identified seven strategies to increase staff retention and recruitment: (1) An interdisciplinary team approach, which allows for career advancement and supports a career pathway model. (2) Non-competitive growth opportunities, which allow for classification reallocations once a specific criteria is reached. (3) Position description reviews, to ensure that all staff are working within the correct classification. (4) A structured approach to offer pay differentials, when staff take additional roles above their current classification. (5) Career marketing materials advertising hiring bonuses, hybrid work, and growth opportunities. (6) Research opportunities to explore the possibility of a 32 hour work week. (7) A leadership program to prepare staff for promotional opportunities.

**"The VR Trainers Community of Practice has been a great opportunity to share resources with other states in our region, and brainstorm with trainers who share our same concerns and interests."**

## 01 Letters to the Governor & Colorado Stakeholders

### Upcoming Strategies:

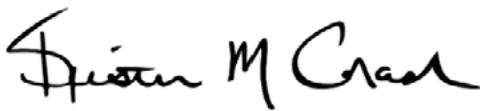
**2024 Four Disciplines of Execution Goal (4DX):** DVR's new 4DX goal is focused on service to our customers, internal and external, and how each unit and staff person can delight our customers. The 2024 Wildly Important Goal (WIG), which began August 1, 2023, is to increase customer satisfaction from 84.6% to 87.6% by July 31, 2024.

**Referrals Process Improvement:** The DVR referral process varies statewide, can be cumbersome to staff, and confusing to the people we serve and our partners. DVR set a goal to develop a statewide referral process that will reduce the burden on staff and improve the customer experience for the people we serve. DVR received a grant to develop an online request for service that connects with DVR's case management system. Testing has been ongoing, and we are expecting to go live in Fall 2023.

**2023 National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM):** 2023's NDEAM theme is Advancing Access and Equity. In October, CDLE and DVR challenged employers to commit to hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities by recognizing that this untapped talent pool is key to achieving an equitable, diverse, inclusive and accessible (EDIA) workplace. Key NDEAM events/activities include: Lunch and Learns, DVR Awards Program roll out, job fairs, the DVR Employer Challenge: Conquering your DEIA Journey, World Mental Health Day, and more!

**Equitable Transition Models Demonstration Grant Project (ETM):** The ETM grant will provide comprehensive, coordinated services to enable low-income youth and young adults with disabilities, ages 14 to 24, to successfully transition to employment. The Workforce Development Program within CDLE is applying for this grant and DVR is partnering with them.

Regards,



Kristin Corash

Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation



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

By way of unanimous agreement, 2023 has been a year of consistent success, as Colorado's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Colorado's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) have demonstrated an unrelenting commitment to building an inclusive workforce in the state of Colorado.

The focus of this year has been the strong promotion of accountability through encouraging participation from all members of the SRC, and with the policy and the executive committees at the forefront of the effort, the SRC was able to formalize a process for delivering policy recommendations to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation that allowed for the elicitation status report inquiries from the SRC. To this end, the Executive Committee has taken the lead on ensuring that members are well prepared to contribute to the work of the Colorado State Rehabilitation Council. Over the course of 2023, the Executive Committee continues to put forth effort to ensure that leadership transitions and the onboarding of new members are as seamless as possible through the creation of a specialized task force.

With support of the Executive Committee, the SRC was able to implement meeting expectations and procedures in an effort to build a more cohesive council in the hopes of building a more collaborative relationship with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The meeting expectations additionally created a platform for all members to have a voice on the council.

Throughout this last year, the Customer Satisfaction Committee consolidated and analyzed the results from the customer satisfaction survey results collected in 2022 to guide their policy recommendations for the year. In an effort to help provide further protection to the disabled community, the Customer Satisfaction committee delivered policy recommendations that the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation vet prospective vendors more thoroughly through federal background checks.

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 conscientiously to perfect outreach in rural areas through the creation of a task force to promote the services of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Due to SRC funding, two members had the opportunity to travel to Columbus, Ohio for the annual APSE conference in June.

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, M.P.A.

Chair, Colorado State Rehabilitation Council



Part

# 02

**DVR & SRC Leadership**

# DVR & SRC Leadership and Contact Information

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

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)  
[dvr.colorado.gov](http://dvr.colorado.gov)

### Executive Leadership Team:

**Kristin Corash**  
Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

**Stacy Evans**  
Assistant Director, Field Services

**Augusta Klimek**  
Assistant Director, Administration

### State Rehabilitation Council Officers:

**Timothy Postlewaite**  
Chair  
[t.writer90@gmail.com](mailto:t.writer90@gmail.com)

**Sherrell Bethel**  
Vice Chair  
[sbethel@peakparent.org](mailto:sbethel@peakparent.org)

**John Bailey**  
[John.Bailey@wellpower.org](mailto:John.Bailey@wellpower.org)



Part

# 03

## State Rehabilitation Council

# State Rehabilitation Council

## State Rehabilitation Council Vision Statement

The Colorado State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) 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.

## 03 State Rehabilitation Council

### 2021 SRC Members and Membership Categories

Name	Status		Officers during SFY23	Membership type
Bobbie Rosa	Active	Voting member		Southern Ute 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
Jennifer Penhale	Active	Voting Member		Colorado Development Disabilities Council
Joelle Brouner	Former	Voting member during SFY23		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
Mark Kollasch	Former	Voting member during SFY23	Chair Elect; Co-chair Policy Committee	Client Assistance Program
Naomi Gonzales	Former	Voting member during SFY23		Business, Industry, & Labor
Ricky Wade	Former	Non-voting member during SFY23		Qualified Rehabilitation Counselor
Michael Bolarinwa	Active	Non-voting		Qualified Rehabilitation Counselor
Shantelle Rockman	Former	Voting member during SFY23	Chair Employment First Committee	Community Rehabilitation Program
Sheila Benintendi	Active	Voting Member		Retired Social Worker
Sherrell Bethel	Active	Voting member	Vice Chair; Chair Customer Satisfaction Committee	Parent Training & Information Center
Timothy Postlewaite	Active	Voting member	Chair; Co-chair Policy Committee	Client Assistance Program
Yolanda Webb	Active	Voting member		Business, Industry, & Labor

Gray highlight = Former Member

# Standing Committees

## Executive Committee

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**High performing boards rubric:** Last year, The Executive Committee dedicated time and effort to researching and creating evaluation tools for the State Rehabilitation Council. Developing these rubrics focuses on engaging SRC members while 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.

This year, we began with implementing the rubrics to members and each committee to evaluate and support the work for the year. As with any new process, we experienced a few barriers. One of those barriers was that the format we were using was not an accessible one, and that didn't allow for all members to participate. Our goal for the next year is to move forward with the accessible version and a better process for disbursement to ensure the rubric meets its intended purpose.

**Task Force Project:** To lessen the time for new members or new chairs to feel comfortable enough with their roles to be fully active and engaged, the Executive Committee set a goal to begin working on a leadership transition guide and a more in-depth onboarding process for new SRC members.

We are creating a task force of about 4-5 members to help make the leadership guide and onboarding process. This task force is open to any current SRC member interested in supporting this endeavor. We anticipate completion of this project by June 2024.

**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 for 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.

This year, we requested that potential members attend a full council meeting and pick one or two committee meetings to attend before their appointment. This allowed the Executive Committee to see how the potential members engage and share ideas in discussions and let the potential members get a glimpse of what takes place during the meetings and ask questions or get clarification on becoming a member.

With full support from the SRC, the executive committee successfully recommended that the position reserved for a Behavioral Health Planning and Advisory Council (BHPAC) member be opened up to an individual in the broader behavioral health community. In the past, recruiting a BHPAC member has been difficult due to the other commitments that these members have. We broadened the qualifications to ensure that someone on the Council represents behavioral health. We were able to fill this position this year because of this change.



## Standing Committees

### Executive Committee (continued)

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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 2023, Colorado APSE had the privilege of hosting the National APSE conference in Columbus Ohio. The conference housed over 500 participants. Thanks to SRC funding, two SRC members were able to attend: Shantelle Rockman and Timothy Postlewaite.



# Standing Committees

## Employment First Committee

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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 supports 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.

### 2022-2023 Employment First Committee Work Summary:

#### Accomplishments

- › Created a task force to determine the need of holding Town Hall meetings in rural areas to promote DVR services and how to access these services.
- › 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
- › EFAP established recruitment efforts and held one new recruitment training

#### 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.

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#### Current Members:

Shantelle Rockman-Chair  
John Bailey  
Josh Davies  
Katie Oliver  
Kristin Corash  
Yolanda Webb

# Standing Committees

## Customer Satisfaction and Program Evaluation Committee

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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.

### 2023 Customer Satisfaction and Program Evaluation Committee Work Summary:

#### Customer Satisfaction Survey

The 2022 Customer Satisfaction Survey was completed by 1,382 people. The respondents of this survey were a mix of disabilities, races, work statuses, and open and closed DVR cases from across the state. This year, our committee was able to compare the survey results we've received over the last three years.

Our survey respondents were asked to rate their agreement on 12 statements about their interactions with DVR. Responders most often agreed that: "The DVR counselor honored me with respect to my unique cultural identity" (87%) and "The counselor took my abilities and capabilities into account as we developed my employment goal" (87%). The lowest rating was 63% agreement with the items: "The counselor helped me identify accommodation solutions I need at my job" and "I got the services I want." The biggest difference in the past three years was a 21% drop: "The counselor treated me with respect" (69%).

Here are a few suggestions from respondents for improving the DVR process: communication, general procedures, counselor training, timeliness, and staff turnover. The counselor appears to be the difference between respondents who had a positive experience vs. a negative experience with DVR. The respondents that had a positive experience had the opportunity to connect with their counselors and used words or phrases like knowledgeable, responsive, diligent, helpful, listened well, respectful, and communicated clearly. The respondents who had a negative experience used words or phrases like stagnant, needing more one-on-one with my counselor, unsupported, passed off to multiple counselors, calls not returned, and rude.

This committee has decided not to distribute a Customer Satisfaction Survey for 2023 and instead focus on and make recommendations based on the 2022 survey results.

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### Current Members:

Sherrell Bethel -  
Chair

Brenda Mosby

Joelle Brouner thru  
4/1/2023

John Bailey

Lloyd Lewis

Michael Bolarinwa-  
Appointed 8/1/2023

Bobbi Rosa-  
Appointed 8/1/2023

# Standing Committees

## Customer Satisfaction and Program Evaluation Committee (continued)

### Increase Background Checks for DVR Vendors Recommendation

This year, this committee recommended that DVR implement further background checks on their vendors. Here is the introduction to the recommendation letter.

“People with disabilities are at a higher risk of violence and abuse than people without disabilities. According to The Bureau of Justice Statistics of the U.S. Department of Justice, The rate of violent victimization against persons with disabilities was nearly four times the rate for persons without disabilities, and people with disabilities are less likely to report these crimes. The Customer Satisfaction Committee strongly believes that federal and national background checks must be implemented for vendors to add extra protection and safety for people with disabilities utilizing DVR’s services. Federal and National background checks will allow DVR to look into potential and current vendors that have conducted business in multiple states and to ensure that vendors aren’t committing crimes and jumping from state to state to avoid detection.”

This committee made five initial requests listed below:

1. What are the policies and procedures individuals served by DVR receive on how to report a crime or abuse against them?
2. What are the policies and procedures DVR staff receive on what to do if an individual served by DVR reports a crime or abuse by a DVR staff, vendor, or other person working with the individual?
3. Who controls what types of background checks vendors go through?
4. What are the barriers that DVR would have to navigate to move forward with implementing federal background checks for all vendors?
5. How can the SRC support DVR in implementing federal background checks?

DVR has communicated with this committee and has made an initial response. Further discussion around this recommendation is needed and in progress.



# Standing Committees

## Planning, Policy, and Education Committee

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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.

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

#### Policy Review

In 2022-2023, 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.

The central role of the policy committee over the last year has been to help the full SRC focus and redefine its core values in an effort to make the council a more successful partner to the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. In the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year, the policy committee made recommendations to streamline meeting procedures in an effort to keep the full SRC meetings focused on the agenda. The policy committee was also a key player in making recommendations to the full SRC when it comes to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion trainings. With the policy committee’s support and input, new

representation was added to the full council and Ute Mountain tribal representation rejoined the council. The final amendments to the vision and mission statements were executed and put forth to the entire council by the policy committee, leading to the approval of both items.

#### 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 the Vendor Unit, the Business Relations Unit, Youth and Transitions, and the Employment First Advisory Partnership. The Policy Committee will continue to seek feedback from SRC members on the areas of interest they’d like for future educational topics.

#### 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. This year, the Policy underwent a number of transitions. The committee went from co-chairs to a single chair. The SRC will consider going back to co-chairs for the upcoming year in order to ensure that the Policy Committee can meet their outlined goals.

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### Current Members:

Timothy Postlewaite  
- Chair

Michael Bolarinwa -  
Appointed 8/1/2023

Jennifer Mendenhall

Lisa Taylor

Jennifer Penhale -  
Appointed 8/1/2023



Part

04

DVR By the Numbers

## DVR By the Numbers

Indicator	SFY21/PY20	SFY22/PY21	SFY23/PY22
Total Individuals Served (both VR and YP)	15,230	15,841	16,574
VR Individuals Served	12,776	12,884	12,986
Potentially Eligible (YP) Individuals Served	2,454	2,997	3,588
Successful Employment Outcomes (VR)	1,515	1,855	1,875
Rehabilitation Rate (VR)*	47.87%	52.46%	52.80%
Average Wages From Employment outcomes (VR)	\$16.65	\$17.53	\$18.73
New Applications (VR)	4,776	5,180	5,513

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

Acronyms:

Vocational Rehabilitation = (VR)

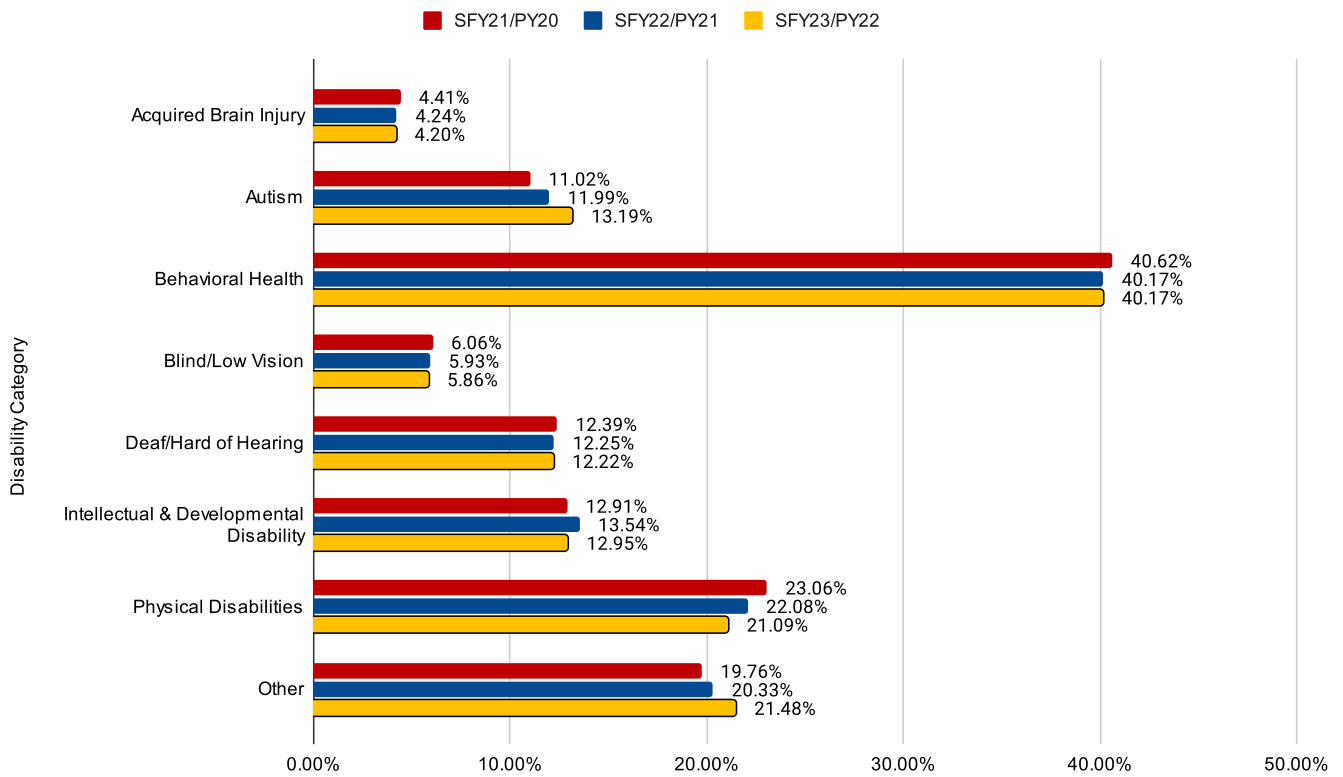
Potential Eligible Student = (YP)

State Fiscal Year = (SFY)

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act = (WIOA)

WIOA Program Year = (PY)

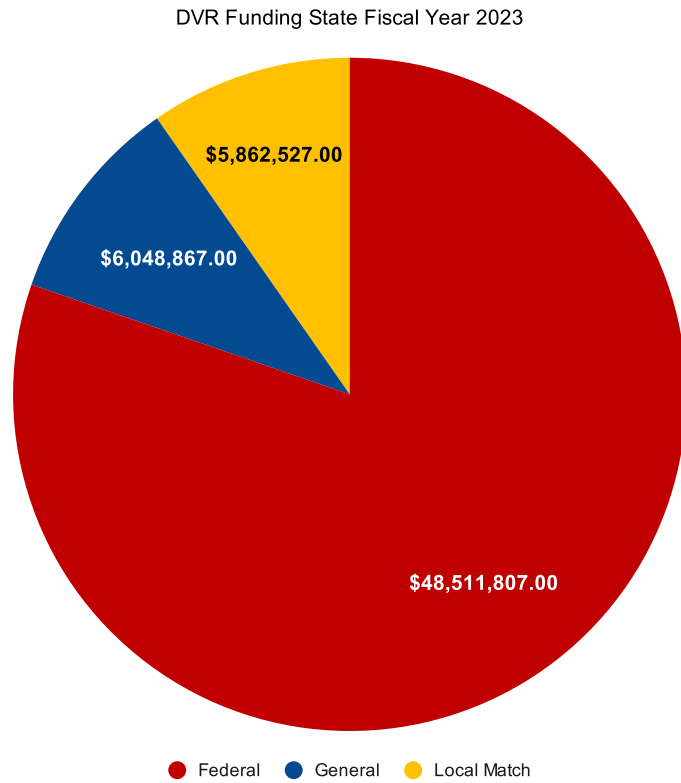
### Disability Category



Disability Category	SFY21/PY20	SFY22/PY21	SFY23/PY22
Acquired Brain Injury	4.41%	4.24%	4.20%
Autism	11.02%	11.99%	13.19%
Behavioral Health	40.62%	40.17%	40.17%
Blind/Low Vision	6.06%	5.93%	5.86%
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	12.39%	12.25%	12.22%
Intellectual & Developmental Disability	12.91%	13.54%	12.95%
Physical Disabilities	23.06%	22.08%	21.09%
Other	19.76%	20.33%	21.48%

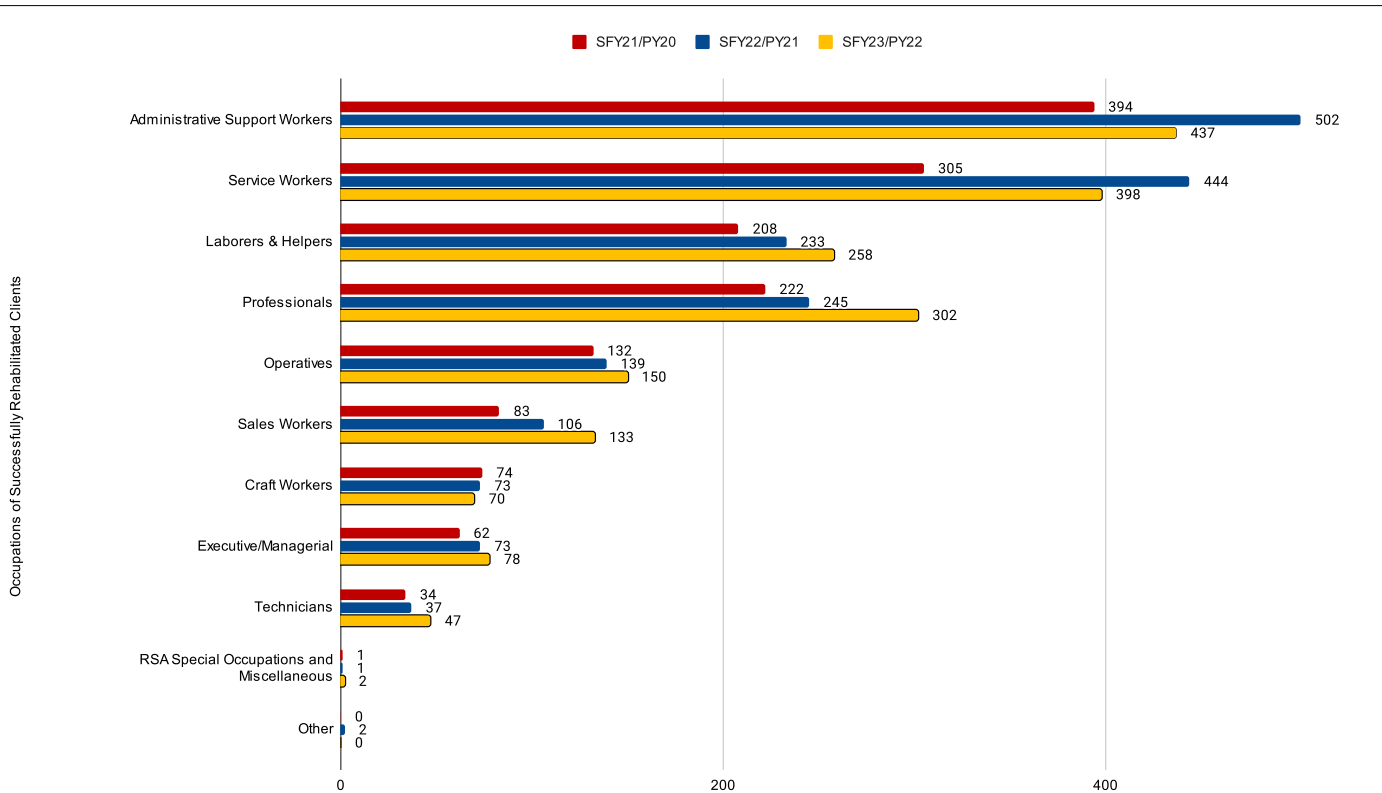


### DVR Funding



DVR Funding	Fiscal Year 2023
Federal	\$48,511,807.00
General	\$6,048,867.00
Local Match	\$5,862,527.00
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$60,423,201.00</b>

### Occupations of Successfully Rehabilitated Clients



Occupations of Successfully Rehabilitated Clients	SFY21/PY20	SFY22/PY21	SFY23/PY22
Administrative Support Workers	394	502	437
Service Workers	305	444	398
Laborers & Helpers	208	233	258
Professionals	222	245	302
Operatives	132	139	150
Sales Workers	83	106	133
Craft Workers	74	73	70
Executive/Managerial	62	73	78
Technicians	34	37	47
RSA Special Occupations and Miscellaneous	1	1	2
Other	0	2	0

### Top 12 Employers - SFY23/PY22

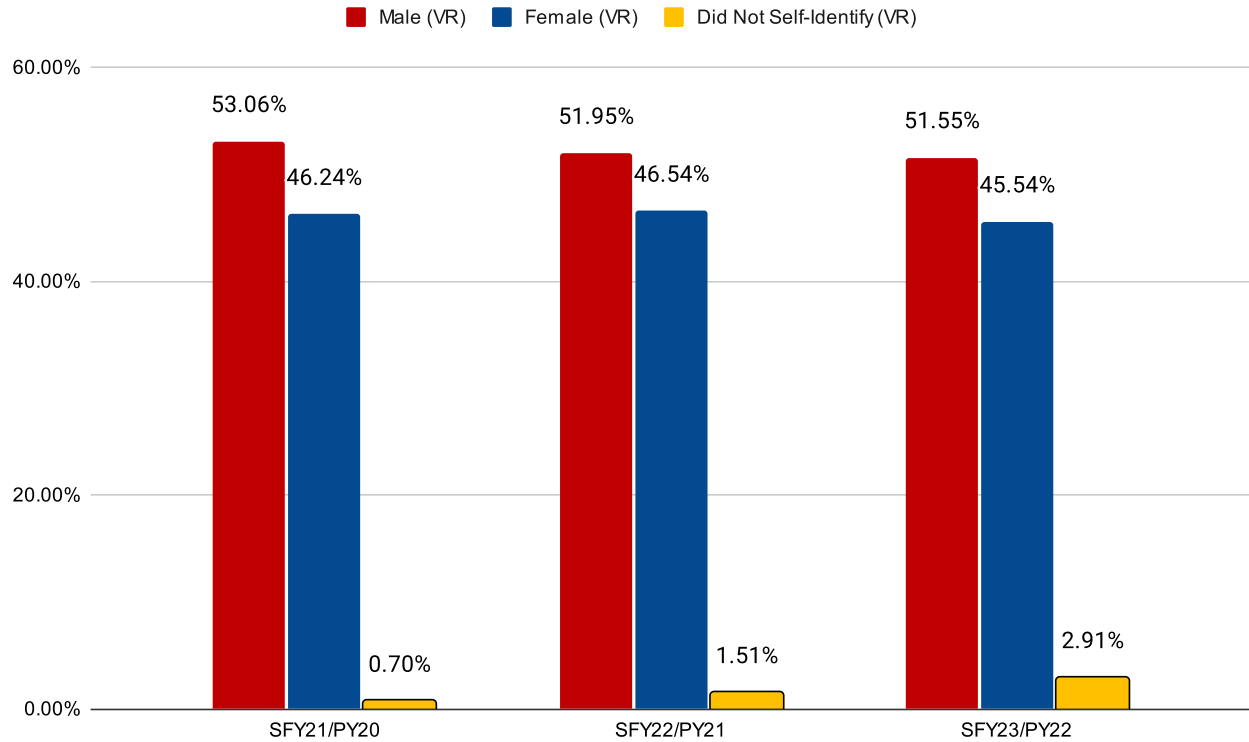


Top 12 Employers - SFY23/PY22	
Dillon Companies Inc	
Wal Mart Associates Inc	
ARC of the Pikes Peak Region	
Safeway Stores Inc Admin Office	
Home Depot USA Inc	
Amazon Com Services Inc	
Goodwill Industries of Denver	
Colorado Community College System (CCCS)	
University Colorado Hospital Auth	
Jefferson County Public School R1	
Walgreen Company	
Lowes Home Center LLC	



## 04 DVR By the Numbers

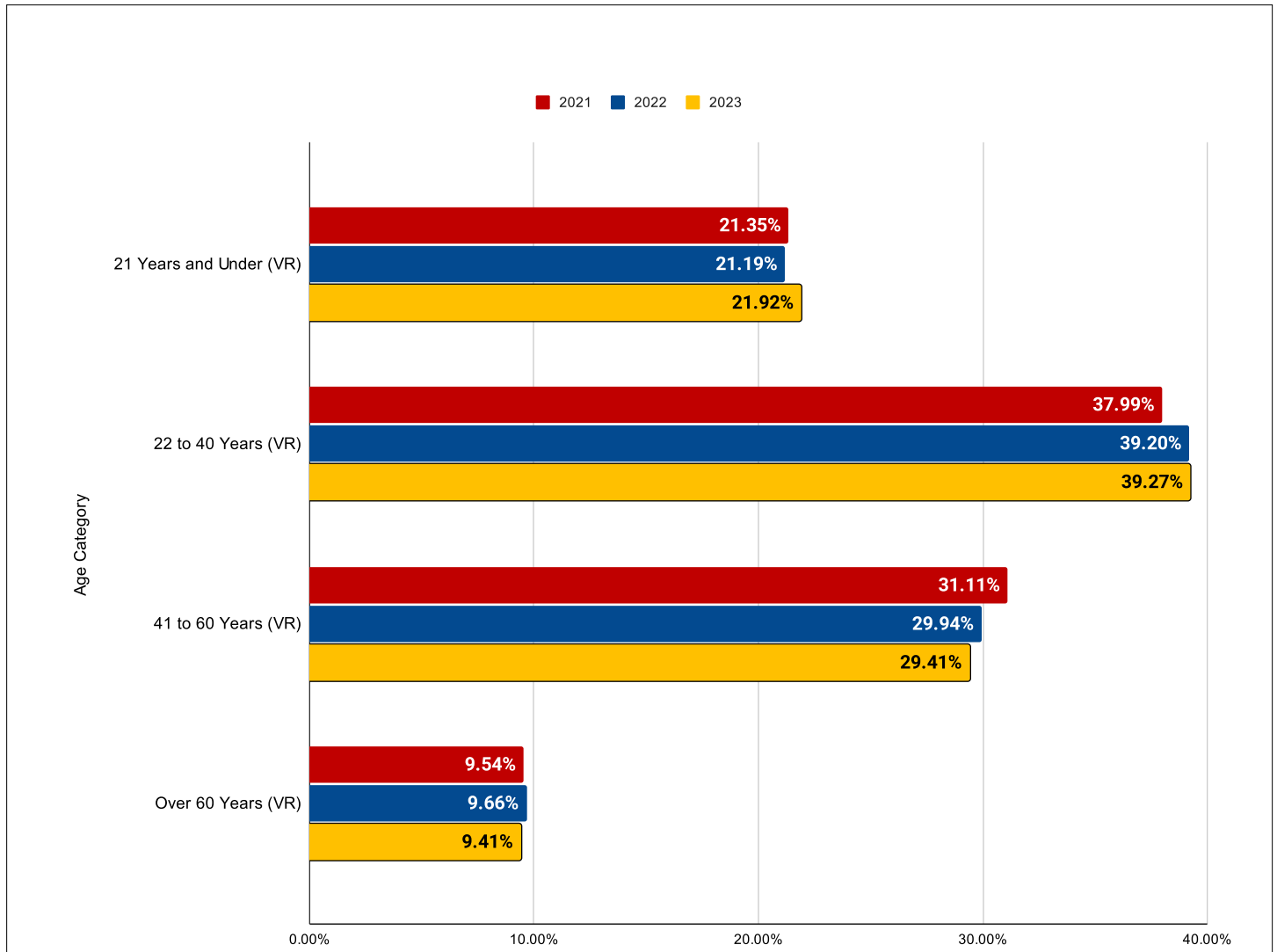
### Gender



Gender	SFY21/ PY20	SFY22/ PY21	SFY23/ PY22
Male (VR)	53.06%	51.95%	51.55%
Female (VR)	46.24%	46.54%	45.54%
Did Not Self-Identify (VR)	0.70%	1.51%	2.91%

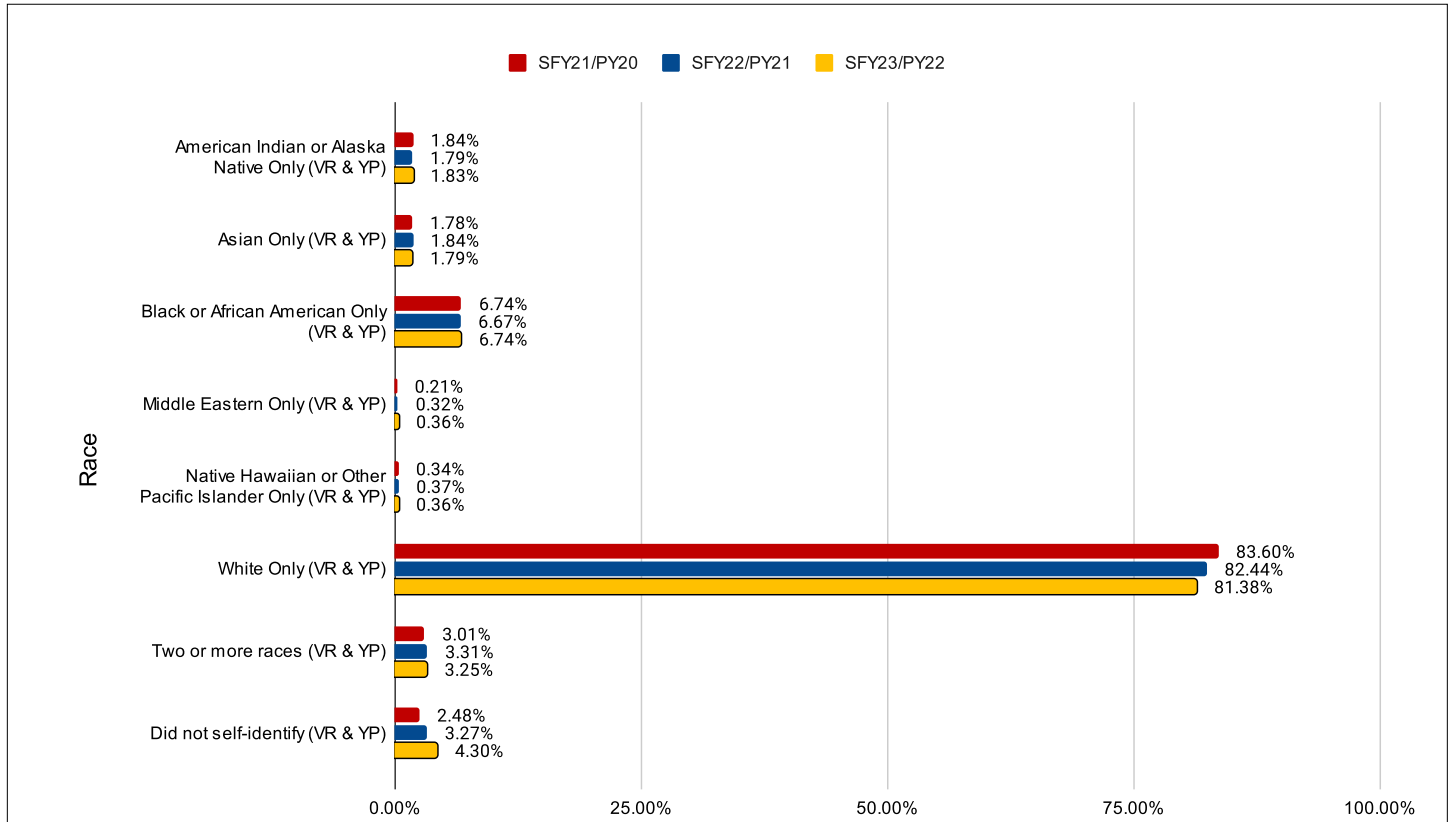
## 04 DVR By the Numbers

### Age Category



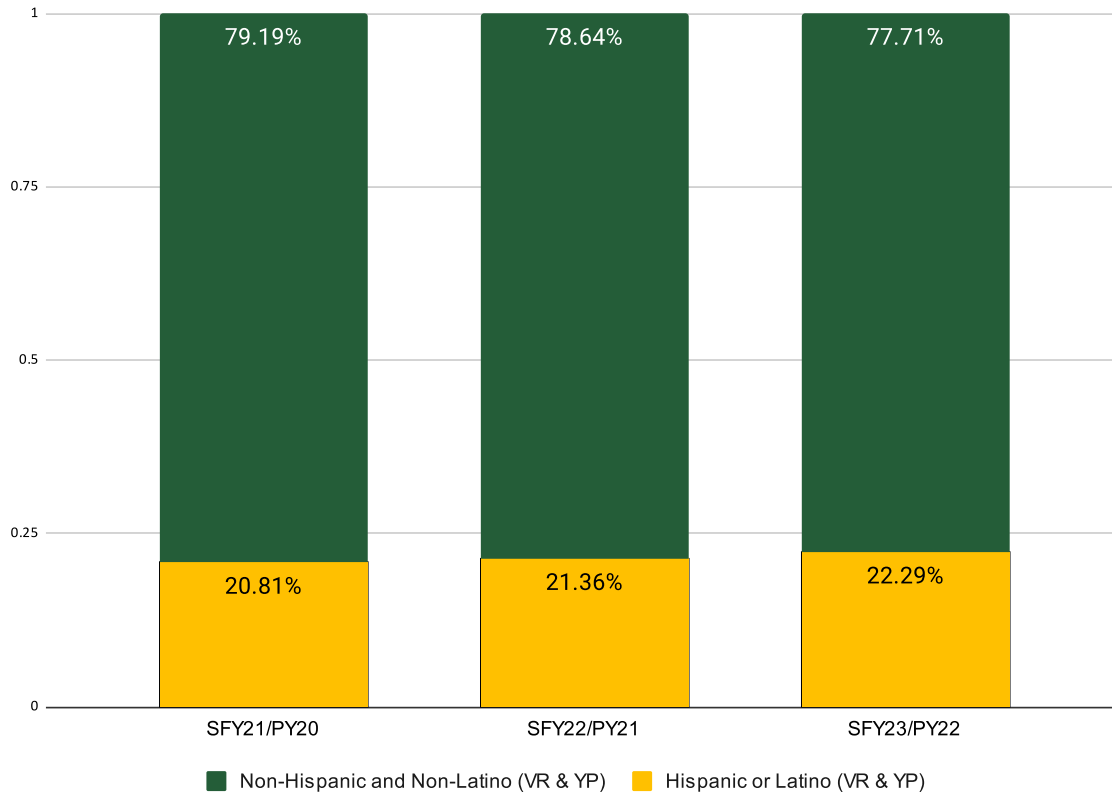
Age Category	2021	2022	2023
21 Years and Under (VR)	21.35%	21.19%	21.92%
22 to 40 Years (VR)	37.99%	39.20%	39.27%
41 to 60 Years (VR)	31.11%	29.94%	29.41%
Over 60 Years (VR)	9.54%	9.66%	9.41%

### Racial Identities of People Served



Race	SFY21/ PY20	SFY22/ PY21	SFY23/ PY22
American Indian or Alaska Native Only (VR & YP)	1.84%	1.79%	1.83%
Asian Only (VR & YP)	1.78%	1.84%	1.79%
Black or African American Only (VR & YP)	6.74%	6.67%	6.74%
Middle Eastern Only (VR & YP)	0.21%	0.32%	0.36%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Only (VR & YP)	0.34%	0.37%	0.36%
White Only (VR & YP)	83.60%	82.44%	81.38%
Two or more races (VR & YP)	3.01%	3.31%	3.25%
Did not self-identify (VR & YP)	2.48%	3.27%	4.30%

### Ethnicities of People Served



Ethnicity	SFY21/ PY20	SFY22/ PY21	SFY23/ PY22
Hispanic or Latino (VR & YP)	20.81%	21.36%	22.29%
Non-Hispanic and Non-Latino (VR & YP)	79.19%	78.64%	77.71%

## 04 DVR By the Numbers

### Successful Closures

Successful Closures	SFY21/PY20	SFY22/PY21	SFY23/PY22
Working at Plan	43.43%	39.19%	59.68%
Not Working at Plan	56.57%	60.81%	40.32%

### Earnings For Those Working at Plan

Earning For Those Working At Plan	At Plan	At Closure	% Change
Ave Hourly Wage (VR)	\$18.51	\$20.22	9.21%
Ave Hours Worked Per Week (VR)	28.33	30.43	7.41%
Estimated Total Earnings (VR)	\$21.94MM	\$25.02MM	14.04%
Average Weekly Salary (VR)	\$558.01	\$636.34	14.04%
Estimated Average Annual Salary (VR)	\$29,017	\$33,090	14.04%

### Earnings For Those Not Working at Plan

Earning At Close For Those NOT Working At Plan	SFY21/PY20	SFY22/PY21	SFY23/PY22
Ave Hourly Wage (VR)	\$15.13	\$16.09	\$17.72
Ave Hours Worked Per Week (VR)	27.4	26.01	26.25
Estimated Total Earnings (VR)	\$19.33MM	\$25.63MM	\$28.47MM
Average Weekly Salary (VR)	\$433.75	\$436.94	\$489.20
Estimated Average Annual Salary (VR)	\$22,555	\$22,721	\$25,439



**Outcomes by Disability Category Stats - SFY23/PY22**

Disability Category	Total Yearly Earnings	Ave Weekly Salary	Ave Annual Salary
Acquired Brain Injury	\$1.86MM	\$551.72	\$28,689
Autism	\$4.34MM	\$361.48	\$18,797
Behavioral Health	\$15.80MM	\$519.34	\$27,006
Blind/Low Vision	\$3.21MM	\$657.12	\$34,170
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	\$16.51MM	\$699.17	\$36,357
Intellectual and Developmental Disability	\$4.33MM	\$292.00	\$15,184
Physical Disabilities	\$8.42MM	\$508.94	\$26,465
Other	\$11.45MM	\$513.06	\$26,679

**Outcomes by Racial Identity - SFY23/PY22**

Race	Total Yearly Earnings	Ave Weekly Salary	Ave Annual Salary
American Indian or Alaskan Native only	\$.51MM	\$469.29	\$24,403
Asian only	\$.88MM	\$470.75	\$24,479
Black or African American only	\$3.56MM	\$547.30	\$28,460
Middle Eastern or Arab only	\$.25MM	\$677.36	\$35,223
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander only	\$.25MM	\$612.70	\$31,860
White only	\$44.61MM	\$547.08	\$28,448
Two or More Races	\$1.34MM	\$477.05	\$24,806
Did not self-identify	\$2.08MM	\$715.38	\$37,200

## 04 DVR By the Numbers

### Outcomes by Ethnicity - SFY23/PY22

Ethnicity	Total Yearly Earnings	Ave Weekly Salary	Ave Annual Salary
Hispanic or Latino	\$10.37MM	\$571.42	\$29,714
Non-Hispanic and Non-Latino	\$43.11MM	\$543.30	\$28,251

### Outcomes by DVR Service Region - SFY23/PY22

Region	Total Yearly Earnings	Ave Weekly Salary	Ave Annual Salary
BLVS Region (Statewide)	\$2.42MM	\$715.74	\$37,219
REGION 1 (Southern/Eastern Colorado)	\$7.90MM	\$503.05	\$26,159
REGION 2 (Denver Metro)	\$18.90MM	\$566.89	\$29,478
REGION 3 (Northern Colorado)	\$16.10MM	\$545.92	\$28,388
REGION 4 (Mountain Resort, Southwestern CO)	\$8.17MM	\$523.78	\$27,237

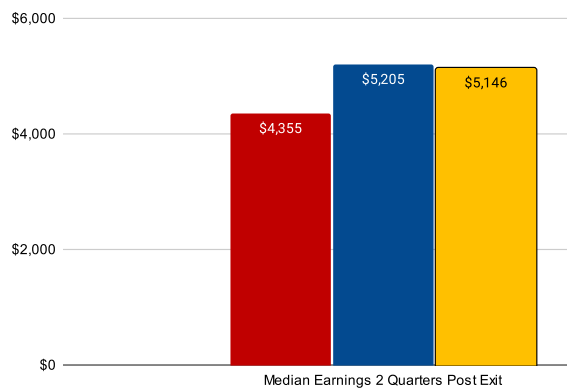
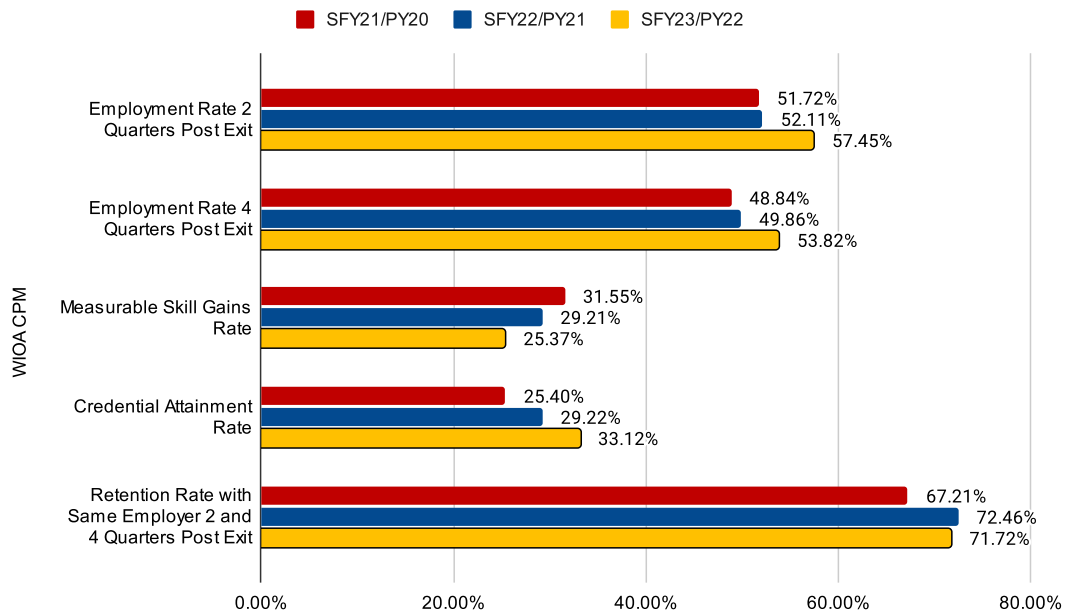
**Outcomes of Individuals Reporting Homelessness - SFY23/PY22**

Identity	Total Yearly Earnings	Ave Weekly Salary	Ave Annual Salary
Did not self-identify			
Is homeless	\$ .97MM	\$622.79	\$32,385
Is not homeless	\$52.51MM	\$547.32	\$28,461

**Outcomes of Individuals Reporting Justice Involvement - SFY23/PY22**

Identity	Total Yearly Earnings	Ave Weekly Salary	Ave Annual Salary
Did not self-identify	\$1.76MM	\$553.77	\$28,796
Has a criminal offense history	\$5.55MM	\$564.76	\$29,367
No criminal offense history	\$46.17MM	\$546.45	\$28,415

## Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Common Performance Measures (WIOA CPM)



WIOA CPM	SFY21/PY20	SFY22/PY21	SFY23/PY22
Employment Rate 2 Quarters Post Exit	51.72%	52.11%	57.45%
Employment Rate 4 Quarters Post Exit	48.84%	49.86%	53.82%
Median Earnings 2 Quarters Post Exit	\$4,355	\$5,205	\$5,146
Measurable Skill Gains Rate	31.55%	29.21%	25.37%
Credential Attainment Rate	25.40%	29.22%	33.12%
Retention Rate with Same Employer 2 and 4 Quarters Post Exit	67.21%	72.46%	71.72%



Part

05

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 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. This goal was achieved.
- › DVR will retain 90% of staff for 24 months or longer by June 30, 2023. DVR continues to experience higher levels of turnover than is ideal and is continuing to focus on improving employee retention.
- › DVR will increase the number of successful closures and the average wages of individuals closed successfully, annually. In State Fiscal Year 2023, DVR also had success with this goal, achieving 1875 successful closures, 20 more than SFY 2022 and an average wage of \$18.64 per hour, which was \$1.16 per hour more than SFY 2022.
- › DVR will meet or exceed negotiated targets for WIOA Common Performance Measures. DVR met or exceeded nearly all of its negotiated targets during the 2022 Performance Year (SFY 2023).

Measure	Actual Performance	Target
Employment in the 2nd Quarter after Exit	57.5%	51.8%
Employment in the 4th Quarter after Exit	53.8%	49.8%
Median Earnings in the 2nd Quarter after Exit	\$5,144	\$4,413
Credential Attainment	33.3%	25.5%
Measurable Skill Gains	24.9%	32.0%

## 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 107 VR Counselors/VR Counselor Interns across the state provide individualized vocational rehabilitation services during this process and assist customers to address employment barriers and realize their career goals.

“DVR's staff is highly committed to excellent customer service and assists individuals with disabilities to obtain vocational success and increased self-sufficiency”

In May of 2022, DVR implemented a Strategic Staffing model that incorporates an interdisciplinary team approach to providing services. Currently, this model is implemented in at least one of DVR's field offices per region. This included implementing a new position, the Initial Engagement and Eligibility Technician. This model has resulted in the last year to increase engagement and rapport between persons we serve and DVR staff, build trust within DVR teams, and decrease the amount of time from application to an Individualized Plan for Employment within offices that participated.

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 multimodal 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.

The Youth Services team expanded to include two new Statewide Trainer/Coordinators for School to Work Initiatives and Pre-ETS/ Employment First respectively. These two new roles are working to 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 are integral for the provision of ongoing support and guidance for DVR staff that collaborate with youth and local education partners. Time was dedicated this year to developing this new system from the ground up.

YSTU in partnership with the Colorado Office of Employment First brought together its first ongoing Family Member Taskforce and facilitated quarterly meetings. The intent and purpose of this Taskforce is to inform YSTU how we can improve upon our existing materials and messaging for better communication and collaboration with family members. The taskforce is composed of 7 family members representing geographic areas, both urban and rural, throughout the state. For a summary of this year's taskforce accomplishments, refer to [this video](#).

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. One way this is being done is through the promotion of re-discovering of local interagency transition teams so a united and strategic effort is being made to move students through their transition continuum by using the framework and tools of [Sequencing of Services](#).

## Project SEARCH

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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 added 3 new sites, including our first site in the hospitality industry. This was made possible with support from the Colorado Office of Employment First and we continue to explore growing these partnerships.

## Youth Services and Transition (continued)

### School to Work Alliance Program

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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 SFY23 there were 39 SWAP contracts covering 68% of Colorado's districts. SWAP served 4,021 youth with disabilities experiencing mild to moderate barriers to employment between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023. Of those youth served, 3,306 received Pre-ETS and 1,553 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 SFY23, SWAP contributed to 401 successful employment outcomes for DVR.



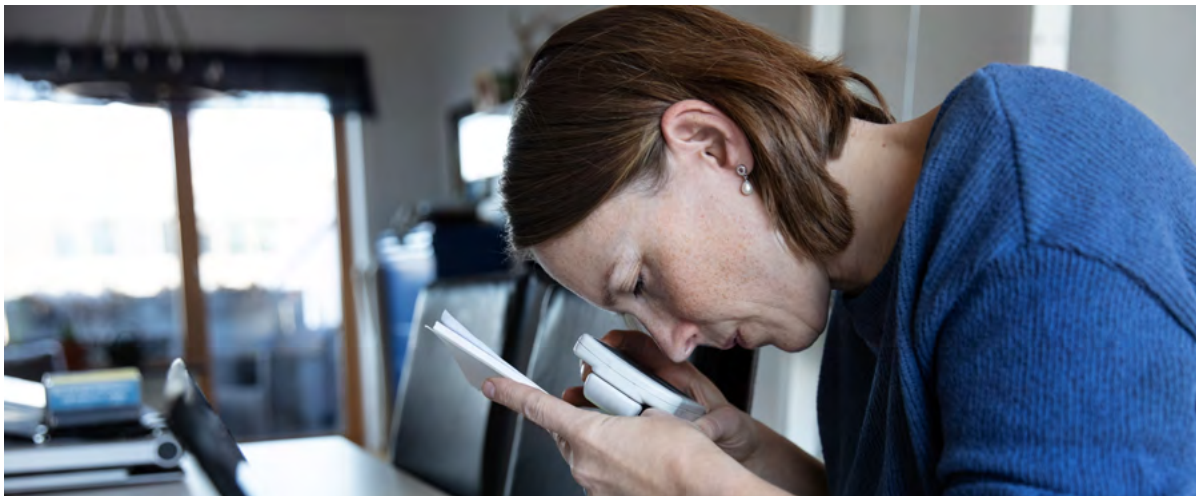
## Blind and Low Vision Services

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.

The Blind and Low Vision Services unit is proud to share that 65 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 \$22.82. 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, BLVS is exploring a change in the current staffing model. We have requested an additional FTE. With this additional FTE, we anticipate hiring an Administrative Assistant who will support the Counselors within the BLVS unit, and redistribute the workload between the Counselors and Rehabilitation Technician.



### Personal Adjustment Training

After completing a pilot project and seeking feedback from a variety of stakeholders, the PAT Center service delivery model changed to that of a hybrid (in person and remote), intensive workshop model. This model has proven to be successful as evidenced by an increase in the numbers served, customer satisfaction, and employment outcomes. Additionally, the PAT unit continues to update the Assistive Technology lab in order to be adaptable with changing and emerging technology. This updated lab will help staff provide more training workshops in the future. The goal is to be able to provide more group training in an effort to serve more individuals and reduce our standby list/wait time. The team will continue to improve this model based on feedback and outcomes.

## 05 DVR Services

### Business Enterprise Program

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The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) continues to rebound from the effects of the pandemic. Notably, there is an increase in gross sales and Blind Operators continue to re-engage in the workforce. The BEP cash fund has also grown over this past year, allowing BEP to increase their annual budget.

The State Licensing Agency (SLA) has submitted two new bids for military contracts. Should the SLA successfully secure these contracts, it will offer two Blind Operators the prospect of earning a sustainable living wage, while significantly increasing the State Licensing Agency's revenue stream.

The SLA continues to engage in active participation with the Colorado Elected Committee (CEC) and update 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.

### Independent Living for Older Individuals who are Blind

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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. This Fall, DVR awarded new contracts to five subrecipients throughout the state.

In an effort to improve access to core services, DVR worked with Mississippi State to create a new funding structure. This new funding structure will be implemented Federal Fiscal Year 2024, and will allow for DVR to reimburse core services at a higher rate than support services. We will continue to monitor this new funding structure closely and continually seek feedback from subrecipients and the people we serve. In addition to changing our funding structure, this past year, DVR worked with Mississippi State to create a procedural manual for our OIB subrecipients. This manual has been shared with sub recipients and training will continue to be provided.

**"In an effort to improve access to core services, DVR worked with Mississippi State to create a new funding structure."**

### Howard Fund

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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 has seen a significant increase in applications and grants awarded. Awards have included the purchase of assistive technology, low vision aids, adaptive equipment, and training. The board continues to explore options to sustain the fund.

# 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 continues to provide both internal and external 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 Supported Employment Unit was able to complete 157 Supported Employment/ Employment First training and technical activities during SFY23.

During FY23 DVR was able to add a permanent position for a Supported Employment Trainer/Coordinator as well as a Supported Employment Program manager. These positions make up the Supported Employment Unit, which is part of the Competitive Integrated Employment Unit.

## Supported Employment Partners & Programs:

### Office of Community Living (OCL), Colorado Department of Healthcare Policy and 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 and OCL partner each year providing training and facilitating opportunities for partnership across agencies and community organizations. DVR and OCL completed 4 Regional 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 has assisted in guiding DVR providers on the qualifications and process of performance-based certification. During FY23, 125 service providers completed the training to meet the minimum qualifications to provide supported employment services.

# Employment First (continued)

## Behavioral Health Administration (BHA)

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BHA 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 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.

BHA 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 & BHA 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. In partnership with the BHA, DVR's Supported Employment Trainer/Coordinator participated in 11 IPS Fidelity reviews.

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. A large area of focus during FY23 was to support employment specialists in adjusting to returning to the community since the restrictions for COVID-19 were lifted. IPS is a community based service which yields best results when providers are out in the community.



# Employment First (continued)

## Self-Employment

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Colorado was recently ranked the second best state in which to launch a business by [Forbes](#), in part due to the high percentage of businesses that succeed. Individuals served by DVR benefit from intensive one-on-one support, ensuring they feel confident and prepared to launch their business successfully.

Over the last year, DVR's Self Employment team's training opportunities have included assisting individuals in transitioning their hobbies into viable careers, debunking misconceptions surrounding self-employment, and fostering collaborative decision-making. One Lead Counselor for Entrepreneurship was able to complete the SBDC's [Leading Edge](#) course, which provided in depth exploration of business plan development. Other counselors have completed The Center on Self Employment's [coursework](#), and virtually attended their [conference](#). The interest in our self-employment program is growing and many new counselors have also begun internal training to support potential entrepreneurs.

Staff and the individuals we serve have raved about the streamlined self-employment program, including the opportunity to present their business concept throughout the approval process. Not only has this presentation provided an outlet for individuals to proudly discuss their business concepts, but staff find the presentations interesting and exciting.

DVR served 249 individuals during the reporting period in our self-employment program, which is an increase of 14.7% over the 217 individuals served during state fiscal year 2022. Of these individuals, 89 entrepreneurs achieved a successful outcome, averaging \$25.19 per hour. DVR supported individuals in exploring business concepts in a variety of markets, including: web designers, writers, holistic health practitioner, photographer, financial planner, plumber, mechanic, artists, woodworkers, farmers, and interpreters.



## 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 other workforce development partners 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 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 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 Apprenticeship Colorado, 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 and Business Services Leadership Team with the purpose of cross-system integration and partnership of both Workforce and DVR resources at the state and local levels.

Leading up to and during SFY23, DVR launched the Disability Program Navigator (DPN) program initially with four (4) pilot workforce centers, then expanding to four (4) additional workforce centers, by the end of SFY23. The DPN program is a contracted partnership with Colorado Local Workforce Areas and DVR in order to create a Navigator position in each local workforce area in order to expand services available to person with disabilities by creating a new pattern of service toward increasing program co-enrollment, service and resource braiding; as well as increasing the access and involvement of people with disabilities in Colorado's workforce initiatives. During its first program year, the DPN program resulted in Navigators providing services to 480 unique individuals, with 274 of those individuals referred to DVR from Workforce or from Workforce to DVR; as well as 113 individuals being co-enrolled with DVR and Workforce for service delivery.



## Business Relations and Outreach Services (continued)

The BRU has continued to implement a new strategic priority, which continues to align with the Governor’s priority for expanding skills-based hiring practices, to their service delivery model toward promoting and implementing Skills-Based Hiring Practices with businesses statewide. During SFY23, 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 SFY23, the BRU trained 195 business customers on one of the core competencies of Skills-Based Hiring, surpassing the established annual goal of 190 businesses trained. For SFY24, the BRU has set a goal of training 215 business customers on the Skills-Based Hiring practices statewide.

“..the BRU trained 195 business customers on one of the core competencies of Skills-Based Hiring, surpassing the established annual goal of 190 businesses trained.”

The BRU has established 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 provided services to Departments such as the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE), Department of Corrections (DOC), Office of the Governor, Department of Personnel Administration (DPA), Department of Revenue (DOR), Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), Colorado Department of Public Safety (CDPS), Department of

Regulatory Agencies (DORA), Community College System, Department of Agriculture (DOA), and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE)..

Additionally, the BRU served 4,096 targeted employers with 529 individuals served by DVR having been hired within these businesses throughout the year. The BRU also provided 884 unique training offerings at no cost to these employers, often helping businesses to meet mandatory diversity requirements. The BRU provided 307 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.

**“The Business Relations Unit 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.”**



# 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 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 requirement is the cornerstone of independent living philosophy and ensures that consumers (service recipients) 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.

The top five goals over the last three years have remained constant: Community Based Living; Personal Resource Management; Education/Vocation; Self Advocacy/ Empowerment; and, Self Care. In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2023, Colorado's CIL network served an average of 2,198 consumers per month. The CILs provide five core services: Information and Referral; Independent Living Services Training; Individual and Systems Advocacy; Peer Support; and, transition services. In addition, the Office secured a new federal grant in the amount of \$121,081 called Public Health Workforce Funding.

### The Office works to:

- › Increase the visibility and understanding of the independent living services
- › Develop partnerships between federal and 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)

During SFY 2023, the Office hosted six meetings with Colorado's Administration for Community Living (ACL) partners. These partners include SILC, CILs, the Developmental Disabilities Council, Disability Law Colorado, JFK Partners, Assistive Technology Partners, MindSource, Projects of National Significance, State Unit on Aging, and the ACL Region Administrator.

# Office of Independent Living Services (continued)

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

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SEEKS is a federally funded research project managed by the Office of Independent Living Services. This project is testing an intervention to increase gross income, employment and social participation of people with disabilities. As the project merges from year 4 to year 5, the SEEKS team is happy to inform that SEEKS reached its enrollment goal on April 30 2023 with 190 participants enrolled and a 77% take-up rate.

Our team and stakeholder groups are committed to advancing an accurate message to promote informed choice about expectations around disability benefits and work. The next phase of the project is to continue to serve participants and to collect data. We are excited to share more accomplishments and many lessons learned soon. The SEEKS intervention is testing 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/seeking employment with a trained employment specialist and benefits counseling advocates.

SEEKS' 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.

SEEKS uses a Stakeholder Advisory Team to inform research and implementation activities. Members include individuals with lived experience with disability and representatives from federal and state agencies. Some activities and accomplishments related to the overall progress in implementing the SEEKS project during FFY 2023 are highlighted below:

- › Individuals from the Black, Native American, and Hispanic communities are represented in the SEEKS project at the same or higher rate than they are in the general Colorado population.
- › Developed products to be disseminated: a training program with fact sheets that addresses state and local benefit programs and compilation of facts about the advantages of having people with disabilities in the workforce.
- › Project complies with Colorado Multiple Institutional Review Board (COMIRB) requirements.
- › Presented nationally at the national APSE (Association of People Supporting Employment First) conference in June 2023. SEEKS shared insights gained from the project on unconscious bias in employment services and offered strategies to combat it.
- › The Office created videos of SEEKS participants sharing their experiences with bias as they've re-entered the workforce.

# Office of Independent Living Services (continued)

## Colorado SILC

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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). During the reporting year, the SILC's currently approved SPIL was approved by the Administration for Community Living to be extended for another year, through FFY24. Keeping in line with independent living philosophy, over 50% of the members of the council are individuals with lived experience as a person with a disability. The SILC's membership represents 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.

The goals set forth in the currently approved SPIL (FFY 2021 - FFY 2024) 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.
  - *This goal has been completed. Colorado decided not to move forward with becoming a 723 state.*

One of the highlights this year was planning and organizing for the Colorado Youth Leadership Forum which took place in June 2023. 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.





Part

# 06

**Celebrating Success**

# Celebrating Success

## Meet Rachel

My name is Rachel Marzullo, and I am a tattoo artist. In 2018 I went through DVR to rejoin the workforce and hone my customer service skills. These skills were once second nature, but I was unemployed for too long. In 2017, prior to connecting with DVR, I went for my first tattoo apprenticeship. It was a harrowing process, and I didn't graduate because my mentor was abusive. Unfortunately, this is common in the tattoo industry. But I knew that being a tattoo artist was the endgame and my goal.

After two years of working in retail, I returned to DVR and asked them if they could help me get through a second apprenticeship. During the Covid-19 pandemic, I found another tattoo artist who would mentor me and teach me.

DVR was pivotal in helping me advocate for myself and getting established with supplies. Even when I struggled, they treated me like family. They counseled me and were like my cheerleaders. They encouraged me. They counseled me to solve my own problems and affirmed my accomplishments, even when I couldn't see them.

▶ [Learn more about Rachel](#) and watch her [success story video](#).



## Meet Laura

My name is Laura Sorrell, and I am an Imaging Supervisor at The Queens North Hawaii Community Hospital. I love working with my team in my department. I love helping others whether that be my patients that are in need of medical care or the people working to care for the patients. I love being a part of something that is bigger than me. I love being a part of the community and serving the needs of the community I live in.

I was not physically capable of working full time in any capacity when I started my employment journey. I had a lot of healing physically and emotionally to overcome before I could go into the workforce again. I had to go back to school and earn multiple degrees in order to qualify for a management role in my industry.

I defied all odds and continued to press on even when family said I wouldn't succeed. I would not allow anything to keep me from meeting my goals.

▶ [Learn more about Laura](#) and watch her [success story video](#).



## 06 Celebrating Success

### March 2023 SEEKS and DVR Collaboration Story: Featuring Tilaria & Billy

Securing Employment and Economic Keys to Stability (SEEKS) is a 5-year research grant received by the Office of Independent Living Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) within the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment. SEEKS participants are assigned to a control group (services as usual) or an intervention group (new services being tested). The Intervention provides 3 services to people applying for Social Security disability:

- › Social Security disability application assistance.
- › Employment Services to obtain employment
- › Benefits Counseling to support an individual to make an informed choice about disability and other benefits and choosing to work

These 3 services are provided at the same time (concurrently) by certified vendors who receive specialized training on the SEEKS intervention.

The SEEKS intervention model addresses the myth that people who receive Social Security disability benefits cannot work. It promotes the expectation that people with disabilities can contribute to the competitive, integrated workforce, while addressing limited economic resources experienced by people with disabilities.

Let's meet Tilaria and Billy, two career seekers receiving services through SEEKS, and learn about their unique employment journeys:

### Meet Tilaria

Tilaria is a career seeker who learned about SEEKS through DVR. She receives a variety of meaningful services through SEEKS that have paved the way for her to meet the needs of her family and pursue her employment goals. While she has had many challenges due to her medical condition, Tilaria is eager to work.

Tilaria shares that SEEKS not only helps her find employment opportunities but has also assisted with her resume and job search. She received assistance in applying for SSI and SSDI as well as resources for WIC [Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children] and other financial supports. She has also been working with a Benefits Counselor to learn how income will impact her benefits after she finds the right job opportunity.

▶ [Learn more about Tilaria](#) and watch her [success story video](#).





## 06 Celebrating Success

### Meet Billy

Billy recently started a new position as a Logistics Manager in a warehouse and is so thankful that his Employment Specialist with SEEKS helped him find a great job match. When Billy was connected with SEEKS through DVR, he had no health insurance and no income to speak of. He came to SEEKS looking for help applying for Social Security disability benefits and didn't think he could work due to his health. He explored his options with SEEKS and Billy realized he could pursue employment in his same field, but in a different position.

Their approach was to jointly work on applying for disability benefits while also searching for jobs that would be a great fit for his needs. He was also referred to Benefits Counseling. He and his Employment Specialist developed a personalized employment plan and began looking for opportunities. He applied for many positions and found his current employer through LinkedIn. Billy is highly satisfied with his experience working with DVR.

Billy shared, "DVR has been great. They've initiated this process. They connected me through to SEEKS and just the joint collaboration between the SEEKS program and DVR has been great. The fact that if there were any questions to be had, they were on the spot to answer it." He shared that in the medical field it always feels like people get the runaround and it's the last thing anyone needs, especially when navigating a disability. Billy feels that DVR has always been direct in answering his questions along his employment journey.

► [Learn more about Billy](#) and watch his [success story video](#).

### Meet Leigh Ann

My name is Leigh Ann Gerk, and I am the proud owner and founder of Mourning to Light Pet Loss, LLC which was established in 2019. I am a licensed professional counselor who specializes in pet loss and grief counseling. I have the honor of helping and guiding individuals and families through the heartbreaking journey of pet loss.

From these interactions with families, I was inspired to write a children's book on pet loss and grief (writing and publishing a book had always been a dream of mine.) This dream came true when I wrote and published "Dear Brave Friend," which, in 2020, went on to win two Indie Book Awards (the largest international awards program for indie authors and publishers.)

► [Learn more about Leigh Ann](#) and watch her [success story video](#).



## 06 Celebrating Success

### Meet Bruce

Hello, my name is Bruce Dietz and I'm a very new radio technologist out in Fort Morgan, Colorado. I work in Denver, Colorado. I just graduated from the RT [Radiologic Technology] program out at MCC [Morgan Community College] in Fort Morgan at 59 years old.

My story goes back to 1981 when I entered the commercial diving field. I did that for 18 years. That was my life. I had a very bad diving accident, which left me disabled. I recovered from that and was able to go on into a business career until 2016 when old injuries came back to plague me. I was in a walker, wheelchair, and in constant pain.

I didn't have a purpose anymore. I decided that I had to make some changes and do something for myself. So, I heard about DVR, our Fort Morgan branch.

"During my first visit with Lynette and Mary at DVR, I was actually still in a walker and walked in and said I wanted to go back to work. Those two young ladies helped me put the direction I needed to set goals."

▶ [Learn more about Bruce](#) and watch his [success story video](#).



### Aurora/Douglas County DVR & DPN Collaboration Success Story

The DVR (Division of Vocational Rehabilitation) Aurora office is working with the Disability Program Navigator (DPN) out of Arapahoe/Douglas Workforce Center in order to assist more individuals with disabilities and help them find or sustain employment. The DPN refers clients to the DVR counselor that may be eligible for DVR services.

The DPN referred a client to DVR in April that was in need of some job seeking assistance and support in determining adequate employment with disability accommodations.

The individual lost their job a couple years ago and was struggling to find employment that met their goals and needs.

▶ [Learn more about this individual's journey with DVR and DPN here](#).