

DELAWARE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT



2024

FISCAL YEAR



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OUR MISSIONS

The State Rehabilitation Council

The State Rehabilitation Council is a participant-driven organization of members representing DVR Stakeholders. Members are appointed by the Governor and provide recommendations and support to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.



The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation provides individualized services to employers and people with disabilities, developing career pathways that link qualified employees to jobs, resulting in greater independence and a more inclusive workplace.



2024 SRC COUNCIL MEMBERS



Elisabeth 'Lisa' A. Furber- SRC Chair

***Ashley Hicks- SRC Member**

***Natalie Klaus-Rogers- SRC Member**

***Sandra Fariña- SRC Member**

***Mary Andrews- SRC Member**

Nicole Barr- SRC Member. Ex-Officio Member

Kenyetta McCurdy-Byrd- SRC Member

Lillian Harrison- SRC Member

Tomara Williams- SRC Member

Laura Greene- SRC Member

Golda Duncan- SRC Member

***Dale Matusevich- SRC Member**

Monterry Luckey- SRC Member

Elisha Jenkins- DVR Director, Ex -officio Member

*** Individuals with an asterisk are not pictured.**

SRC AND DVR: WORKING TOGETHER FOR EMPLOYMENT

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) share a vision:

Assisting individuals with disabilities to develop their skills and abilities and find successful employment in Delaware.

The SRC plays a vital role in overseeing the public vocational rehabilitation program by assessing the division's effectiveness in delivering these services to Delawareans with disabilities. As partners, the SRC and DVR:

- Identify, develop, review, and implement goals and priorities.
- Review DVR participant satisfaction survey results and provide feedback.
- Conduct periodic assessments to determine the needs of individuals with disabilities in Delaware.
- Provide direct input for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined State Plan specifically addressing best practices, innovation, and responsiveness to industry occupations.



A MESSAGE FROM THE SRC CHAIR

Greetings Friends,

It is a privilege and honor to share the State Rehabilitation Council's (SRC) Annual Report for calendar year 2024. Inside, you will find details about the many ways that the SRC and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) work together to accomplish joint goals and priorities for the Vocational Rehabilitation program. This calendar year was challenging for the SRC, but despite the challenges, the SRC was able to accomplish several required and important mandates. I believe our Annual Report will highlight the priority areas that the SRC worked on during 2024. These priority areas can best be described in a few simple words: rebuilding, refocusing, and renewing.

The State Rehabilitation Council took some time to rebuild in 2024. At the beginning of this year, we had several SRC member vacancies. The SRC worked collaboratively with DVR to identify and recruit new members to the Council while ensuring the composition of the SRC was diverse and inclusive. Further, the SRC and DVR jointly developed a new SRC member Orientation program which included written Orientation materials and a new member Orientation onboarding meeting.

This calendar year was also a time for the SRC to refocus our work and advocacy efforts. The SRC needed to "go back to the basics". The SRC refocused by educating new members and re-educating existing SRC members on the history of the Vocational Rehabilitation program, the laws pertaining to Vocational Rehabilitation, and the required tasks of the SRC. As chair of the SRC, I was afforded the opportunity to attend a training conference sponsored by the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC). This two-day conference provided meaningful training on several of the SRC's mandated activities, support in SRC best practices, and an opportunity to network and share SRC resources with my fellow SRC Chairs.

And finally, the SRC worked on renewing and re-emphasizing the work of several committees of the State Rehabilitation Council. This includes the Membership & Government Relations Committee, the Participant Satisfaction Committee, and the Policy, Procedure, and Performance Committee. Each of these Committees is now meeting on a regular and consistent basis and each performs an important function for the SRC.

As I look forward to 2025, I am confident that the State Rehabilitation Council will continue to grow in our advocacy efforts on behalf of and in collaboration with DVR, the vocational rehabilitation program more generally, and in our efforts to promote competitive integrated employment for Delawareans with disabilities. In conclusion, I would like to thank my fellow SRC members, who are all volunteers, for their time, hard work, and dedication to the SRC. I thank you for the opportunity to serve on this important and meaningful Council.

Respectfully,

Elisabeth Furber

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Greetings,

Thank you for the opportunity to share a glimpse of our investments and commitment to the advancement of employment for Delawareans with disabilities. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has made several strides during Fiscal Year 2024 in its mission to provide individualized services to employers and people with disabilities, developing career pathways that link qualified employees to jobs, resulting in greater independence and a more inclusive workplace.

The Division has been concentrating its efforts on key areas of focus; Customer Service, Quality Assurance, Strategic Planning, Recruitment and Retention, and Marketing and Communications. The DVR team aims to enhance access to and utilization of vocational rehabilitation services for Delaware residents, support career pathways to retain talent within Delaware's workforce, customize services and expertise to meet individual needs, and lead and participate in collaborative strategies with agency partners to achieve greater collective impact at all system levels.

DVR continued its collaboration with the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services and the Division for the Visually Impaired to secure technical assistance from the U.S. Department of Labor's, Office of Disability Employment Policy National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network to implement systems change to enhance competitive integrated employment in Delaware.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has prioritized community engagement and improving access to services. As a result, DVR has updated the agency's communication tools such as brochures, the agency website, and social media presence. These efforts aim to ensure that more Delawareans are informed about the career pathway service, increase disability awareness, and promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

DVR appreciates the dedication and commitment of its team to provide quality customer services to participants with disabilities. DVR is grateful for the collaboration of our partners to enhance the workforce system while seeking opportunities to improve processes and address challenges. DVR will continue to explore best practices, professional development, and the acquisition of additional resources for job seekers such as industry-recognized training programs and apprenticeships in the current fiscal year.

Sincerely,

Elisha Jenkins

Director

Participant Satisfaction Survey

In 2024, the participant satisfaction survey was sent to individuals who exited the vocational rehabilitation program after receiving services. Surveys were returned by individuals who were employed at their exit as well as those who had exited the DVR program without completing their plan for employment. The geographic distribution among respondents is as follows: Wilmington **21.47%**, Newark **18.65%**, Dover **31.07%**, and Georgetown **28.81%**.

How would you rate your overall satisfaction with DVR?

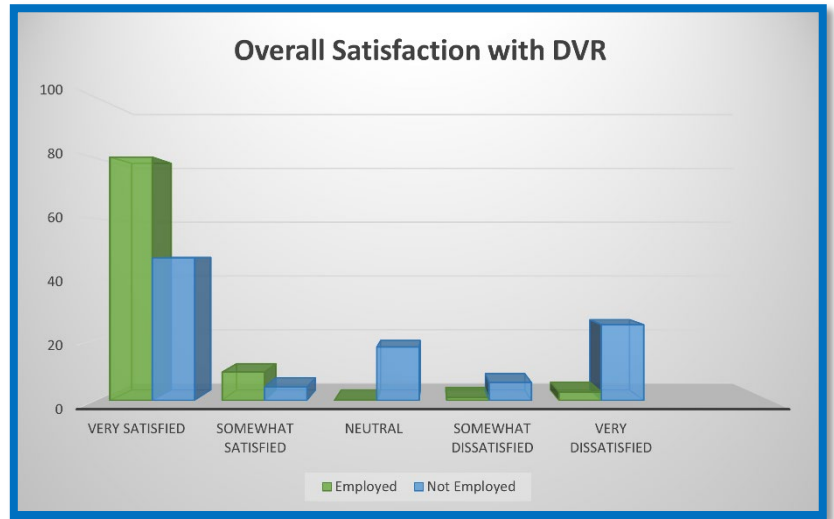
The Overall Satisfaction rating is greater among individuals who were employed at closure with **89.72%** indicating that they were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied.

The employed respondents reported that **3.74%** were somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Among the respondents who did not reach employment at closure, **51.47%** indicated that they were very satisfied, or somewhat satisfied.

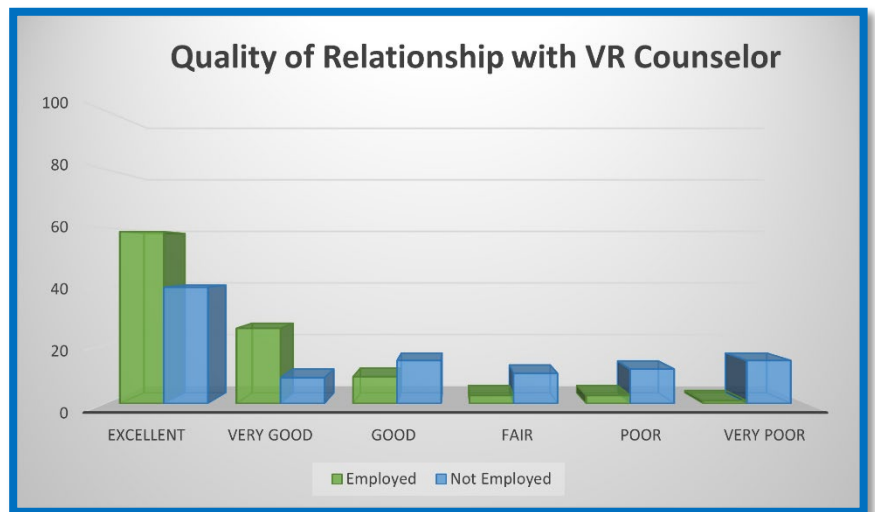
The unemployed respondents reported that **30.88%** were somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

6.54% of employed respondents and **17.65%** of unemployed respondents were neutral.



How would you describe the quality of your relationship with your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor?

Among individuals who exited with employment, **84.41%** indicated that their relationship with their VR counselor was either excellent or very good, **11.92%** indicated good or fair relationships, and **3.67%** indicated either poor or very poor relationships. Of those who exited without employment, **48.53%** indicated either excellent or very good relationships with their VR counselor, **25%** indicated good or fair relationships, and **26.47%** indicated poor or very poor relationships.



How satisfied were you with the opportunity to choose your vocational rehabilitation goal and services?

A fundamental principle of the Vocational Rehabilitation program is to empower participants to make informed choices regarding their employment goals and the services they receive. The survey asked participants to evaluate their satisfaction with their ability to choose these goals and services.

Among individuals who were employed at closure, **90.56%** were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their ability to choose their goals compared to **52.95%** of those who were unemployed at closure. Among employed participants, **3.77%** were either somewhat or very dissatisfied while that number was **32.35%** among unemployed participants.

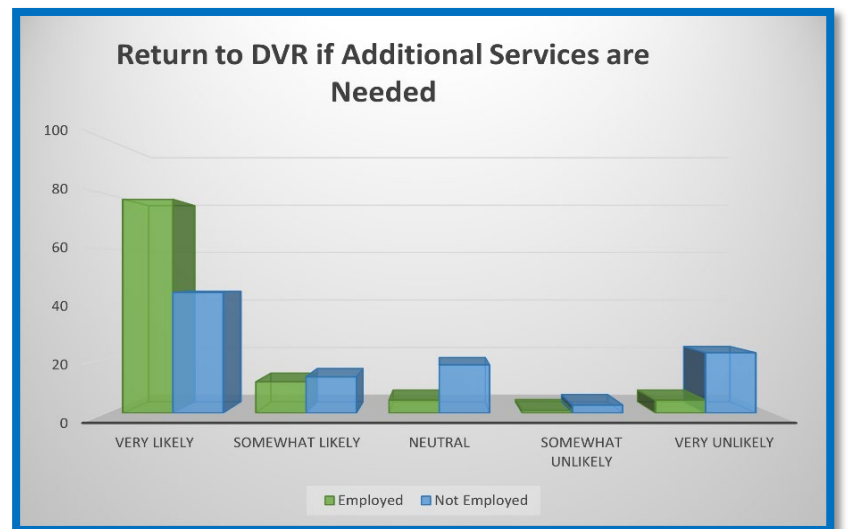
Among employed participants, **5.66%** were neutral while **14.71%** of the unemployed participants were neutral.



How likely would you be to come back to DVR if you need additional employment services?

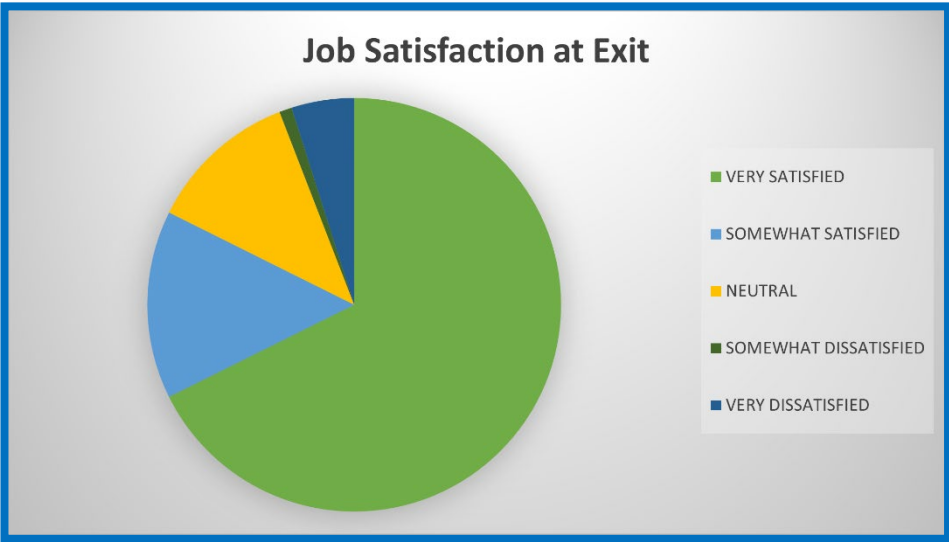
Survey participants were asked about the likelihood of returning to DVR if they needed additional employment services in the future.

Among those who exited with employment, **89.53%** said that they were very or somewhat likely to return, **4.76%** were neutral, and **5.71%** were somewhat or very unlikely.

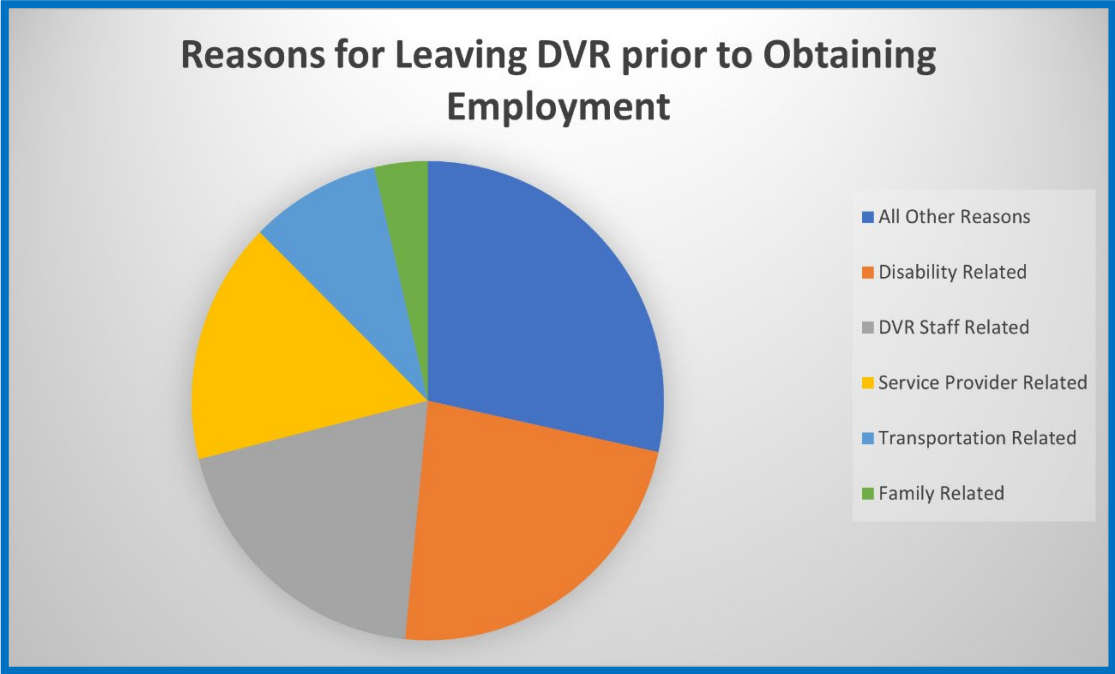


Among those who exited without employment, **57.36%** said that they were very or somewhat likely to return, **17.65%** were neutral, and **25%** said that they were somewhat or very unlikely to return.

The participants who were closed in employment status were asked to provide job satisfaction feedback in their survey. **82.36%** indicated that they were very or somewhat satisfied with their employment while **11.76%** were neutral and **5.88%** were either somewhat or very dissatisfied.



Participants who exited DVR services before obtaining employment were asked to select from a variety of factors the most prevalent reasons for their departure. Participants overwhelmingly responded ‘Other Reasons’ at **68.75%** as the factor in them leaving the program before achieving employment. Additional factors that played a role in their exiting the program were rated as follows: Disability- related issues at **55.81%**, DVR staff-related issues at **47.22%**, Service provider related issues at **39.47%**, Transportation-related issues at **21.62%**, and Family-related issues at **8.82%**.



State Rehabilitation Council 2024 Recognition Awards

In celebration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Delaware State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), and the Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council (VRAC) to the Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) partnered to recognize the work of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, businesses, and participants.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors of the Year were selected for their demonstration of excellence in their role in promoting career development and opportunities for individuals with disabilities.



New Castle County DVR VR Counselor of the Year, Shaune Shaw

Shaune Shaw is a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Ms. Shaw was selected as the DVR New Castle County Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor of the Year. Her nomination stated She is patient, understanding, and passionate about helping people with disabilities. Shaune cares about her participants, she reaches out to families and surrounding teams to develop plans and to create a successful path for participants. Not only that, but she is also eager to support the DVR team. She is involved and supportive when our colleagues are in need. Shaune is willing to set her time aside to help others who are in need. I find her dependable and trustworthy.



DVI VR Counselor of the Year, Leroy Jett

Leroy Jett is a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor with the Division for the Visually Impaired. His nomination states, “Leroy goes above and beyond for his consumers. He makes sure they have everything they need.”

“Mr. Jett has an enthusiastic attitude and deep commitment to his work with blind and visually impaired clients. . . . He is a friend to everyone he meets. He has gotten significant results in a timely manner on behalf of clients.”

The DVR Kent County Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor of the Year award winner is Ghita Oukili. Ms. Oukili’s nomination form stated, “Ghita shows compassion for each client that she has! She will take her time to ensure each client truly receives the care and help they need to achieve their goals. I have seen Ghita go above and beyond and tackle Project Search with success. Having a VRC that cares as much as she does is truly hard to find!” “Counselor Ghita consistently displays a cheerful demeanor and listens attentively to any concerns her participants may have. It is common for clients to leave with smiles and a sense of renewed hope, even during challenging times. She consistently goes above and beyond, offering help even at the last minute. Clients never leave without hope.”



Kent County DVR VR Counselor of the Year, Ghita Oukili

The Sussex County Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor of the Year award winner is Savannah Rust. Savannah began working with the Sussex DVR team in 2021 as a Transition Assistant. She has continued to flourish and organically builds relationships and rapport with transition coordinators, education professionals, and other support professionals in various schools. Savannah has a knack for planning and organization.



Sussex County DVR VR Counselor of the Year, Savannah Rust

State Rehabilitation Council 2024 Employers of the Year Recognition Awards

The Delaware Employers of the Year were selected for their commitment to creating and maintaining an inclusive workplace and providing employment opportunities to qualified individuals with disabilities.

The New Castle County Employer of the Year Award winner is Aramark Dining Hall at the University of Delaware. The nomination stated this employer has a wonderful impact and boost in self-confidence for an employee through their employment at Aramark. ‘The natural supports that are in place for workers who need supported employment to be successful are outstanding. Employees work collaboratively with job coaches to support employees with disabilities so that they are successful. The supervision is also outstanding! They work to meaningfully include workers with disabilities in all work functions.’”



New Castle County Employer of the Year, Aramark Dining Hall

The Kent County Employer of the Year Award winner is Safeway of Dover. The nomination stated, “Safeway in Dover has been a steadfast supporter of individuals with disabilities over the years. They currently employ three people with significant disabilities, providing support throughout the hiring process and on the job. Dottie "Nikki" Walls, who has been with the store for over 20 years, is always eager to meet new people with disabilities. She interviewed in a welcoming manner, ensuring the process was positive and stress-free. After offering him the position, she accommodated his schedule to allow for his participation in the Special Olympics, emphasizing its importance and offering full support. She established a "Safe Space" in the store for employees with disabilities to retreat to if they felt unsafe or encountered issues during their shift. She also ensured DVR participants and other employees knew who to approach if they experienced discomfort, danger, or mockery from customers or colleagues. Nikki is a bright, shining star in a remarkable company that fully supports DVR clients.”



Kent County Employer of the Year, Safeway of Dover

The New Castle County & Kent County Employer of the Year Award winner is the Mental Health Association of Delaware. “Mental Health Association Delaware is an extremely inclusive work environment. They strive to support people from all walks of life and recognize that our strength as humans lies in our diversity. “



New Castle & Kent County Employer of the Year, Mental Health Association of Delaware
State Rehabilitation Council 2024 Employee of the Year Recognition Awards

The Employees of the Year were selected for those who have shown admirable growth and determination in achieving their vocational goals by overcoming barriers.

The New Castle County Employee of the Year Award winner is Natalie Klaus Rogers. She was nominated for her outstanding work as an advocate. “She has worked hard for MHA for so long and has been an advocate for DVR by telling her lived experience to the clients and her co-workers who have had similar lived experiences with having a disability. She has provided numerous resources and is always helping people reach their full potential.”



New Castle County Employee of the Year, Natalie Klaus Rogers

The Employee of the Year for Sussex County is Mr. John Benson. His nomination stated John was involved in a diving accident that left him paralyzed at the age of twenty years old. At the time of his accident, Mr. Benson was employed as a flock supervisor for Perdue Farms. During the last sixteen years since his injury, Mr. Benson has never given up and has always found ways to adapt to do the work he enjoys. He has a love for agriculture and operating equipment. When he realized that Mr. Atkins needed assistance with his grain harvest in 2017, he researched the necessary modifications needed to get him back into a tractor. He planned to modify an engine crane with a long boom, add weights on the back, and use his Hoyer sling to lift him into the tractor cab to run the tractor and grain cart. Within a couple of days, Mr. Atkins and Mr. Benson had the lift built, and almost ten years after his injury, Mr. Benson was back in a tractor doing the work he loved. Using this method for numerous years, Mr. Benson would help with fall harvest, spring, and fall tillage, and numerous other tasks he could perform while driving the tractor. He would often send Mr. Atkins photos and videos from a company that builds truck-mounted lifts for paralyzed individuals to get from their truck seat to the cab of numerous types of farming equipment. Not knowing how to make his dream come true, Mr. Benson finally reached out to the team at DVR for guidance and assistance. In November of 2022, with the help of DVR, the lift was installed on his truck and was ready for operation. Since having this lift, Mr. Benson has been able to expand his capabilities to not only continue working for Mr. Atkins but also other farming operations within the Sussex community.



L: Sussex County Employee of the Year, John Benson.

R: Mr. Benson demonstrates his accommodation.

Business Relations in Delaware

The DVR Business Relations team connects businesses with a pool of qualified candidates and offers the necessary support services to help participants thrive in their roles. Career exploration, employer engagement, and assisting Delaware job seekers with employment are at the forefront of DVR's strategic goals. The Business Relations Team is dual customer-centered, working with job seekers with disabilities and businesses to:

- Assist job seekers to obtain meaningful and quality employment opportunities.
- Identify and prepare DVR job seekers to promptly meet employer recruiting needs.
- Build relationships and engage business and industry in collaborative activities as a resource to meet their workforce needs.
- Engage employers in activities as strategic partners.
- Collaborate with employers to help identify high-demand industries and occupations in Delaware.
- Promote and encourage apprenticeships, OJT, internships, and other work-based learning opportunities.
- Provide labor market information and other tools and resources that address workforce needs.
- Explore tax credits and workforce incentives.

During Fiscal Year '24 DVR assisted 645 job seekers with disabilities. The Business Relations Specialists provided support to 343 Delaware businesses to address their specific workforce needs such as accessing an untapped labor pool, training, workforce recruitment and retention assistance, and accommodations.

The Business Relations Team is a partner with the State of Delaware's Department of Human Resources Talent Acquisition Team and the Division of the Visually Impaired to support the State of Delaware Employment Network. The State of Delaware's Employment Network (EN), a Work Experience Development Program, was created to provide work experience opportunities for people with disabilities to gain useful, employment-based knowledge and experience within varied state government career paths. In addition, increase state agency knowledge and participation in the State of Delaware's Selective Placement and Employment Network Programs to advance hiring opportunities for people with disabilities seeking employment in the State government. This period, in collaboration with the State of Delaware's Department of Human Resources Talent Acquisition, the Selective Placement Program processed 60 applications during this period, thirty-seven participants were added to the EN, five individuals were placed in work experience opportunities, and one resulted in a merit employment offer with the State of Delaware.

The Business Relations Unit uses information from the Delaware Office of Occupational and Labor Market Information such as the Delaware Career Compass, the Delaware Monthly Labor Review, and other labor market information as a guide for creating career opportunities for people with disabilities and for establishing linkages with business. Utilization of Delaware JobLink, the State's free job matching and workforce information service for job seekers and businesses from the Division of

Employment and Training, is also a resource used by the unit for serving its dual customer population. The National Employment Team, Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP), which connects participants to various resources, including Job Postings, Geographic-Specific Resumes, Recruiter Access, Compliance and Application Reports, Hiring Data, and Interview Capability is also a resource shared with businesses and job seekers.

DVR is an active member of the Delaware Workforce Development Board's Business Cohort. This collaborative initiative provides Business Relations professionals the opportunity to share resources, strategically address workforce needs, and provide an extensive marketing and outreach network.

The DVR Business Team also partners with state and local Chamber of Commerce, SHRM (Society of Human Resource Management), and other professional organizations to promote a structure for networking, collaboration, and sharing information.

DVR's Business Relations Team's dual customer focus also provided support to assist youth and adult job seekers with developing resumes, preparing for interviews, completing applications, and connecting with employers. In addition, the Business Services team provided onsite supports during employer onboarding. DVR's Business Relations team developed employer informational tours to increase industry knowledge for youth with disabilities and adult job seekers. Examples of information tours include various industries such as information technology, retail, electrical, HVAC, production, education, and communications. DVR's Business Relations Team's dual customer focus provides support and guidance to youth and adult job seekers, employers, and community partners.

The Business Relations Specialists also collaborate with other divisions in the Department of Labor such as the Division of Employment and Training in community outreach, career job fairs, and local employer's hiring needs to bring the best career opportunities to youth and adult participants.

The DVR Business Relations Unit works with the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Program to assist businesses with Federal contracts to fulfill the Section 503 requirements regarding the employment of individuals with disabilities. The OFCCCP has referred businesses that are seeking compliance to DVR for assistance. Federal contractors send lists of open positions to the Business Relations Unit. In addition, Business Relations Specialists work with the State's Office of Government Support Services where Government contracts are awarded.

DVR received technical assistance resources through the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center -Quality Employment during this period. This provided DVR's Business team with tools and strategies focused on building capacity to connect with businesses, identifying business needs, and supporting their efforts to hire and retain persons with disabilities in their workforce. The DVR Business team will continue to enhance their skills in areas such as analyzing business-driven strategies and tools, engaging diverse business partners, and working collaboratively with companies to analyze staffing challenges and identify opportunities to leverage hiring individuals. In addition, Business Relations team members receive professional development in job development and placement, labor market and career information, marketing to business customers, employment readiness, soft skills training, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and other areas required to bring proficiency to the job.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation will continue to develop and enhance established partnerships with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of VR services.

Participant Success Stories:

1) D.W. was referred for Job Placement services with the Business Relations Unit in January of 2024 because her hours had been cut at the assisted living facility where she was employed. When D.W. met with the Business Relations Specialist she stated that she would like to work in a retail store because she enjoys working with people and she would like to work near Price's Corner because it was close to her home. D.W. informed the Business Relations Specialist she was interested in applying at the following stores: JC Penney, Target, and Gabe's, and would also consider going back to Goodwill and the Salvation Army where she had gained her retail experience sorting, tagging, stocking, and hanging merchandise on the sales floor. Business Relations Specialist met with the General Manager (GM) at JCPenney, and she informed him she had a client who was interested in working retail, but she was not interested in working on the cash register. She stated that the client can work as a stock clerk and assist the customers with locating merchandise. The General Manager stated he had the perfect position for her and asked her to apply online as a Sales Associate. He advised that even though the job description states cashiering as one of the duties, he would customize the position to fit her skills and abilities. However, he did inform the Business Relations Specialist that the position would not be available until late May as a P/T Support Associate working in the fitting room, returning merchandise to the sales floor, as well as maintaining the upkeep of the sales floor. D.W. was very excited about the opportunity. The Business Relations Specialist and D.W. completed the online application, and the Business Relations Specialist prepped the client for the interview. The interview was held with the General Manager on 4/25/24, with her Business Relations Specialist by her side for support. D.W. was offered the position, and the Business Relations Specialist provided on-site support during the client's onboarding process because she had difficulty with computer operation. D.W. has been very successful in her position, and the Assistant Manager has given the feedback that she is a rock star!

2) A.B. came to DVR for job placement assistance upon becoming unemployed when his employer, Boston Market went out of business. A.B. had worked with this employer for thirty years in a supported employment position. A.B. and his father first met with the Business Relations Manager to discuss his skills and abilities, as well as barriers to employment, and develop a plan for the path forward. A.B. was assigned to work with a Business Relations Specialist who immediately started conducting job development. The Business Relations Specialist met with the owner of Rooted AF, located in the Chancery Market in Wilmington, and discussed possible opportunities for A.B. and the support he would need at work to be successful. The owner, Ms. Nikita Thomas, has experience as a Special Education Teacher and was excited about the prospect of hiring a DOL-DVR client. Ms. Thomas stated that she was seeking a food service team member and discussed possible customization of position and supports that could be put in place for the client to be successful, including developing an OJT agreement. The Business Relations Specialist met with the client and his father, created his resume, informed them of the opportunities at Rooted AF, and prepared the client for an interview. A.B. and his father were very excited about the opportunity of employment at Rooted AF and liked the fact that it was also close to A.B.'s home. Business Relations Specialist escorted the client to the interview and the client was hired on the spot. It was determined that A.B. would be most successful in learning the roles and responsibilities of the position through an OJT opportunity which would allow for one-on-one training for the client to

learn the role and update his skills. The Business Relations Specialist and VRC met with the owner to develop the OJT agreement and map out the details of how the client would learn the roles and responsibilities of the position and increase his responsibilities as he learned skills. The Business Relations Specialist continues to provide employment follow-up services and Ms. Thomas reports that A.B. is doing a fabulous job. Ms. Thomas advised that she is very excited that he has joined their team. A.B. has expressed his satisfaction with his employment and that he is thankful for the services DVR has provided him.

3) C.M. was referred to the DVR Georgetown office in July 2015 for assistance with locating steady employment and a high school diploma to further her training opportunities. C.M. graduated from high school with a certificate of attendance, reporting that she has always struggled with learning disabilities. She relayed that she received training as a medical assistant and had been employed off and on for many years in nursing home facilities. She reported that she was currently underemployed and continued to face barriers that prevented her from remaining consistent in her academic pursuits. In June 2019, C.M. enrolled in elementary algebra and digital literacy courses at Delaware Technical Community College (DTCC) and gave birth to a new baby. She continued to receive counseling and guidance, tutoring sponsorship, and other financial support through DVR and completed her high school credentials in December 2020. In January of 2024, C.M. was accepted into the Certified Clinical Medical Administrative Assistant (CMAA) Training Program, offered through the Delaware Workforce Board. In June of 2024, C.M. completed her training and passed her CMAA certification. C.M.'s employment plan was revised, and she was referred to the DVR Business Relations Unit for job development and placement assistance. C.M. gained full-time employment in August of 2024 as a Patient Services Representative with TidalHealth Medical Partners. C.M. also obtained a part-time position at Pam Health Rehabilitation every other weekend. She received assistance from DVR with the initial costs of her uniform and the onboarding process. Today, C.M. states both her jobs are going well, and she values the career development support from DVR. C.M.'s re-entry into the workforce has helped her overcome many financial burdens she was facing before her full-time employment.

4) E.H. self-referred to DVR in August of 2021 as she was seeking funding for post-secondary education. After a semester at her local Community College, E.H. decided she would like to focus on employment. In January 2022, after a vocational assessment was conducted, E.H.'s Individualized Plan for Employment was completed with an employment goal of Nonfarm Animal Caretakers. E.H. was seeking a job in animal care; however, she discussed pet grooming training as an option with her VRC. After deeming her job ready, E.H. was referred to the BRU and began working with the Business Relations Specialist. The Business Relations Specialist and E.H. began exploring job leads with pet stores, kennels, veterinary clinics, and other animal shelters; however, most of those positions required animal handling experience and/or formal vet tech training. Additionally, E.H. continued to express her long-term desire to learn pet grooming. After doing extensive research, the Business Relations Specialist realized there were no formal training providers for pet grooming in Sussex County. She then began to reach out to pet grooming salons in the county to ask if they would be interested in providing training for EH. Nearly all the salons the Business Relations Specialist spoke with were in desperate need of pet groomers; however,

they were unwilling to take on someone with little to no experience...except for Mary Lecates, owner of 'A Comfy Pet Salon.' The Business Relations Specialist met with Ms. Lecates and provided her with information about the DOL's Apprenticeship and OJT Programs for employers. She also shared information regarding the WOTC Tax Credit. After E.H. met with Ms. Lecates for the interview and further discussions with the Business Relations Specialist, Ms. Lecates agreed to become an OJT provider. A (3-phased) OJT agreement and training schedule were commenced, and E.H. began her training as a paid employee on March 18, 2024, at both of Ms. Lecates' s Salon locations. Since March, E.H. has been successful in learning the complicated skills necessary to become a dog/cat groomer. Over the first several weeks, she was required to learn and understand all shop operations including the use of their POS system, in addition to dog breeds, their temperaments, and communicable diseases, while assisting the grooming staff. Following the first few weeks, E.H. jumped into learning how to handle, bathe, and dry the animals as well as becoming adept at using all related materials and tools. After several months, E.H.'s skills continued to improve, and she began learning hair detangling/brushing and nail clipping among other skills. E.H. has progressed to the final stages of pet grooming training and has performed well in all areas. More importantly, Ms. Lecates, the shop owner, Page, E.H.'s trainer, and the entire team at both grooming salons have been very enthusiastic about E.H.'s training and her job performance. She has developed solid relationships with the entire team at 'A Comfy Pet Salon' and has become "part of the family"; trusted with the upkeep (including openings and closings) of the shops when staff is not present. E.H. continues to express gratitude to her team at DVR for assisting her in overcoming the many barriers she faced as a young adult aging out of foster care. She also shares her story and refers others to DVR who, in her words, "helped me find my dream job."

5) S.A. began his journey with DVR in March 2023 seeking assistance with obtaining employment. S.A. worked with his Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor as she provided counseling and assessments to assist him with focusing on a vocational goal. Initially, he struggled with eye contact, often appearing downcast during discussions with his counselor. She encouraged him to have self-belief, and confidence in his abilities and assisted him in selecting a career he would enjoy. Gradually, he grew more optimistic about his employment opportunities. S.A. was referred to work with a Business Relations Specialist for job placement services to achieve his goal of becoming a Custodial Worker. The Business Relations Specialist assisted S.A. in creating a resume and applied for various positions on his behalf, communicating with numerous employers. In January 2024, a position opened at the Delaware Veterans Home in Milford for a Casual Seasonal Custodial Worker. S.A. expressed strong interest in this role and the Business Relations Specialist met with him to complete and submit his application. The Business Relations Specialist contacted DHR to request support for the client's application to be reviewed. The Business Relations Specialist received an email from Ms. Leggs at the Delaware Veterans Home, stating that they would like to schedule an interview with S.A. The Business Relations Specialist reached out to the House Manager through VRC to establish contact. An interview for S.A. was successfully scheduled at the beginning of February 2024. The Business Relations Specialist conducted interview preparation with S.A. and accompanied him to the interview to assist with the completion of pre-interview paperwork. S.A. performed well in the interview and received a job offer pending his references and background check. S.A. struggled to provide suitable employment references to Ms. Leggs at the Delaware Veterans Home as part of his pre-employment screening. S.A.'s Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Business Relations Specialist, and Group Home Manager all wrote letters of reference for S.A. The Business Relations Specialist escorted S.A. to complete his drug test and background check. They were informed that S.A. had an active case at local Court 11. The Business Relations Specialist was able to take S.A. to

the courthouse to meet with the judge and take care of his pending charges. The Business Relations Specialist reached out to Ms. Leggs at the Delaware Veterans Home regarding S.A.'s background and pending charges. Ms. Leggs informed the Business Relations Specialist that the matter was pending and that confirmation from the Home's Director was necessary to proceed with the hiring. The Business Relations Specialist received an email from the HR Director indicating that while the case was pending, the job offer could remain. S.A. was officially offered the position of Casual Seasonal Custodian at the Delaware Veterans Home. The Business Relations Specialist provided on-site support throughout the onboarding process to assist with client orientation, completion of paperwork, and new hire training. S.A.'s Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor scheduled a Job Coach to work with him until natural support could be established at work. In addition, DVR assisted the client with obtaining a new pair of glasses that he needed to be successful at work. S.A. expressed, "I can't stop smiling, I love my new glasses!" S.A.'s Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and Business Relations Specialist maintained contact with him to provide employment follow-up. He informed the Business Relations Specialist of a court date in July for his charges and requested the Business Relations Specialist's presence. The Business Relations Specialist escorted S.A. to the courthouse. The Business Relations Specialist was questioned about their affiliation with the client and whether he was compliant with DVR's requirements. The Business Relations Specialist confirmed compliance, and S.A. proudly told the judge that he was employed as well. The prosecutor agreed to dismiss the charges, with the condition that any non-compliance with DVR should be reported. The Business Relations Specialist relayed this to the Director of the Delaware Veterans Home, who assured S.A.'s continued employment. Now six months into his employment, S.A. is affectionately nicknamed "Sunshine" by his co-workers for the positivity he brings to the workplace.



Transition Services in Delaware

The Delaware VR Transition Services Team is composed of fifteen Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Counselors supporting students in their career pathways. During this period, Delaware DVR increased the number of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to meet the employment and career needs of Delaware students and support families and educational partners.

During Fiscal Year 2024, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation served a total of 1,758 students statewide; 628 of those were new students. This is a slight decline in student applications to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. However, Delaware DVR experienced an increase in Pre-Employment Transition Services participation of 1,245 students accessing 3,794 Pre-Employment Transition Services:

- Job exploration counseling
- Work-based learning experiences during or after school or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships) provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive training or postsecondary education programs at Institutions of Higher Education (IHE)
- Workplace Readiness Training to develop social skills and independent living
- Instruction in self-advocacy, including peer mentoring.

Project SEARCH is a highly recognized Transition to Work program aimed at preparing youth with significant disabilities for success in competitive integrated employment. Delaware has four Project SEARCH sites: ChristianaCare Hospital Services (New Castle County), Bayhealth Hospital and Delaware Department of Transportation (Kent County), and TidalHealth Hospital (Sussex County). The collaboration includes the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Department of Education, Local Education Agencies, businesses, and Community Rehabilitation Providers. During the annual Project SEARCH conference held in July 2024, ChristianaCare Health Services was recognized for achieving a hundred percent intern placement. For the 2023-2024 school year, the total number of employed graduates is:

- ChristianaCare Hospital- five students,
- Bayhealth Hospital- two students,
- Delaware Department of Transportation - two students,
- TidalHealth Services- one student.

Delaware is a partner of Delaware's Program Improvement Process for Equity (PIPEline to Career Success) for students with disabilities. PIPEline, facilitated by the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE) goal is to increase the number of students with disabilities who enroll in career technical education career pathways, participate in related work-based learning experiences in authentic employment settings, and enter in-demand employment. The students participate in a curriculum, Student Voice, identifying barriers and highlighting innovative ways to connect students to career technical education pathways. The Delaware PIPEline Project has engaged fifty-seven students from nine school districts over the past four years. For Pipeline 2023-2024, twenty-one students from four school districts participated in PIPEline: Appoquinimink School District, Brandywine School District, Capital School District, and the Red Clay School District.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has focused on collaborating with other departments within the State to strengthen DVR's ability to provide quality employment services to the people and families of Delaware. DVR and the Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families (DSCYF) initiated a collaborative effort to improve the delivery of career and employment services to transition-age justice-involved students. This collaboration is the foundation of ensuring access to services. DVR collaborates with the Department of Services for Children, Youth & Their Families (DSCYF) to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services and Transition services to youth in foster care and treatment facilities. DVR partners with the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS) to improve the quality and access to supported employment services. Collaboratively DVR and the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS) coordinate services, resources, and supports for students requiring extended supports in a work environment.

Monthly Statewide Transition Cadre meetings provide transition stakeholders an opportunity for professional development and collaboration, share best practices, and enhance post-school planning and outcomes for transition-age youth. Stakeholders include Department of Education Exceptional Children team members, district administrators, local education agency personnel, DVR Counselors, DVR Administrators, community partners, and other state agencies.

DVR remains engaged in technical assistance with the National Assistance Center on Transition to assess its program model, review best practices, and develop strategies that are responsive to support students and youth with disabilities to achieve their educational, living, and employment goals.

DVR continues to evaluate opportunities to expand services and engage additional partners. In addition, DVR is analyzing its communications footprint and seeking strategic opportunities through technology, social media, and participating in community events such as transition fairs, college fairs, career fairs, and resource events.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation continues to identify ways to increase opportunities for students and creatively develop new initiatives. DVR is analyzing opportunities to increase summer Pre-ETS opportunities and develop unique opportunities to increase exposure to work-based learning and exploratory experiences. In addition, DVR will enhance its partnerships with other WIOA agencies to address challenges for youth with mental health barriers, justice-involved, and autism.



Bayhealth Project Search graduates 2023-2024

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Highlights

Mission: We provide individualized services to employers and people with disabilities, developing career pathways that link qualified employees to jobs, resulting in greater independence and a more inclusive workplace.

Core Beliefs:

- There is always more than one future
- The key is to find the intersection of the possible, preferable, and plausible futures
- In order to compel action in a common direction two things must occur:
 - Everyone on the team must believe in the path forward
 - Everyone must be able to see themselves as a participant on the journey.

Guiding Principles:

- Vocational Rehabilitation is mission-driven and dual customer-focused
- Vocational Rehabilitation leads change through innovative and cutting-edge practice
- Vocational Rehabilitation customizes services to meet the needs of the individual and business customer
- Vocational Rehabilitation creates partnerships to maximize resources and opportunities.

In FY'24, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) served 4,659 individuals, compared to 4,364 in FY'23. The Division served almost 300 more individuals this past fiscal year and is analyzing mechanisms to increase outreach to provide employment-related services to individuals with disabilities.

DVR has been focused on strategic initiatives to drive improvements across the agency. The key elements of the plan include:

- Innovating solutions to enhance access to and utilization of vocational rehabilitation services for Delaware residents.
- Building careers and retaining talent within Delaware's workforce.
- Customizing services and expertise to meet individual needs.
- Leading and engaging in collaborative strategies with our partners to achieve a greater collective impact at all levels of the system.

DVR recognizes that knowledgeable team members are an asset in providing quality customer service to participants. Through continuous professional development, the DVR team strives to improve employee retention, foster team growth, and maintain an engaged, motivated, and satisfied workplace. Topic areas this year included: supported employment, benefits planning, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), fiscal basics, case management, and foundational counseling theories.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation utilizes various technological platforms and enhancements to provide services to individuals with disabilities. DVR enhanced its Case Management System with the addition of a Vendor Portal for community rehabilitation providers which streamlined payment requests and report submissions. DVR recently began the implementation process to adopt an exciting new automated client communication tool to increase client engagement, communication, and customer satisfaction.

Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Federal Fiscal Year 2024 Performance Report

Successful Rehabilitations:	581	
Most Significant Disabilities	213 (37%)	} 93%
Significant Disabilities	328 (56%)	
Transition Youth Rehabilitated	143	
Total Participants Served:	4,659	
Most Significantly Disabled	1,933 (41%)	} 91%
Significantly Disabled	2,346 (50%)	
New Applicants in FY 2024	1,941	
Determined Eligible	1,813	
Acceptance Rate	93%	
New Transition Students	628	
Transition Students Served	1,759	
Average Hourly Wage for FY 2024 Closures:		
All closures	\$18.64	
Transition	\$15.53	
Supported Employment	\$13.99	
Adults (Not TR or SE)	\$17.20	



Vocational Rehabilitation Office Locations

New Castle County

Wilmington

4425 North Market Street
Wilmington, DE 19802
P: 302-761-8275
F: 302-761-6633

Newark

University Office Place
252 Chapman Road 2nd Floor
Newark, DE 19702
P: 302-368-6980
F: 302-368-6988

Kent County

Dover

Blue Hen Corp. Ctr.
655 S. Bay Rd., Ste. 2H
Dover, DE 19901
P: 302-739-5478
F: 302-739-6874

Sussex County

Georgetown

8 Georgetown Plaza, Ste. 2
Georgetown, DE 19947
P: 302-856-5730
F: 302-856-5486



For additional contact information,
please visit our website:

<https://labor.delaware.gov/DVR>

PHOTO CREDITS

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- Aerial view of Wilmington, Delaware, by Jin/Adobe Stock

Additional photos:

- Page 5: Southern Delaware Marsh sunset, by Clendaniel Photo/Adobe Stock
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