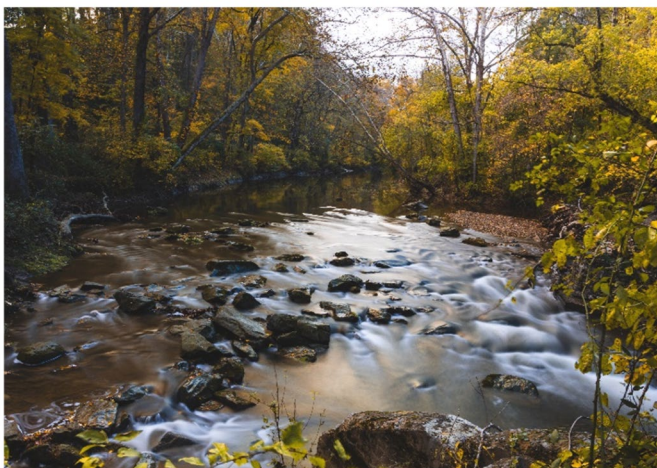
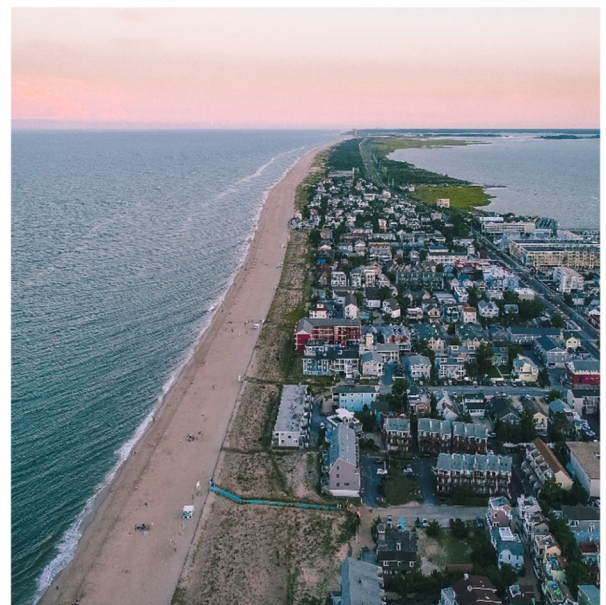


# Delaware State Rehabilitation Council Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2023



**DELAWARE  
DEPARTMENT OF  
LABOR**



**Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

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(Right to Left, Top to Bottom)

1. Aerial view of the Delaware River, Wilmington, Delaware, by Christopher Boswell
2. The Delaware Legislative Hall, Dover, Delaware, by G. Nagel
3. Aerial view of Dewey Beach, Delaware, by Nicole
4. Creek in White Clay State Park, Newark, Delaware, by Cyrus Sariaslani/Wirestock Creators

Additional photos:

- Page 4: Cape Henlopen, Lewes, Southern Delaware, by Yvonne Navalaney
- Page 13: Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge, Smyrna, Delaware, by Bo.

## OUR MISSIONS

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### 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.



### 2023 SRC Council Members

- Emmanuel Jenkins
- Lisa Furber
- Marissa Band
- Nicole Barr\*
- Ellen Coulston
- Karen DiNardo
- Laura Greene
- Elisha Jenkins\*
- Monterry Luckey
- Christina Andrews
- Natalie Klaus-Rogers
- Dale Matusevich
- Kenyetta McCurdy-Byrd
- Jackie Poquette
- Loretta Sarro
- Despina Wilson
- Alexia Wolf
- Ashley Hicks

Individuals with an asterisk \* are non-voting members of DVR staff.



# SRC AND DVR: WORKING TOGETHER FOR EMPLOYMENT

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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 an essential role with the DVR in administering the public vocational rehabilitation program by evaluating the division's effectiveness in providing 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.



November 20, 2023

The Honorable John Carney  
Governor of Delaware  
Tatnall Building William Penn Street  
2nd Floor  
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Governor Carney:

Enclosed for your review is the 2023 Annual Report of the Delaware State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). During FY23, the Council Chair position was held by Emanuel Jenkins. The Vice-Chair position was vacant for FY 23.

During FY 23, with the Public Health Emergency ending on May 11, 2023, the SRC started meeting using a hybrid model and having meeting locations in all three counties. DVR continued providing career counseling, training opportunities, and job placement services, resulting in 692 successful employment outcomes. The Council's plan for 2024 is to recommit to our roles and responsibilities, revitalize sub-committees, and enhance recruitment efforts to increase the membership of the State Rehabilitation Council. As well as nominate a new vice chair and a chairperson as my term for the SRC committee is ending in December 2023. As the outgoing chairperson, I am grateful and delighted to have served two full terms on the SRC committee. Undoubtedly, the SRC and DVR staff will continue to work diligently to ensure individuals with disabilities have equal access to employment services and increase the number of individuals with disabilities in the workforce. In conclusion, The SRC and DVR staff are fully dedicated to ensuring the SRC continues to grow.

"Equality in employment isn't just a goal; it's a commitment to harness the diverse strengths of every individual, including those with disabilities, creating a workforce where ability knows no limits."

*Emmanuel Jenkins*  
*chairperson*  
*State Rehabilitation Council*

# Employment First Oversight Commission Update

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*HB 122 is named the Jamie Wolfe Employment Act, after the fierce, well-known disabilities advocate, Jamie Wolfe. Wolfe passed away in 2018 after fighting for years for this legislation. She fought for other issues of equality for people with disabilities as well.*



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

With a goal toward competitive integrated employment (CIE) for all — including individuals with disabilities — the Delaware General Assembly enacted HB 122, the Jamie Wolfe Employment Act on June 29, 2021. HB 122 mandated the phased elimination of subminimum wage employment by January 2024. The legislation anticipated the need for careful planning and charged the Delaware Employment 1<sup>st</sup> Oversight Commission (EFOC) with the development and implementation of a plan to phase out subminimum employment in the State. The legislation outlined components to address the resource and funding requirements and to ensure all individuals with disabilities, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability, could become employed in CIE. The scope of the plan was to be broad, focusing on people currently in or just phased out of 14c employment, but also on promoting opportunities for competitive employment for young adults as they transition from school, and adults who have not yet moved from other services into employment.

Of special and substantial note is that one of the two organizations in Delaware using 14C Subminimum wage terminated use of their 14C certificate as of June 2021. The other organization ceased all sheltered workshop operations in Delaware effective May 2022. In June of 2023 the final draft of HB 122 Implementation Plan was presented to the Delaware General Assembly.

While there has been modest progress since the Implementation Plan Action Steps adoption, the EFOC has recognized several key challenges that has slowed progress on many objectives within the Plan:

- Ongoing direct service professional and program staff recruitment, retention, and vacancy crisis
- Significant increase in overtime costs due to staff vacancies
- The number of staff vacancies as a direct result of the Pandemic
- Transition to community-based strategies coincided with the Global Pandemic
- Adverse impact of ARPA funding from the Federal Government created a disincentive to seek employment.
- Individuals and families' reluctance to seek out services for the following reasons:
  - i. fear of the Pandemic
  - ii. Disinterest in services and supports
  - iii. Lack of belief in community-based direction
  - iv. Long-term impacts from the Pandemic
  - v. The number of Individuals and family members who passed away during the Pandemic

The key priorities contained within this Competitive Integrated Employment for People with Disabilities Implementation Plan for HB 122, the Jamie Wolfe Employment Act (Section II) and as identified by both the EFOC and Employment First Task Force (EFTF) and adopted by the EFOC, are as follows:

1. Expand the pool of employers participating in supported employment programs:
  - a) Review DVR rates, including additional funding for job development, increased placement milestones, and/or increasing the job coaching rate.
  - b) Funding for capacity building/training and technical assistance for system providers.
2. Invest in strengthening and diversifying the provider network delivering employment support services:
  - a) Track and analyze employment outcomes and services data received for people who were employed using subminimum wages by Chimes and Elwyn.
  - b) Fund DDDS Supported Employment service at levels that cover provider costs and consider the additional support needs of those with more significant disabilities who desire to work.
  - c) Assure robust job exploration, discovery, and customized employment for individuals desiring to work.
  - d) Funding for capacity building/training and technical assistance for system providers.
  - e) Provide quick response within the provider community to the support needs of people previously supported by Elwyn DE through their sheltered employment and day habilitation programs.
3. Ensure cross-agency collaboration and support to maximize system capacity and employment outcomes.
  - a) Revise DOE, DDDS and DVR memorandum of understanding, and establish data to be tracked by each agency.
  - b) Convene a work group to identify collaborations overlap and create partnerships to work together to support individuals to obtain CIE.
4. Focus on employment opportunities at an earlier age, incorporating employment into goal setting as early as possible in the transition process:
  - a) Convene a work group to identify collaboration overlap and create partnerships to work together to support individuals to obtain CIE.
  - b) Provide more opportunities for collaboration between teachers and transition staff (DOE), DVR, DVI, and DDDS preparing transitioning youth/families.
  - c) Annual or bi-annual review DVR rates, including adding more funding for job development, increased placement milestones, and/or increasing the job coaching rate.
  - d) Where appropriate, expand educational opportunities for families with a focus on understanding the adult service system and the work incentives, and other financial tools such as ABLE act accounts, that allow continuation of government benefits.

Both the SRC and DVR are committed partners in the implementation of the findings and recommendations in accordance with HB 122, the Jamie Wolfe Employment Act. Concentrated collaborative work between the various State Agencies and Delaware Provider Organizations toward successful accomplishment of the Implementation Plan, will continue over the next several fiscal years.

# Participant Satisfaction Survey Results

In 2023, 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 exit as well as those who had not reached employment at exit.

The geographic distribution among respondents is as follows: Wilmington **38.15%**, Newark **21.85%**, Dover **19.69%**, and Georgetown **20.31%**.

## How would you rate your overall satisfaction with DVR?

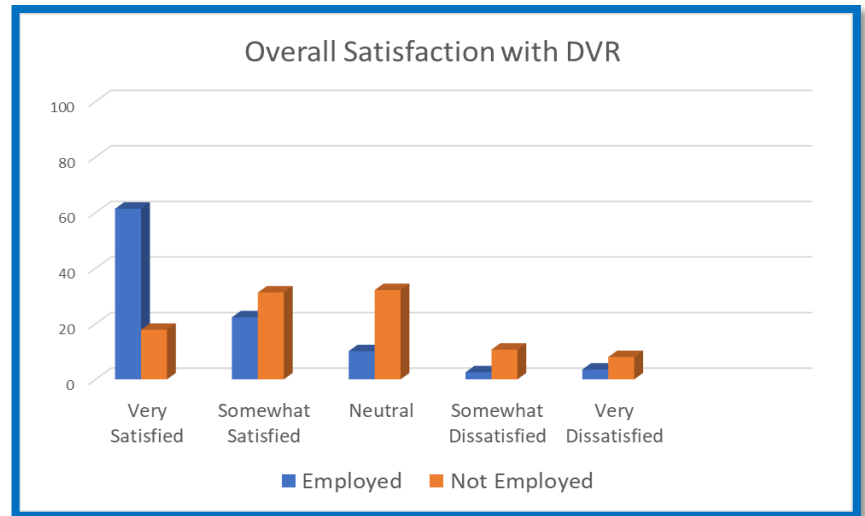
The Overall Satisfaction rating is greater among individuals who were employed at closure with **83.76%** indicating that they were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied.

The employed respondents reported at **6.09%** being somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Among the respondents who did not reach employment at closure, **49.11%** indicated that they were very satisfied, or somewhat satisfied.

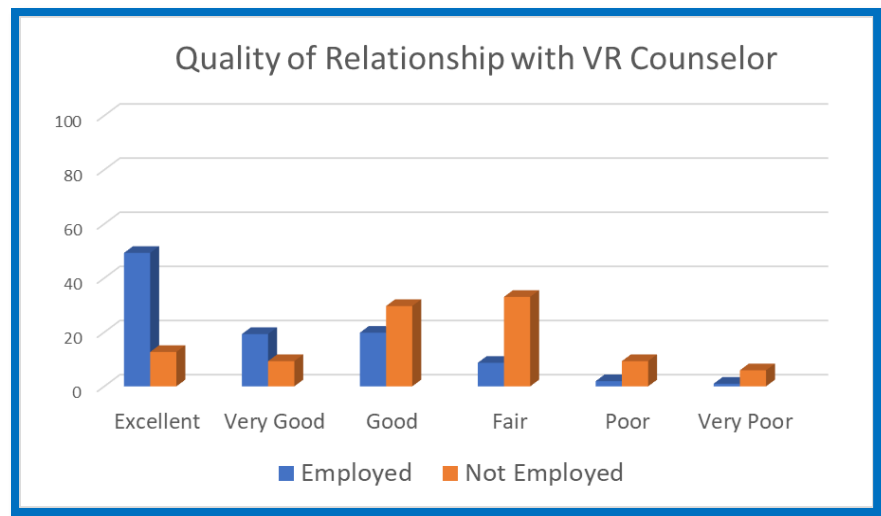
The not employed respondents reported at **18.75%** being somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

**10.15%** of employed respondents and **32.14%** of not employed respondents were neutral.



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

Among individuals who exited with employment, **68.60%** indicated that their relationship with their VR counselor was either excellent or very good, **28.51%** indicated good or fair relationships, and **2.9%** indicated either poor or very poor relationships. Those who exited without employment, **22.03%** indicated either excellent or very good relationships with counselor, **62.71%** indicated good or fair relationships, and **15.25%** indicated poor or very poor relationships.





## Participant Satisfaction Survey Results Continued

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

A core tenant of the Vocational Rehabilitation program is allowing participants to make informed choices about the employment goals they set and the services that they receive.

The survey asked participants to rate their satisfaction with their perceived ability to choose their goals and services.

Among individuals who were employed at closure, **81.64%** were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied compared to **48.31%** of those who were not employed at closure. Among employed participants, **6.28%** were either somewhat or very dissatisfied while that number was **24.57%** among not employed participants.

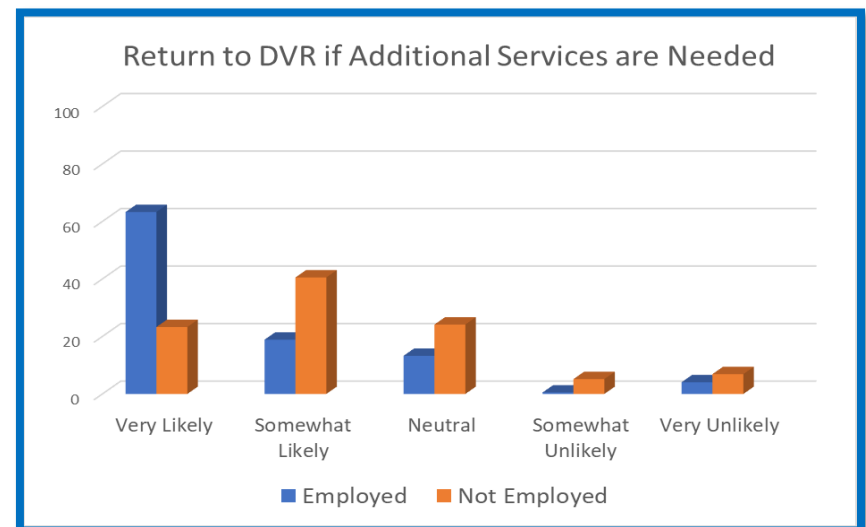
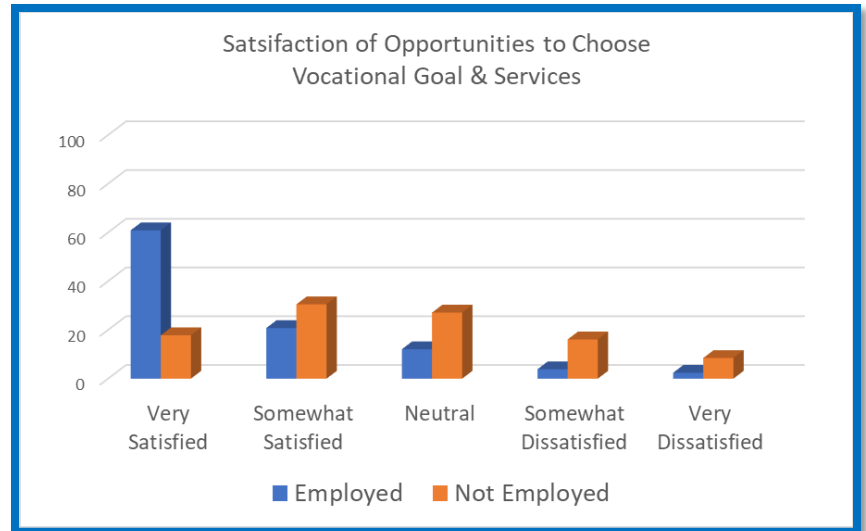
Among employed participants, **12.08%** were neutral while **27.12%** of the individuals who were not employed were neutral.

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

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

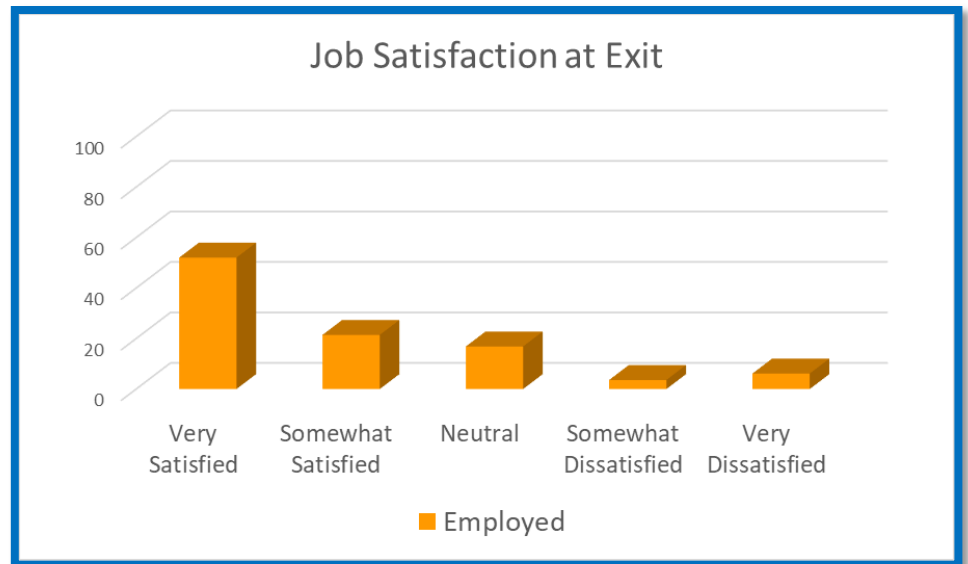
Among those who exited with employment, **82.15%** said that they were very or somewhat likely to return, **13.27%** were neutral, and **4.59%** were somewhat or very unlikely.

Among those who exited without employment, **63.8%** said that they were very or somewhat likely to return, **24.14%** were neutral, and **12.07%** said that they were somewhat or very unlikely to return.

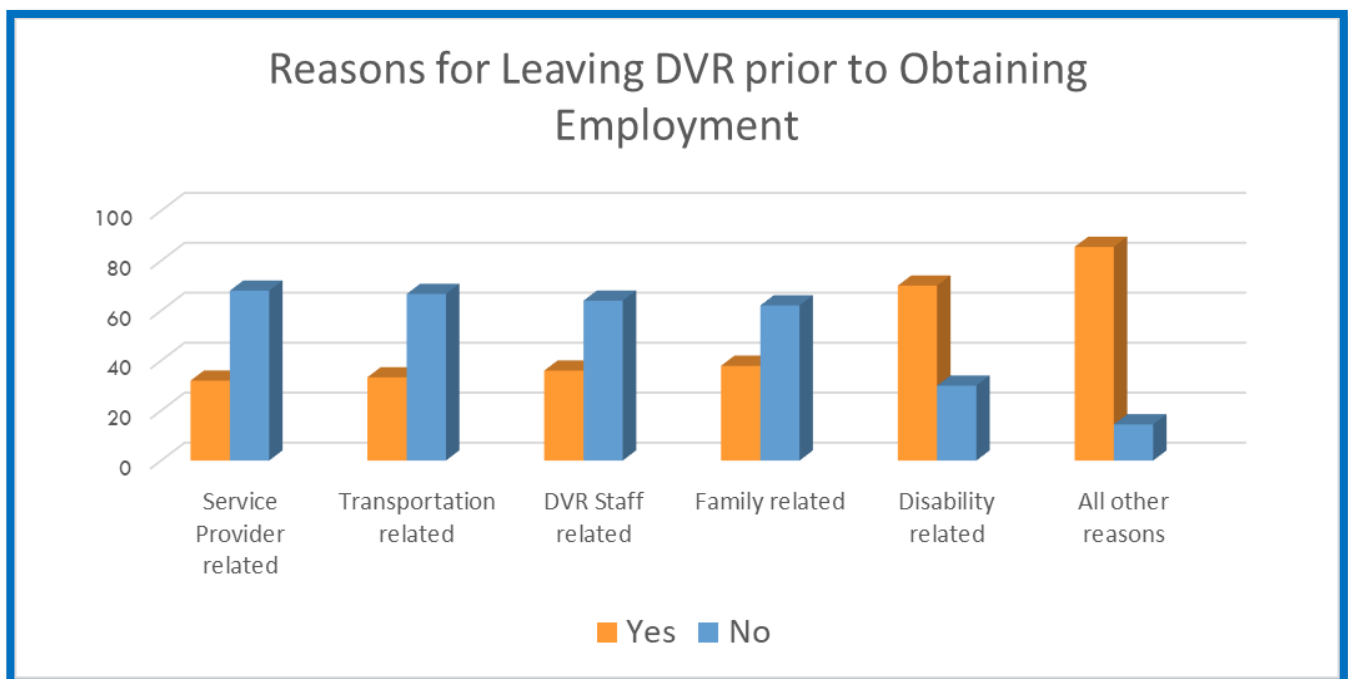


## Participant Satisfaction Survey Results Continued

The participants who were closed in employment status were asked to provide job satisfaction feedback in their survey. **73.47%** indicated that they were very or somewhat satisfied with their employment while **16.84%** were neutral and **9.69%** were either somewhat or very dissatisfied.



Participants who exited DVR services prior to obtaining employment were asked to select from a variety of factors the most prevalent reasons for their departure. Respondents were asked to answer yes or no to the following areas of impact playing a part in their case closure: Service provider related issues **32%**, Transportation-related issues **33.33%**, DVR staff-related issues **36%**, Family-related issues **37.93%**, Disability-related issues **70%**, or other reasons **85.51%**.



# State Rehabilitation Council Goals & Priorities

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The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) was unable to meet consistently through fiscal year 2023 for collaboration to discuss setting new goals and priorities for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The council requested that DVR reflect on the agency's quality of services using the measurements previously set.

## **GOAL 1: Provide quality employment outcomes for people with disabilities.**

- Build Relationships with Business
- Employment Outcomes for Participants with Significant Barriers to Employment
- VR Services support Financial Independence
- Access to Services is Non-Discriminatory

The DVR Business Relations Unit (BRU) connects with businesses throughout Delaware to build and maintain strong working relationships. The BRU partners with businesses to understand the hiring manager's staffing needs, and the job duties of the positions available so they may match DVR participants with the right employment opportunities for their skills, abilities, and interests. The Business Relations Specialists work closely with the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to ensure participants' success with their employment goals and that they have the support and guidance they need during their job search. The Business Relations Specialists also frequently collaborate with other divisions in the Department of Labor such as the Division of Employment and Training to partner with community outreach and career job fairs, and local employer's hiring needs to bring the best career opportunities to our participants.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation customizes services to meet the needs of the individual. DVR job placement services provide participants the development of a resume and job seeking activities, assist the participants in correctly completing job applications and instruct on the appropriate behaviors and appearance for job interviews. The job placement provider observes and recommends job modifications or accommodations, and consultation with the employer/supervisor as needed as well as training the employer regarding ensuring the participant receives consistent, appropriate adjustments to their employment setting as necessary. The placement provider and/or VR Counselor follow up on services to measure the effectiveness of job retention, and employer and participant satisfaction. The VR Counselor ensures that the participant's chosen placement provider works with them to provide training at the job site regarding the functions of the job. Training includes behavioral training at the job site such regarding appropriate co-worker, supervisor, and customer interactions; lunchtime and break-time behaviors; mobility training; and any other skill sets that affect job performance. This service model lays the groundwork for successful employment outcomes for participants with significant barriers to employment.

## **GOAL 2: Support training programs that reflect opportunities in the labor market.**

- Assist consumers to focus on their Career Pathways
- Appropriate Training Opportunities leading to Business-Recognized Credentials
- Coordination with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Partners
- Measurable Skill Gains

- Collaboration with Community Rehabilitation Providers

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation provides career guidance and assistance to individuals with disabilities in mapping out career pathways in occupations that build on interests, skills, abilities, and preferences. The goal is to match the participant to job opportunities that offer the potential for upward mobility with the needed credentials to advance. DVR counselor's conduct career assessments to gather information for person centered employment planning assisting to eliminate barriers that may interfere with success. The personnel assessments the VR counselors arrange for their participants focus on strengths, areas for improvement, challenges and opportunities, short term goals, long term goals and end goals for when they exit the program.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's job skill training providers assist participants with the appropriate training opportunities leading to recognized credentials. DVR Collaborates with Employment and Training for DVR participants to have access to Individual Training Account (ITA) providers. The credentials that DVR participants obtain are industry recognized and recorded at exit of the training program.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation coordinates with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Partners via the following platforms: monthly leadership meetings, WIOA One-Stop meetings, participation in the WIOA Adult Pathways work group, attendance of the WIOA annual convening, collaboration on the combined State Plan under WIOA, and attendance to the Career Pathways conference.

For DVR participants receiving services under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and enrolled in an education or training service, it must be determined if that academic, technical, occupational, or other form of progress leads towards a credential or employment. This advancement is known as a "measurable skills gain" and tracks interim progress. These can be credentials such as a diploma or its equivalent, a degree, a certificate, pre-test, and post-test, for any participant enrolled in an education or training program.

DVR collaborates with community service providers and workforce training partners in the provision of training services. Delaware DVR's aim is to work with state skills and training programs to help build a strong labor force within the occupation sector, with better benefits, more stability, and/or higher pay. Collaboration between Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Delaware Workforce Development Board and Employment and Training has been implemented, giving VR Counselors access to Employment and Training's Delaware Job Link portal to over two hundred and eighty approved and vetted ITA training providers to assist DVR participants with obtaining the skills necessary to pursue employment in their chosen career fields. Additionally, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's Contracting Unit has solicited and awarded contractual agreements to over sixty-five community partners to provide competitive integrated employment training and assessment programs for VR participants with disabilities.

### **GOAL 3: Expand opportunities for students to transition from school to work.**

- Quality of Pre-Employment Transition Services
- Quality of Transition Services
- Coordination with Partners (e.g., DOE & Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS))

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has initiated actions towards enhancing the quality of Pre-Employment Transition services by evaluating and collecting data of the effectiveness of the programs. Developing programs that target labor market growth to enhance the learning and exploratory experiences for the youth. In addition, DVR is identifying tools and venues that will lead to the collection of data needed to continue the expansion of quality services. DVR has five Pre-Employment Transition Service Coordinators providing services under the WIOA, five areas. The coordinators are currently in thirty-two schools throughout Delaware.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation continues to monitor the quality of Transition services by provision of training, developing of tracking tools of referrals, case management, quarterly Team meetings and individual counseling sessions with staff. Delaware DVR has thirteen qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors that provide services throughout the State. The counselors serve all public schools, eighteen to twenty-two educational programs as well as local charter schools, including students within our correctional systems. This team of professionals are engaged with the DOE partners, community partners and sister agencies such as the Division of Development Disabilities Services.

DVR collaborates and coordinates with the Division of Development Disabilities, and the Department of Education to identify challenges and find solutions. The goal is to ensure the students and families are well supported in the transition process and that there is a seamless transition from the educational system into adult services. The DVR team collaborative provides information to students and families by way of informational parent's day or night sessions, resource fairs and other career events.





# Business Relations in Delaware

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The Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has enhanced connections to workforce information, resources, and other advantages for serving individuals with disabilities. Career exploration, employer engagement, and assisting job seekers go to work are at the forefront of DVR's strategic goals. To assist in this area, DVR has an in-house Business Relations Unit which consists of one Statewide Business Relations Manager, five full-time merit, all of whom have post-secondary degrees with concentrations in areas such as marketing, communications, or human resource management. Unit team members consistently receive training in areas required to bring proficiency to the job.

The Business Relations Unit currently functions from a dual-customer perspective of working with job seekers with disabilities and businesses, and exists to:

- Identify and prepare DVR job seekers in a timely manner to meet employer recruiting needs.
- Build relationships, engage business and industry in collaborative activities as a resource to meet their workforce needs.
- Assist the DVR Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to obtain meaningful & quality opportunities for all assigned job seekers who want successful employment.

During FY'23 DVR assisted 692 job seekers with disabilities to obtain/maintain employment. This resulted in our in-house Business Relations Specialists and contractual Placement Specialists working with approximately 497 Delaware businesses to help fill their specific workforce needs.

The Business Relations Team is a partner with the State of Delaware 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. This period there were twenty-two participants added to the EN, six individuals placed in work experience opportunities and four resulted in employment offers.

The following are several participant success stories from the past year:

- 1) MP has been a participant with DVR since 2013, receiving services in the Newark office. She currently is working with a VR Counselor and Business Relations Specialist. DVR supported MP through many challenges to obtain her Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Delaware. Upon graduation MP worked with the Business Relations Specialist for job placement services, including creating her resume, job development, completing applications, interview skills, and conducting mock interviews. Per the VR Counselor, "He worked great with this client who had been a challenge and very dismissive of other employment specialists. His approach worked very well for her, and she cooperated with him so that we could all work together to help her become successfully employed." MP obtained federal employment at OSHA and relocated to Georgia in November where she has been very successful in her position as an Environmental Scientist.

- 2) On Friday, June 16th, Senior Administrator of Business Relations attended the DFRC Blue-Gold Football Game and was able to connect with MB, a former DVR participant who received supported employment services in the Middletown office. MB was very excited and proud to update on his job as a Security Guard with Allied Barton Security Services. MB's worksite is located at WL Gore, and he was very thorough explaining his daily tasks. MB received job placement services from a Business Relations Specialist, including resume development, job development, and interview skills prep. The Business Relations Specialist worked closely with the Hiring Manager at Allied Barton Security Services to determine the best position and location for MB and provided follow-up services for 90 days to assure MB's success in his position.
- 3) AN was referred for DVR Services while in high school and graduated from Sussex Central High School in June of 2019 with a diploma. She initially attended Delaware Tech for Fall 2019 semester, but she was not happy with the major or the classes that she had chosen and decided to pursue part-time employment. She began working with a DVR Business Relations Specialist to find employment in October 2019. AN began working at Royal Farms in Harbeson, DE in March 2020. She maintained her employment with Royal Farms through December of 2022, but things did not work out with this placement, and she reached out to DVR once again for employment assistance in April 2023. AN was assigned to work with another Business Relations Specialist and expressed interest in working at the Amazon Distribution Center in Seaford. AN explained that this location is close to her residence thus this job site would accommodate her transportation needs. The Business Relations Specialist assisted AN to complete the application process with Amazon and she was offered a position. AN initially believed she would have to decline the employment offer as the three-day mandatory training takes place at 2:30 a.m. and she wouldn't have transportation available since she relies on her parents. The Business Relations Specialist contacted the Disability Services team at Amazon to inquire if alternative arrangements could be made for this participant. She also inquired about on-site supports for AN, especially during her training. Although the training times could not be changed, the BRS was able to coordinate alternative training dates that better fit the participant's family's schedule. The BRS and AN's family support also worked with the team at Amazon to ensure she would receive one-on-one training where ongoing job supports will also be identified. AN began her training and new employment with Amazon in Seaford and all reports have been positive thus far.
- 4) JC began receiving DVR services in high school and his vocational goal to build a career pathway at DelDOT. JC reached out to DVR this past Spring to assist him in gaining additional training as a traffic safety flagger. JC completed his flagger training and continued to work with a Business Relations Specialist to obtain a position in the field. In the meantime, the Business Relations Specialist worked with the Employment Network Program Managers to elevate his resume to obtain an internship with DelDOT and prepared JC for his interview. Prior to submitting his resume to the Employment Network, JC had applied for an entry-level position with DelDOT but was declined due to lack of experience. JC received an offer as a Casual/Seasonal Equipment Operator 1 Intern with DelDOT. He started in November training with the team at DelDOT's Ellendale Yard in Sussex County.

# Transition Services in Delaware

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The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed on July 22, 2014, the law requires the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies to set aside a minimum of 15% of their federal funds to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services to Students with Disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services. Delaware DVR Transition services strive for growth and expansion.

Delaware is being recognized as a leading State in providing transition services across the country. Delaware is strengthening services to promote a broad continuum of available resources to all, from pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities to employment advancement. By providing the five required core pre-employment transition service activities for early engagement of students with disabilities regardless of whether they have applied or been determined eligible. The core services are as follows:

- 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

These services are for eligible students enrolled in school, aged between 14 and 22 years old who have a disability, and are potentially eligible for DVR services, as well as consumers referred by DVR and/or community partners. Introducing students to the wide array of services available supports the students with disabilities to access to information to make choices and resources for their educational pathways and success.

DVR contracts with five Pre-Employment Career Coordinators to work directly with the Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and students throughout the state. Pre-ETS Career Coordinators meet with the LEAs to identify the needs of their students regarding gaps in their career preparation services. Together they develop a plan to distribute the core Pre-ETS services that are most needed.

Employment Career Counselors work with students to assist them with developing a foundation of skills related to career interests and exploration, self-advocacy, and disability awareness. However, each school has different resources; DVR remains flexible to meet the needs of the students.

The collaboration among DVR, Department of Education, (DOE), LEAs, Pre-ETS Career Coordinators, and providers continue to be exceptional, and we continue to identify ways to make stronger collaborations and expand services.

DVR monitors and evaluates the programs and services provided by the Pre-ETS Career Coordinators and Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs), both formally and informally. On-site monitoring, observations, feedback from schools, students, and families, and using pre/post tests are all strategies used to evaluate the Pre-ETS services. LEAs incorporate the work completed in Pre-ETS in the students'

IEP and data considerations. The information gives students a better understanding of their strengths, barriers, disability, and accommodation needs and helps to develop and utilize their self-advocacy skills to the best of their ability.

Project SEARCH (PS) is another example of a strong collaboration with DVR, DOE, LEAs, businesses, and Community Rehabilitation Providers. The program continues to serve students in 4 different businesses and all three counties during the school year including Christiana Care Health Services (CCHS) in New Castle County, Bayhealth Hospital, and the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) in Kent County, and Tidal Health Hospital in Sussex County. Each site has a host school district providing the instructor and classroom support, however, students from any district are encouraged to apply and can use the school choice process to participate through the host district.

Delaware has been nationally recognized for the high rate of successful employment among the graduates of all four Project SEARCH sites. The programs consistently achieve 80%- 100% placement rates with each cohort of students. Project Search Steering Committees exist for all Project SEARCH programs in Delaware and are comprised of representatives from each of the partner organizations: the host business, DVR, DOE, LEAs, and provider agencies. Although each program operates slightly differently, the committee meetings are held regularly, generally monthly, but no less than quarterly. The purpose of the committees is to monitor and evaluate the program based on adherence to the Memorandum of Understanding and program fidelity.

The committee reviews roles and responsibilities, processes and procedures, and the timeline of events to evaluate program effectiveness and efficiency. With all partners at the table on a regular basis, there is continuous program evaluation. When situations arise in which a change is required, the partners discuss options, the impact the change may have on the program, and considerations for each individual partner. The Committee will consult with the Project Search on-site team to receive feedback and communicate changes for the implementation of the program.

The Project Search on-site team consists of the instructor, paraprofessional(s), skills trainers, and the VR Counselor. This team meets weekly to review operational needs, plan coverage, identify and address concerns, and facilitate communication and collaboration. A member of the Steering Committee meets with the PS on-site team at least monthly to maintain communication, evaluate the daily operations, and assist with identifying and resolving programmatic barriers. Over the past year DVR and DOE coordinated monthly Technical Assistance from the National Sponsors to keep our teams up to date on best practices.

Delaware continues to be a leading partner in the PIPEline to Career Success for students with disabilities. This initiative has been participating in collaboration with multiple of school districts and continues to expand. The students participating in PIPEline have the opportunity to research an area of concern or challenge, research and provide creative solutions to the leaders of the school districts to ensure participation and equity.

## DVR Participants Achievement of Employment Success

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The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's Mission is as follows: 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. During the last fiscal year through the collaboration of our VR Counselors, our participants, and our Job placement specialists our agency was able to successfully place six hundred and ninety-two participants into employment. Below are a sampling of our participants experiences of success.

- 1) DVR participant AC came to our agency in November of 2020 for assistance with job placement assistance. AC graduated with a Bachelor's Degree from DSU in 2016 in Mass Communication but was unable to find employment in his career field. His DVR Counselor connected him with the DVR Business Relations team where he received job placement services from a Business Relations Specialist. The BRS worked with AC on his resume and assisted him in applying for several positions throughout their working relationship. After being turned down by one of the employers he had interviewed with, Ability Go, who told him he did not have the desired communication skill sets, he and the BRS continued to seek employment. The BRS was able to assist him in successfully applying and receiving a job offer as a Communications Officer at the National Security Agency for Central Security Services in Fort Meade MD. The position started March 27, 2023, and AC was very satisfied and pleased with this job, as the starting salary was \$67,000. AC utilizes a wheelchair for mobility and was able to find an apartment near his office that is accessible. He was also informed from his employer that his job site would be wheelchair accessible to him as well.

The VRC kept in regular contact with him checking in every 30 days on how he was doing with his new position. One of the emailed updates from AC contained the following remarks:

"As I sit at my desk at my new job, remembering how the hiring manager at Ability Go told me that I lacked communication and other skills they required.... I never let it get to me because I knew it's probably not meant to be and something greater is coming. And here we are. This job welcomed me with open arms and really wanted me to be here because they said my communications skills will help make the agency better, make real world impact and touch many individuals. So, very grateful because even from the start my goal with you and vocational [rehabilitation] was always to get a federal job at one of the top agencies. Thankful that we and vocational rehabilitation accomplished that and made my dream come true! So, thank you!"

- 2) A VRC in the Kent County office began working with HM in 2017 during his senior year of high school. During the initial intake, HM expressed that he intended to obtain a two-year degree in accounting. He was self-aware of the fact that he was strong in math and determined. HM completed his associate degree in accounting at DTCC in May 2021. He began looking for jobs in his field and quickly learned that most employers required a bachelor's degree for entry level positions. He then reached out to VRC and asked for supports in going back to school to get a four-year degree so he would have more opportunities available to him. The participant chose Wilmington University to continue his education and completed his Bachelor of Accounting and Finance in the summer of 2023, all while working full time as a cashier for Walmart and caring for his young child. He emailed VRC prior to his final semester to request an in person meeting to discuss how DVR could assist him with finding employment in his area of study. During this meeting, VRC discussed with the client working with an in-house DVR Business Relations Specialist for job placement assistance. HM agreed to this plan and after working



together for a short time, his Business Relations Specialist was able to assist him in applying for an accounting position for a small firm in Milford, DE. HM recently contacted his VR Counselor to advise that he received a job offer and has accepted his first full time position in his career field at Hodges Accounting.

- 3) JB self-referred to DVR services in July of 2021 requesting assistance with adaptive farm equipment to enable him to effectively access and manage contracted work. He worked part time as a farm contractor with a family friend but was severely limited to other opportunities due to his quadriplegia and lack of equipment necessary to address his disability. His VR Counselor reached out to AgraAbility for information and assistance and learned that a VR Counselor, Dr. Sam Matthew, previously worked for that agency and was instrumental in developing their vocational adaptive needs assessment tool. Dr. Matthew was recruited to assist with this case and conducted an on-site Assessment of Need with Recommendations. He provided the written Assessment with recommendations as to specific equipment needs for the consumer. Hydraulic lift equipment was obtained LifeLyfts which did the installation. The participant purchased a truck with his funds with a flatbed to which the lift could be fitted. A post installation site review was conducted and follow up with the consumer included his updated Business Plan and Income statements, and his reporting method to Social Security as required due to his SSDI benefit. He was placed into DVR Employed status following confirmation that the Lift was working well, and he had upcoming contracts for work. He reported that he worked on more than 1000 acres over the summer and was very satisfied with his work ability to date. JB has relayed no obstacles and has expressed satisfaction with his progress and amount of work. At case closure his VRC received the following note from JB expressing his gratitude,  
"I cannot thank you and your office enough! This truck was on my wish list for soooo long. It's been life changing so far! I hate to see our case close because doing business with you has been so wonderful. If I ever need any DVR services again, I will be calling and requesting [you].... Thanks again. "
- 4) A DVR Counselor in the Sussex County office began working with JW as a transition student in February of 2018 while he was a junior attending Delmar High School. The VRC continued to support JW through the completion of his degree. DVR assisted him in obtaining a one-on-one nurse while he attended classes at college, securing assistive technology and adaptive equipment for his educational needs, financial assistance, and employment readiness. He graduated from Salisbury University with a bachelor's degree in communication and secured a position as a Promotions Producer with WBOC shortly after. After a few months of employment, he was promoted to host his own radio show owned by WBOC called Solo Cup Saturday Night with JW from 7 p.m. – 9 p.m. and is also the host on Sundays from 4 p.m. – 7 p.m. on WRDE-FM Coast Country station 103.9 and 106.3. JW is frequently featured on WBOC in commercials advertising their radio station Coast country.
- 5) KH came to DVR in December of 2016 as a Transition student. DVR provided him vocational career counseling and supports throughout his senior year and afterwards at both DTCC where he obtained his associate degree in applied science and later at Wilmington University. KH graduated from Wilmington University with a degree in Human Resource Management this past spring of 2023. With ongoing guidance and counseling from his VR counselor, he found a job with the State of Delaware Department of Human Resources (DHR) office as a Training Support Specialist in July 2023. His supervisor, Ashley commented, "KH is awesome, and he's doing fantastic. He is very comfortable with the team, asking questions and has picked up everything very quickly. He's open to feedback and has been very

receptive. We've dubbed him the mayor. He's introduced himself and is friendly with everyone in the office, even those in the other divisions. He's brought a new and different element to the office in a very positive way."

- 6) LB was referred to DVR as a transition student in 2020 by Cape Henlopen high school. She made an informed decision to pursue the vocational goal of Teaching Assistants. LB initially enrolled at Delaware Technical Community College in the fall of 2021 to major in Early childcare, but she left the college after having trouble keeping up with the academic pace of her courses. Her DVR Counselor met with LB to review her career strengths and interests and develop a strategy to move her forward in her career goals. After collaboration, LB, the VR Counselor and LB's family support determined that the employment goal of Paraprofessional would be a suitable transition for her to pursue. LB was unsuccessful during her first two attempts at the ParaPro assessment. Her VR Counselor referred LB to one of DVR's providers for tutoring assistance to ensure she would be prepared for her third attempt at the assessment. Accommodations of extra time and a reader were approved for LB to take the exam for the third time. LB successfully passed the ParaPro assessment on her third try. She was able to secure employment at the Cape Henlopen school district as a Paraprofessional for Sussex Consortium. Her job title is Substitute Service Aide, and she is working independently without supports.
- 7) SL came to DVR in April of 2023 seeking assistance with drivers training to become licensed to drive with hand controls and obtain modifications to his vehicle. These services were needed to maintain employment. His VR counselor coordinated his services with one of our providers and SL obtained his license and was approved for funding for the vehicle modification through Delaware Maryland Paralyzed Veterans. SL has been driving with hand controls for a month and continues to be employed. He shared the below email to his counselor regarding his experience, "Thank you so much for checking in with me. I continue to be impressed with the efficiency of Delaware state government. Really! On Sep 26th Spin Life installed the hand controls into my Toyota. On Sep 27th Brant's Driving School sent a certified teacher to go with me to pick up the car and take a test drive. All good. On Oct 17th I was able to drive myself up to Reading, PA for my monthly meeting with my Board of Directors. All good. On Oct 24th I received a request from DEL DOT for an annual review of my physical abilities. On Nov 6th, I drove up to Chestnut Hill Hospital in Philadelphia to confer with my Primary Care doctor. He will send DEL DOT the completed papers. All good. .... you have given me my mobility back. I am able to work and travel to meetings. I am able to travel to workshops and work events with my peers. Thank you again. "

# Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Federal Fiscal Year 2023 Performance Report

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Successful Rehabilitations:	692	
Most Significant Disabilities	278 (40%)	} 93%
Significant Disabilities	367 (53%)	
Transition Youth Rehabilitated	277	
Total Participants Served:	4,364	
Most Significantly Disabled	1,869 (43%)	} 92%
Significantly Disabled	2,135 (49%)	
New Applicants in FY 2023	1,790	
Determined Eligible	1,598	
Acceptance Rate	94%	
New Transition Students	654	
Transition Students Served	1,855	
Average Hourly Wage for FY 2023 Closures:		
All closures	\$15.72	
Transition	\$14.71	
Supported Employment	\$12.71	
Adults (Not TR or SE)	\$17.20	
Individuals in Delayed Status at the end of FY 2023	0	



# Vocational Rehabilitation Office Locations

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## New Castle County

### **Wilmington**

4425 N. Market St.  
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

### **Middletown**

Appoquinimink State Service Ctr.  
122 Silver Lake Road  
Middletown, DE 19709  
P: 302-696-3180  
F: 302-696-3181

## 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>