

placement CONSUMER assessment Jobs security Independence situational follow-along Integration EMPLOYMENT follow-along Careers ENGAGEMENT

2014 Annual Report

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Transition consumer

Virginia State Rehabilitation Council

Services Urgency training INDIVIDUAL WORKFORCE success Teamwork JOB COACH RESPECT counseling



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT FOR AGING AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

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The theme of this year's annual report is *Community Partnerships*.

These are not just words, but a means to successful employment outcomes for the job seekers DARS serves. We often use terms such as collaboration, teamwork, cooperation, group effort, creativity, common goal and relationships to describe what it takes to have good working partnerships.

It requires an ongoing, deliberate effort to partner with other people or organizations and there is no success without it. The job seekers DARS serves look to the agency to establish the best services and resources necessary to prepare for, find and retain employment. DARS looks to its community partners for the talent and tools to help these job seekers achieve success. And they deliver.

As Babe Ruth said, "The way a team plays as a whole determines its success." It's very important to remember always that when our team succeeds, it means people with disabilities succeed.

Many community partners made a positive difference in the lives of thousands of Virginians with disabilities in 2014: Employment Services Organizations (<http://bit.ly/1AXJstu>), Centers for Independent Living (<http://bit.ly/1AF1JgL>), Brain Injury Services providers (<http://bit.ly/1mCaXpl>), Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (www.wwrc.virginia.gov), local school systems, Community Services Boards (<http://1.usa.gov/1xeizC7>), local departments of social services, advocacy organizations, and countless more.

These partnerships are invaluable to the programs and individuals featured in this report.

Message from the Chairperson

“As stated in the mission, collaboration with community partners is a critical factor in the department’s ability to create the opportunities for Virginia’s deserving citizens with significant disabilities.”



On behalf of the State Rehabilitation Council, I am honored to share with you the 2014 SRC Annual Report. In spite of continued budgetary constraints, Virginia’s vocational rehabilitation program had an exceptional year with 4,087 individuals with significant disabilities becoming successfully employed, 97.8 percent of them employed at or above minimum wage in integrated settings. I continue to be amazed at the commitment I see from the employees of the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services who strive to realize their remarkable mission. This mission statement is succinct, yet all-encompassing:

“The Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, in collaboration with community partners, provides and advocates for resources and services to improve the employment, quality of life, security, and independence of older Virginians, Virginians with disabilities, and their families.”

This year, the theme of our annual report is “Community Partnerships.” As stated in the mission, collaboration with community partners is a critical factor in the department’s ability to create the opportunities for Virginia’s deserving citizens with significant disabilities. It truly is an alliance of devotion.

It was an honor and a learning experience to serve as Chair of the SRC the past year. During the year, Commissioner Rothrock hosted two very informative leadership summits in the beautiful settings of the Virginia Capitol and the Virginia War Memorial. I also had the opportunity to attend two SRC Region III Learning Communities where I was able to meet and compare notes with SRC chairmen from Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. In June, I was privileged to present the SRC Employee Leadership Roy J. Ward Awards to five DARS employees who “go above and beyond” in their efforts to serve Virginians with disabilities.

The most inspiring part of my year as Chair came when the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center hosted our August meeting. Following the meeting, WWRC Director Rick Sizemore gave us a tour of the facility. This gave everyone a firsthand look at the wonderful work and support this unique campus provides to its clients.

It’s been a busy yet fulfilling year. Thank you.

Ellen McIlhenny
SRC Chairperson

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Message from the Commissioner

“Meeting our Commonwealth workforce’s needs with our consumers is the ultimate goal in vocational rehabilitation and we are succeeding.”



As I grew up in Martinsville in the 1960s, one of my interests was Motown music. The Temptations and Supremes were usually No. 1 on the charts, at least prior to the Beatles. One of my favorite tunes was a duet, the big hit by Marvin Gaye and Kim Weston, “It Takes Two.”

The basic theme of this tune was that life can be OK as a “single,” but far better with a partner. During this past year, as DARS embraced Marvin and Kim’s advice, one partnership flowered and another was born.

Our Project SEARCH initiative truly blossomed. Thirteen hospitals across our Commonwealth each welcomed six to eight youngsters with multiple barriers to employment for a nine-month internship during which they experienced an array of job clusters. These interns not only gained job skills but learned to work on a team. Local school systems and our network of Employment Services Organizations maximized the initiative’s potential success. Seeing these youngsters transform from “students” to “workers” is a rewarding experience. And, significantly for the students and their families, so often the internships lead to careers.

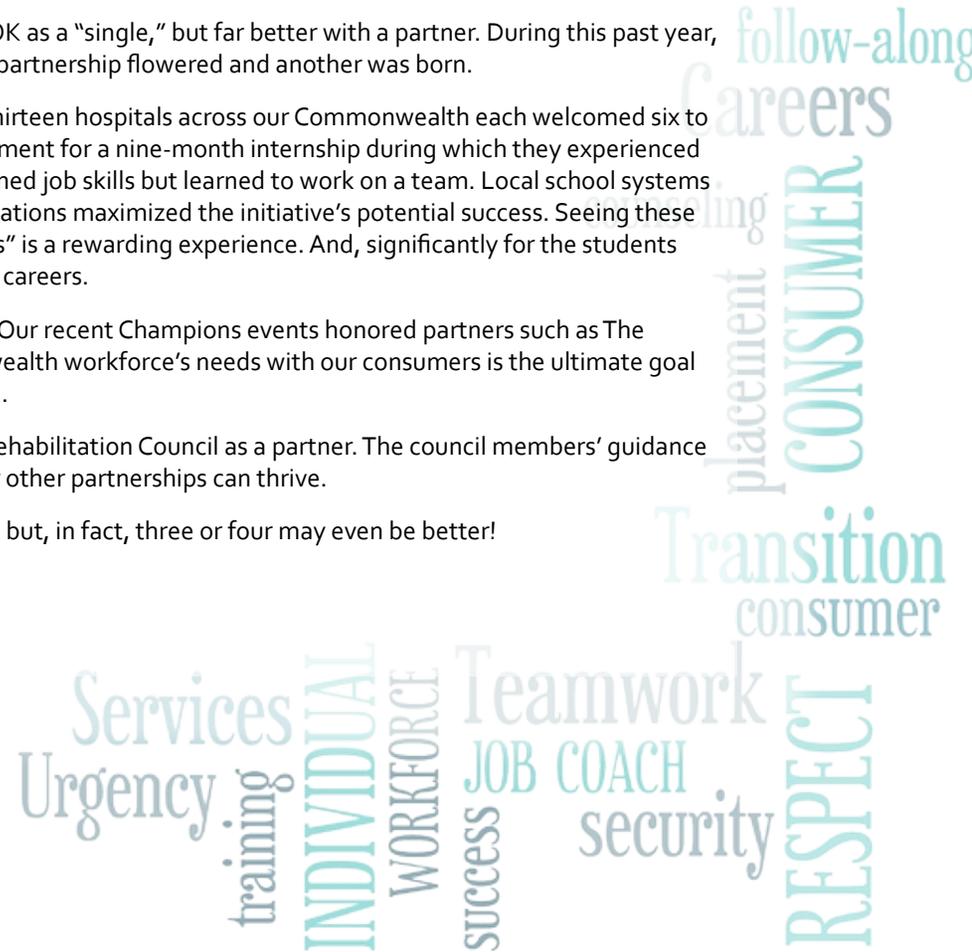
Our newest significant partners are corporations. Our recent Champions events honored partners such as The Hershey Co. and Amazon. Meeting our Commonwealth workforce’s needs with our consumers is the ultimate goal in vocational rehabilitation and we are succeeding.

I would be remiss not to mention our own State Rehabilitation Council as a partner. The council members’ guidance and advocacy provides an environment where our other partnerships can thrive.

Yes, Marvin and Kim had it right. It does take two, but, in fact, three or four may even be better!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Rothrock".

Jim Rothrock
Commissioner, Department for Aging
and Rehabilitative Services



2014 SRC Members



Front row, left to right:
Sally Thompson, Deloris Johnson,
Tonya Fowler, Toney Lineberry

Back row, left to right:
Richard Keene, Bruce Phipps,
Samantha Hollins, Shannon Haworth,
Ellen McIlhenny, Ken Jessup

SRC Council

Dack Axelle - Mechanicsville
Suzanne Bowers - Bealeton
Kate Broderick - Norfolk
Tonya Fowler - Lynchburg
Audie Gaddis - Harrisonburg
Shannon Haworth - Richmond
Samantha Hollins - Richmond
Ken Jessup - DBVI liaison

Deloris Johnson - Harrisonburg
Richard Keene - Abingdon
Toney Lineberry - Manakin-Sabot
Ellen McIlhenny - Montpelier
Bruce Phipps - Roanoke
Jim Rothrock, ex-officio - Richmond
Lauren Snyder-Roche - Poquoson
Sally Thompson - Hampton

2013-2014 Council Activities

Council Chair Ellen McIlhenny attended the Region III SRC Learning Community Meetings hosted by the George Washington University Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center (TACE). The meetings included representatives from SRCs in Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. The meetings included leadership training and discussions about the challenges SRCs face in finding new members, legislative advocacy and strategies for recognizing vocational rehabilitation counselors, legislators and our community partners.

Ellen McIlhenny attended the DARS Leadership Summit for board/council members held at the Virginia War Memorial. This annual summit brings together the chairs and vice-chairs of all the DARS boards and councils to provide information and tools to handle the ever increasing demands of board and council members. Ms. McIlhenny and Kate Broderick also participated in the orientation program for new DARS board and council members hosted by Commissioner Rothrock and held at the Virginia Capitol.



In November 2013, the Council held its annual retreat in Richmond. The George Washington University TACE facilitated the event and presented the performance outcomes of the VR program in federal fiscal year 2013. The members also discussed how they could enhance their commitment to the work of the Council.

The Council sent letters to Sens. Mark Warner and Tim Kaine expressing concerns about provisions in Senate Bill 1356 reauthorizing the Rehabilitation Act. Specific concerns included the possibility that the Rehabilitation Services Administration would be moved from the U.S. Department of Education to the U.S. Department of Labor and the proposed change in the educational requirements for qualified VR counselors.

The Council sent a letter to departing Gov. Robert McDonnell and the transition team of Gov.-elect Terry McAuliffe to notify them of the accomplishments of the vocational rehabilitation program in the development and consideration of the Commonwealth's biennial budget and to thank them for their continuing support.

Visit our website to find
past SRC annual reports:
www.va-src.org/news.htm.

The Council presented its annual SRC Employee Leadership Roy J. Ward Awards to five employees from the Division of Rehabilitative Services and the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center. The five award recipients are featured in this report.

The Council reviewed and approved the 2012 and 2013 Vocational Rehabilitation Consumer Satisfaction Reports and renewed its Memorandum of Understanding with DARS for the conduct of the satisfaction survey.

The Council drafted its recommendations to the agency on the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs that were included in the 2015 State Plan as Attachment 4.2(c) Input of the State Rehabilitation Council. The Council also reviewed and approved Attachment 4.11(c)(2) State's Goals and Priorities and other 2015 State Plan Attachments.

The Council signed a letter of support for a Disability Rehabilitation Research Project grant on the project, "Estimating Return on Investment in State Rehabilitation Programs." This grant has been funded and Ellen McIlhenny will serve as the SRC representative to the grant advisory group.

The Council approved a one-year extension of the contracts for the four administrative hearing officers.

The August meeting was held at Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center, where the Council toured the facility at the conclusion of the meeting.

SRC Recommendations

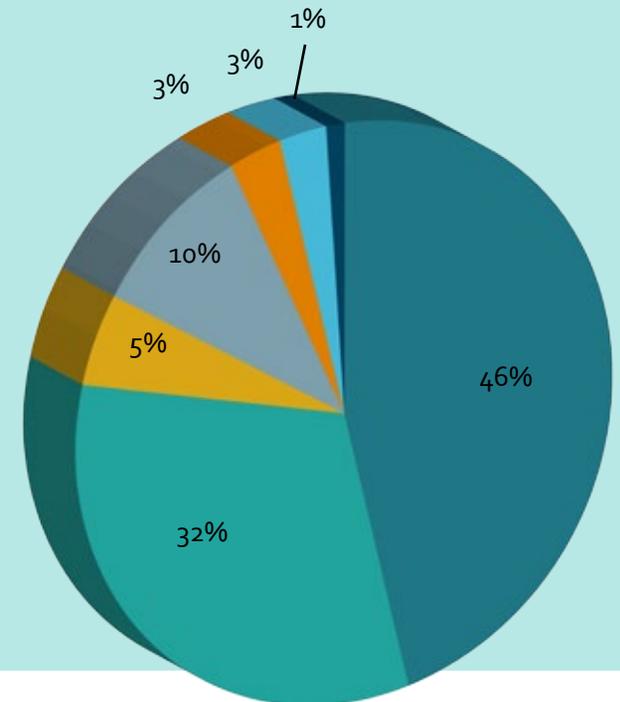
At the SRC's annual retreat in November, members received information about the vocational rehabilitation program's performance during FFY 2014. Based on this information and other information received throughout the year, the SRC called on DARS to:

- Look at best practices of offices with strong success rates to determine if the practices can be replicated at other offices;
- Analyze and aggregate data to determine service quality; and
- Analyze unsuccessful case closures to determine how the agency can improve its success rate.



The Richmond Times Dispatch published Commissioner Rothrock's opinion piece, "Virginia's Workforce: Inclusion and Opportunity for All," on Oct. 13, 2014. (www.vdars.org/blog.htm)

Impairments of Clients Served in 2014 (total 9,766)



Client Success Story



Success Story: Tevin O'Brien

Tevin O'Brien first entered Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center in 2011 for its 10-day Postsecondary Education Rehabilitation Transition program after graduating from McLean High School. He later attended the Life Skills Transition Program, followed by vocational training focused on groundskeeping and maintenance. Tevin's instructors demonstrated how to model supervisors and take initiative on a project, as well as the importance of punctuality.

"Woodrow prepared me for taking care of myself independently and time management, which has been a huge issue for me," Tevin said.

After graduating from WWRC in 2013, Tevin worked with Sheli Sotiropoulos, a job placement counselor in the DARS Fairfax office, and her intern, Tonya. "They were very helpful and took a lot of time with me, finding jobs that were best suited for me," Tevin said. They met weekly at a local workforce resource center to search and apply for potential jobs and went on several informational interviews with potential employers.

As Tevin lacked work experience and did not drive, his job choices were limited in the competitive Northern Virginia market. Another job placement counselor in Fairfax shared a job lead at the Sully plantation,

a historic site in the Chantilly area. Tevin did well on the interview, Sheli said, but when he did not get that position, she approached the director about creating an unpaid work experience for Tevin.

The lead groundskeeper agreed to work with Tevin a few days per week. Despite starting off in the harsh winter months, he worked enthusiastically with his supervisor and colleagues. He learned to operate unfamiliar equipment and gained three months of valuable work experience.

In the spring, Tonya helped Tevin apply for a seasonal, full-time job at the Reston Association, a planned community in Northern Virginia, with the trail maintenance crew. Tevin was hired in April 2014, making \$12 an hour. Since then, his counselor closed his case.

To help Tevin succeed at his new workplace, Sheli discussed Tevin's learning disabilities and his work-related strengths with the supervisor. They spoke about accommodations Tevin needed, such as extra time to learn tasks and learning through observation and hands-on practice. The staff was willing to work closely with him on tasks that challenged him and assigned him duties that were most compatible with his abilities.

"Everyone keeps everyone on track," Tevin said, adding

that he fits in well with the maintenance crew. He enjoys the flexible hours, his colleagues and tending to the different sites where he maintains walking trails.

During the summer, Tevin's former supervisor offered him a paid position at the Sully plantation, based on Tevin's proven capabilities during his unpaid work experience. Tevin opted to stay at Reston, but was pleased to know that his efforts to grow in his chosen line of work paid off.

Tevin's experience illustrates the valuable partnership that exists between WWRC and the Division of Rehabilitative Services in ensuring success for our consumers.

"Woodrow prepared me for taking care of myself independently and time management, which has been a huge issue for me,"

Awards & Recognition

SRC Employee Leadership Awards



Pictured with SRC Chair Ellen McIlhenny (far left) are (L to R): Linda Eads, accepting on behalf of her late husband, Doug Eads; Sandra Gerhardt; Kristen Chesser; Wendy Cullen-Lawhorne and Tracy Topolosky.

In June 2014, the State Rehabilitation Council presented its 2014 Employee Leadership Roy J. Ward Recognition Awards for outstanding service and contribution to the field of vocational rehabilitation and the disability community. Five awards were given this year at a recognition luncheon.

Sandra Gerhardt is a highly respected VR counselor serving adult consumers in the City of Portsmouth. She has worked with DARS for 14 years and is a distinguished leader in the Eastern region. She has been an active member of the National Rehabilitation Association and its state chapter and is a recipient of the Virginia Rehabilitation Counselor/Educator "Spirit Award."

Kristen Chesser began her career at DARS as a VR counselor in Charlottesville and at Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center. In 2013, she assumed leadership of WWRC's Behavior Specialist program and led efforts to redesign the campus-wide behavioral intervention system to assist direct service staff in crafting interventions that correct and teach rather than provoking negative behaviors.

Wendy Cullen-Lawhorne began her career at WWRC in 2000, serving as a mobile evaluator, vocational evaluator and providing leadership as the program manager for vocational evaluation. At WWRC, she worked to cross train vocational evaluators and develop notebooks for each evaluation area, enabling clients to receive the evaluation of their choice. She consistently met or exceeded her department's yearly client goal of 1,020 clients served in vocational evaluation.

In 2012, Tracy Topolosky, who has been with the agency for about 20 years, transferred to a new position that serves a medical caseload, coordinating continued therapy services for consumers who are close to completing acute rehabilitation but need additional services and recovery before returning to work. As of June 2014, of the approximately 100 consumers served on this caseload, about 75 percent made enough recovery to continue with their vocational rehabilitation.

The family of the late Doug Eads, who passed away in May, accepted his posthumous award for distinguished leadership as a longtime job development/job placement counselor in the Christiansburg office and his tireless work to secure successful employment for VR consumers. He will be remembered as a dedicated employee and as a positive ambassador for DARS.

UR-DARS ROI Research Efforts Recognized

DARS has again won national recognition from the National Council on Rehabilitation Education, which presented DARS with its 2014 President's Award for Excellence in Vocational Rehabilitation. The honor recognizes DARS' work, led by Drs. Joseph Ashley and Kirsten Rowe, with the University of Richmond and University of Virginia economists on "Return on Investment" in vocational rehabilitation. DARS won the 2013 President's Award for the agency's innovative Work Incentives Specialist Advocate program. The NCRE is a professional rehabilitation counseling organization chartered with the responsibility of improving rehabilitation counseling services to persons with disabilities through quality education and research.



Dr. Joseph Ashley and Kirsten Rowe were recognized for their research efforts on "Return on Investment" in vocational rehabilitation.



Success Story: Mary Nay

In her 70s, Mary Nay remains full of inspiration and capable of beating the odds. She was born with cerebral palsy and has bilateral hearing loss. She uses hearing aids and a scooter to aid her mobility.

Mary spent 30 years as a lead data entry clerk in the information technology department of the telecommunications firm Comdial Corp. At the same time, she worked evenings for 23 years with Cooper & Secrest Associates, a nationally known political polling firm, where she was a supervisor her last 15 years on the job.

Mary approached DARS in 2012 because she did not like staying at home in retirement. "I'm a people person,"

she said. DARS Rehabilitation Counselor Karla Leshner helped Mary obtain improved hearing aids, a walker and scooter. Mary also worked with Kaye Monroe, a job placement counselor in DARS' Charlottesville office, who helped her apply for jobs and set up interviews.

She began working as a cashier at the Walmart Supercenter in Charlottesville in August 2013. "I was scared to death. I had never run a cash register," Mary said. "I kept the supervisors running at first. Comprehending things can be a problem, but once I got it, it was great."

Mary, who hadn't worked with the public this intensely in a long time, worried that co-workers and customers might not accept her and her limitations. She found that wasn't the case. People will wait longer in line to check out at her register and have told store management how much they appreciate that Walmart hired her. Originally hired as a seasonal worker, Mary stayed on as a permanent employee and now works 32 hours a week

and earns \$9.30 an hour.

Walmart's work accommodations include placing her only at the express lanes, providing a stool for her to sit on while working and allowing her to park her scooter near her register for easy and safe mobility.

In May 2014, DARS honored Mary as a client of the year at the regional Champions of Disability Employment event in Staunton.

Mary has written and published a book about her experience as a person with a disability and how she refuses to let physical limitations or people's reaction to her disabilities stand in the way of her goals.

For example, after many years of using her scooter, Mary's leg muscles began to atrophy. Her doctor prescribed an exercise program at a local fitness center. After working with the staff on exercise machines for several weeks, Mary's legs strengthened.

One day, she sat on her scooter and watched as people walked around the track. She thought, "I'm going to do that." She got out of her scooter, made her way to the track and completed three laps. She can now walk, using canes, up to 2 miles at a time and walks several times a week.

"So far, my life has given me just about everything I wanted ... I was given a chance for education; I was fortunate to have become part of the workforce; and happily married with a family. What more could I ask for?"

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

Vocational rehabilitation services assist Virginians with disabilities to reach their desired employment goal. Individuals who meet the eligibility criteria work in partnership with a VR counselor and other Division of Rehabilitative Services staff, service providers and community partners to develop an individualized program to receive the services that they need to become or remain employed or to regain or advance in employment. Services may include assessment, vocational evaluation, counseling and guidance, restoration, training, job development, assistive technology, supported employment, placement, etc. Mutually determined services and service providers are developed into an Individualized Plan for Employment to achieve a vocational goal and meaningful employment in accordance with the personal needs and objectives of each individual.

Expenditure Categories FFY14

Category	Total Spent	Total% Of
Supported Employment Services	\$15,706,100.71	64.0%
Training, including Tuition	\$1,685,835.96	6.9%
Non Medical Supplies and Services	\$1,398,308.34	5.7%
Work Adjustment Training	\$1,080,426.65	4.4%
Fuel, Travel and Transportation	\$988,380.65	4.0%
Medical and Therapeutic	\$944,620.62	3.8%
Maintenance - Room and Board	\$583,035.22	2.4%
Durable Medical Equipment	\$536,552.86	2.2%
Work Incentive Services	\$329,516.00	1.3%
Attendant Care and PAS Payment for Payroll	\$310,996.37	1.3%
Interpretive Services	\$302,322.72	1.2%
Modifications - Home/Vehicle and Rehab Engineering	\$280,818.09	1.1%
Community Support Services	\$245,701.22	1.0%
Self Employment including Tools and Equipment	\$68,388.36	0.3%
Diagnostics	\$37,616.87	0.2%
Services to Family Members	\$25,863.31	0.1%
Independent Living Services	\$23,174.21	0.1%
Other	\$1,500.00	0.0%
Total	\$24,549,158.16	100.0%

2014 Program Highlights

VR Outcomes

DARS continued under an Order of Selection in FFY 2014 due to insufficient funds to serve all eligible individuals. However, the agency was able to operate with Priority Category I (individuals with most significant disabilities) open the entire year and Priority Category II (individuals with significant disabilities with two serious functional limitations) open for half the year. This allowed DARS to serve 29,509 consumers, a 5 percent increase over the previous year. A total of 48.6 percent (14,344) of these consumers were transition age (ages 14-24).

Of those served, 83 percent were most significantly disabled.

2014 also was a banner year with 4,087 consumers becoming successfully employed. This represented a 30 percent increase and almost 1,000 more successful outcomes than in 2013. More than 97 percent of these consumers were employed in a competitive job. In addition, the program achieved a success rate of 61.7 percent, the highest in 25 years.

DARS continued to emphasize timeliness of services. Eligibility determinations are required to be made within 60 days of application unless extenuating circumstances justify a delay. In FFY 2014, the average length of time between application and eligibility was just 41 days. The average length of time between eligibility and the development of the Individualized Plan for Employment was 49.97 days, well below the 90-day requirement.

Other program highlights include:

- 10,704 applications for services were taken, an increase of 8.1 percent (9,906) over 2013.
- The percent of consumers who were determined ineligible for services decreased to 4.6 percent.
- 8,021 Individualized Plans for Employment were written.
- Average hourly earnings were \$9.66, a decrease from \$10.06 in 2013.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

Consumer Satisfaction

Each year, the agency conducts a consumer satisfaction survey among consumers who received services through the Division of Rehabilitative Services and were either employed at the time of case closure or not employed. The survey provides a systematic method of learning the point of view of DRS consumers. Participants provide their levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction regarding services, staff and various aspects of the vocational rehabilitation process. FFY 2013 consumer survey responses showed:

- DRS provides good service quality.
 - Consumers with employment outcomes continued to report overall satisfaction above the agency's 82 percent target.
 - Overall satisfaction for consumers without an employment outcome continued to improve.
- Ninety-one percent (n=204) of consumers who were competitively employed at closure and earning at or above minimum wage reported they were working.
 - Seventy-nine percent were satisfied with their current job.
 - Seventy-two percent of those satisfied expected to hold the same job a year later.

DRS remained strong on consumer perception of service quality.

- More than 80 percent of consumers agreed they were treated well by DRS staff (93 percent, n=367); would refer a friend (86 percent, n=342); and would return to DRS if needed (84 percent, n=330).
- Consumers believed they were not rushed (85 percent, n=334); received clear explanation of services (86 percent, n=339); and were taken seriously (86 percent, n=340).
- Seventy-eight percent (n=308) of consumers agreed their counselors knew about helpful programs and 80 percent (n=316) believed their counselors met timetables discussed for the VR program. Satisfaction has improved for consumers without an employment outcome.

Satisfaction with involvement in developing the plan (75 percent, n=295) and the time it takes (73 percent, n=288) remained below 80 percent; perception among consumers without an employment outcome has improved.

FFY 2013 ends the 11-year assessment of satisfaction for consumers with case closure after services. The new model (implemented in FFY 2014) focuses on assessing satisfaction for consumers with an open case (post-employment plan but prior to employment).

SRC Retreat

The Council held its annual retreat in November where members heard presentations by DRS Skills for Leadership members on their strategic planning projects. Members toured WWRC during their August meeting.



Message from the DRS Director

“And while jobs are the most obvious measure of success, it is about more than people getting jobs. We measure success in how people are served through our program.”

We measure success in Virginia’s vocational rehabilitation program in many different ways. First and foremost, it’s about people obtaining jobs. In 2014, 4,087 “job candidates” became successfully employed, nearly 1,000 more than in 2013. In addition, we saw a success rate of 62 percent, the highest in 25 years.

And while jobs are the most obvious measure of success, it is about more than people getting jobs. We measure success in *how* people are served through our program. I am proud to announce awards to our top offices across the Commonwealth that embodied the values of “Intense Consumer Engagement” in this year’s Director’s Awards:

Teamwork Award – as evidenced through collaborative effort, enthusiasm, initiative and creativity as an office team to help “job candidates” become “employees”: **Petersburg and Christiansburg offices**

Most Improved Award – as demonstrated through analysis of performance data addressing: (1) time from employment plan to successful employment outcome; (2) number of successful employment outcomes; (3) earnings; (4) time from services implemented to closure; and (5) job goal matching the plan goal. Performance outcomes were compared to those in the previous year: **South Hampton Roads Office**

Timeliness Award – as demonstrated through shortest length of time to move a consumer from being an applicant to having an employment plan implemented and therefore demonstrating a sense of urgency to consumer needs: **Roanoke Office**

Quality Award – as evidenced by highest rates for competitive employment outcomes, wages and hours worked at closure, thereby demonstrating respect for quality outcomes for consumers: **Pounding Mill Office**

Engagement Award – as demonstrated by meeting or exceeding all measured performance standards as outlined on the Commissioner’s Scorecard, including: (1) successful closures; (2) individual plans for employment written; (3) earnings; (4) competitive employment rate; and (5) success (rehabilitation) rate: **Fairfax, Alexandria and Abingdon offices**

Honorable mentions went to the following offices for meeting four of the five criteria for the Engagement Award – all were just slightly under the goal for wages: Franklin, Hampton/Newport News, Henrico, Martinsville, South Boston, Warsaw and Williamsburg.

It is my honor to publically recognize and reward exceptional performance and quality service provision to all DRS staff who embrace the values of teamwork, respect, a sense of urgency, client responsibility and engagement in their work. When staff focuses their contributions towards a common goal, consumers are able to increase their independence and quality of life through gainful employment. And *that* is our mission.

Kathy Hayfield
Director, Division of Rehabilitative Services



Client Success Story

Success Story: Daniel Altomonte

"Daniel Altomonte is someone who never lost sight of his career path and his hopes for how his life will be for him and his family," said Penni Wetherell, job placement counselor in DARS' Fishersville office. She began working with Daniel in June 2013, when he worked part time at a local grocery store.

Daniel, who has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, anxiety and a learning disability, had good references from previous jobs servicing vehicles, painting and custodial and manufacturing work. He had taken some college courses and wanted to work for an employer that would provide him a stable, secure workplace so he and his wife could start a family, Penni said.

The Hershey Co. launched its H.E.R.O.S. (Hershey Extends Real Opportunities to Succeed) initiative in 2012 at its Lancaster, Pa., manufacturing facility. Bolstered by the program's success in Pennsylvania, the company began recruiting candidates to replicate the effort at its Stuarts Draft plant.

Penni thought that Daniel would be a good fit. "When I approached Daniel about this opportunity, he immediately stated he felt this was the job he had been waiting for, for many years," she said. Prior to his interview with Hershey, Penni reviewed the company's policies, demands of the job and the possibility of

mandatory overtime hours or swing shifts. "Daniel didn't flinch. He wanted to work at Hershey."

Daniel interviewed with Hershey in July 2013, but did not get a position. "We were told there may be more opportunities in the future, but no guarantees. Daniel chose not to give up hope and worked harder on his interviewing skills," Penni said.

Over the next months, Daniel continued working at the grocery store and DARS closed his case. He asked Penni if she would conduct mock interviews with him on a regular basis "just in case" Hershey called. Six months later, a position became available and Daniel was more than ready.

During the interview, Daniel explained why he was the perfect candidate for the job, focusing on his skill set, what he could offer the company and his flexibility in working overtime or swing shifts. He knew the history of the company, the ins and outs of the H.E.R.O.S. program, and he thanked the company for employing those who otherwise might not be considered.

After the interview, the hiring manager said, "Wait here," and left the room for about 10 minutes, Daniel described. To his surprise, the hiring manager returned, saying, "We are prepared to give you the job now," and

handed Daniel a written job offer.

On the way back to the DARS office to fill out paperwork, Daniel's car broke down but his spirits were up. He told Penni, "I'll borrow one until I can buy my own because now, thanks to DARS and Hershey, I can!"

Daniel now works 40 hours a week, making \$16.62 per hour with full benefits. Career Support Systems, Inc., one of DARS partner Employment Service Organizations, provided job coach training services for Daniel for the first six months on the job. This was an important partnership in Daniel's success as the services provided him with moral support and encouragement.

"I like going there for the people," Daniel said. "My boss has been great. He said I'm one of the best workers he has had and that I'm part of the family now."

"Daniel stated he felt this was the job he had been waiting for, for many years."

Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center

WWRC Director's Message



This year has been the year to celebrate and strengthen Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center's partnerships with the statewide community of those who help people with disabilities become employed.

WWRC's collaborative relationship with the Division of Rehabilitative Services has positioned DARS

and the Center as expert in understanding Virginia's workforce needs, as well as being acknowledged as the source of help and assistance for people with disabilities who wish to work. Throughout the year, the message of "hope and a path forward to employment" emerged as a key theme among job seekers with disabilities receiving our services.

This sentiment was best captured at one of our graduations when a parent of a graduate said, "My daughter, now employed, has achieved a goal beyond anything I could have imagined before she attended WWRC."

As we've pursued our vision of understanding where employment opportunities are in Virginia and helping our clients obtain meaningful careers, we've strengthened relationships with numerous economic

development directors, workforce investment boards, employment networks, Chambers of Commerce, industrial roundtables and manufacturing associations. Our partnership in the employment arena through our business development managers has helped employers understand we are an exceptional resource to people with disabilities, as well as businesses and industries in Virginia.

This relentless focus on "where the jobs are" and "what jobs our highly motivated clients are pursuing" has defined the model at WWRC as a workforce driven curriculum. We have committed ourselves to connecting trained, motivated and reliable clients and graduates to employers such as The Hershey Co., which has filled numerous critical positions with DRS/WWRC clients. Our collaboration on a statewide level has helped us align WWRC's vocational programming to the known, yet constantly changing, workforce needs across the state. In addition to Hershey's, companies whom have hired our clients include Lowes, The Home Depot, Panera Bread, Walmart, Care Advantage Inc., College of William and Mary, Amazon, Walgreens, Newport News/Williamsburg International Airport, CVS Health, U.S. Department of Defense, Mid Continent Cabinetry ... and the list goes on and on.

The Center works with amazing people who are very focused on why they are here at our campus in Fishersville. For me, none stands out more than Ben Biegel. When Ben first arrived on campus, he told me that he wanted to be a craftsman. As his graduation date rolled around, Ben could not attend the ceremony because he was already working, using skills he learned

at WWRC. His instructor knew how much he would miss participating in the day's events, so imagine Ben's delight when he received a video made just for him, with the graduation audience chanting, "Good job, Ben!"

This year, WWRC is fortunate to have helped almost 700 Virginians along the challenging path to employment and their hope for a more fulfilling life. Virginia's workforce benefits from their talents, abilities, motivation and dedication to the job.

Rick Sizemore

Director, Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center

Number of DARS Vocational Rehabilitation Consumers Served by WWRC Service Area FFY14

Vocational Evaluation (VE) Total	1,144
VE (Non-PERT)	643
PERT*	464
PERT Transition Academy	37
Vocational Training - Fully Enrolled	390
LSTP (9-week program)	448
Medical Rehab Services	1,132
Primary Medical Rehab Services	535

**Postsecondary Education Rehabilitation Transition Program*

WWRC

Building Trades

Ben Biegel came to WWRC in late 2012 and entered into the Building Trades Training Program after undergoing a vocational evaluation. He worked extremely hard developing his skills to advance to the highest level of the program, cabinetmaker's assistant. Ben began a six-week student internship Sept. 10, 2013, at Mill Cabinet Shop in Bridgewater. Just three weeks into his internship, Ben had so impressed the business owner, Lee Stover, that he was offered a full-time position with the company. He gladly accepted and began full-time work Oct. 28, 2013. He was hired by one of the area's premier cabinet shops on the basis of his exceptional work ethic, attitude and woodworking abilities.

Although Ben came to WWRC from the Northern Virginia Regional Office, he decided to relocate after this job offer. He needed some post-employment guidance and counseling from DARS. In alignment with DARS' ICE (Intense Consumer Engagement) initiative, collaborative supports were provided by his home field counselor and the job placement counselor from the Fishersville office. Ben's case was successfully closed in April 2014.

Materials Handling and Forklift

Kody Cazares' case was opened for services with DARS in June 2012. He has cerebral palsy and limited use of his right hand. He suffered a stroke as an infant and this left him partially paralyzed in his right hand.

Kody came to WWRC in late 2012 for a vocational evaluation. In December 2012, a plan was developed for him to enter the Materials Handling program and trial training in Forklift Operating. He began the Life Skills Transition Program in April 2013. He successfully



completed LSTP and earned a Bronze Level Career Readiness Certificate. He then entered into the Stand Alone Learner's Permit Class. Kody completed the course and was able to obtain his learner's permit from the Department of Motor Vehicles in July 2013.

He began the Materials Handling Training program in June 2013. His training included student internships at three separate locations, where he received praise for his work performance at each site. Kody was also recommended for participation in the Forklift Operator Training program, for which he received his Certificate of Completion. He went on to complete the Materials Handling program in February 2014. Training instructor Steve McGuffin was so impressed that he offered to serve as a reference, as he believed Kody was an exceptional candidate in the materials handling field.

Kody worked on his job seeking skills with Center staff, developing interviewing skills and his resume. An occupational therapy evaluation helped to identify accommodations he needed for independent living.



WWRC



The LSTP is just one example of the extensive resources at WWRC as well as an exceptional example of how WWRC strives to respond to the needs of Virginians with disabilities.

Because of his positive behavior and success in and out of the classroom, Kody was recommended for residence in the Center’s Transitional Living Cottages, which provide those who have never lived on their own experience in maintaining a home, shopping and meal preparation. This is a limited housing option, and Kody enjoyed the privilege he earned for the last three months of his time at WWRC.

After leaving WWRC, Kody began working with the job placement counselor at his home field office. After submitting several applications and diligent efforts from him and his placement counselor, he won an interview and then a full-time position with his local Walmart.

Life Skills Transition Program – Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program

The Life Skills Transition Program at WWRC piloted a specialized program option for clients who are deaf or hard of hearing, and who utilize American Sign Language as a means of communication. The pilot program followed the LSTP curriculum with a focus on deaf culture. Classes combined instruction with an ASL interpreter and an instructor who is deaf. Twenty-five clients were served through the course of five intakes during the year and the pilot reported a client completion rate of 89 percent. The pilot has been approved to become an official program for consumers

at WWRC. This is just one example of the extensive resources at WWRC, as well as an exceptional example of how WWRC strives to respond to the needs of Virginians with disabilities.

Comments from LSTP DHH clients:

- Rebecca: “I like WWRC because of the new things to do.”
- Keshon: “I’ve learned the importance of being on time, and dressing appropriately for work.”
- Ferney: “It’s fun being around so many people.”
- Ibrahim: “I didn’t realize how pretty the campus was, with the lake and the mountains – very nice.”

WWRC



WWRC Works to Develop Sweet Business Relationships

In the summer of 2013, The Hershey Co. manufacturing plant in Stuarts Draft announced an initiative to offer apprenticeships to approximately six individuals with disabilities. The program was sponsored through a Hershey corporate initiative, "Hershey Extends Real Opportunities to Succeed," or H.E.R.O.S. The apprenticeship program offered individuals with disabilities a six-month work experience on the production line in the plant. During the apprenticeship, clients could access any needed supports from WWRC to help them complete the program as long as they were able to perform the required duties at the end of the six months.

DRS Business Development Manager Cindy Roberts created a strategic collaboration of the Fishersville DRS office and WWRC with H.E.R.O.S. when the program was

announced at the Stuarts Draft plant. Cindy and WWRC determined that it would be critical for candidates to have the physical strength and stamina to perform labor at a typical work station in the Hershey plant. As the agency began screening likely candidates for the program, a physical work performance evaluation was administered by a physical therapist at WWRC. It provided a reliable, valid, clinical assessment of an internship candidate's ability to complete physical labor. In addition, Vocational Instructor Steve Sweeney and WWRC Director of Physical Therapy Sharon Russo visited the Stuarts Draft plant and assessed the typical work station the clients would use during the internship. This collaboration of DARS, WWRC and our community business partners illustrates how strong business relationships will allow for successful paths to employment for the Center's clients.

Website links:

SRC home page: www.va-src.org

SRC annual reports: www.va-src.org/news.htm

SRC meeting bulletin: www.va-src.org/bulletin.asp#2

SRC member application: <https://commonwealth.virginia.gov>

DARS home page: www.vadars.org

DARS Transition Services Guide: <http://bit.ly/1hhy3vo>

DARS Transition Services Guide (Spanish): <http://bit.ly/1C7qSA2>

DARS Facebook page: www.facebook.com/vadars

Commissioner's Richmond Times-Dispatch opinion blog:
www.vdars.org/blog.htm

WWRC home page: www.wwrc.virginia.gov

COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

Brain Injury Services providers: <http://bit.ly/1mCaXpl>

Centers for Independent Living: <http://bit.ly/1AF1JgL>

Community Services Boards: <http://1.usa.gov/1xeizC7>

Employment Services Organizations: <http://bit.ly/1AXJstu>

Project SEARCH: <http://bit.ly/1k8NLvZ>

SHARE
**DARS' Services for
Employers website**
www.vdars.org



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Virginia State Rehabilitation Council

Contact Us

Call:

Voice: (800) 552-5019 | (804) 662-7000
TTY: (800) 464-9950 | (804) 662-9040
Fax: (804) 662-9532

Write:

Chair, State Rehabilitation Council
Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services
8004 Franklin Farms Drive
Henrico, VA 23229

Email: dars@dars.virginia.gov * Online: www.va-src.org

Attend a Meeting or Public Hearing:

The State Rehabilitation Council meetings and public hearings are open to the public. SRC meetings are held in March, May, August and November. The public hearings generally are held in February and March. The meeting locations, dates and times are posted on the SRC website at www.va-src.org/bulletin.asp#2, on the DARS website at www.vadars.org/events.aspx and on the Commonwealth Calendar at <http://1.usa.gov/1r3G1Rv>.

Apply for Membership:

If you are interested in becoming a member of the SRC, you may obtain an application form by calling the Secretary of the Commonwealth's office at (804) 786-2441 or online at <https://commonwealth.virginia.gov>.

State Rehabilitation Council

Our Mission

The mission of the Virginia State Rehabilitation Council, in partnership with the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, and in collaboration with advocacy groups, consumers and their families, is to ensure that Virginians with disabilities receive quality services while seeking to achieve meaningful employment, self-sufficiency and independence.

Our Vision

All Virginians with disabilities will have access to quality services leading to meaningful employment, self-sufficiency and independence.



8004 Franklin Farms Drive
Henrico, VA 23229
(800) 552-5019 (voice) • (800) 464-9950 (TTY)

www.vadars.org

**Commissioner
James A. Rothrock**

