



Washington State  
**Rehabilitation Council**

# WSRC Post Meeting Packet

## August 10-11, 2023



## August 2023 Quarterly Meeting

### Post-Meeting Materials Packet

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## Quarterly Meeting Agenda

Thursday, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023

9:00am to 3:30pm

[Click here to join Zoom meeting](#)

TIME	PRESENTER	AGENDA
9:00	Peggy Frisk	<b>Call to Order/Executive Committee</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions</li> <li>• Vote: Approval of May 2023 quarterly meeting minutes</li> <li>• Vote: Officer elections</li> <li>• Vote: Approval 2024 meeting dates and locations</li> </ul>
9:45	Cassi Villegas	<b>DVR Interim Director Updates</b>
10:30	Robb St. Lawrence Jamie Grund	<b>RSA Monitoring &amp; Corrective Action Plan Overview</b>
<b>10:45</b>		<b>BREAK</b>
11:05	Shelby Satko Jen Bean Lesa Dunphy	<b>WSRC State Plan Engagement</b>
11:30	Lauren Peterson	<b>State Plan Overview</b>
<b>12:00</b>		<b>LUNCH</b>
1:00	Jamie Rasmussen Mari Heusman Lauren Peterson	<b>State Plan Priorities Workshop</b>
3:15	Peggy Frisk	<b>Council Wrap-up</b>
<b>3:30</b>	Peggy Frisk	<b>ADJOURN</b>

Tomorrow morning, day two of the WSRC Quarterly Meeting will begin promptly at 9:00am.



## Quarterly Meeting Agenda

Friday, August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023

9:00am to 11:30am

[Click here to join Zoom meeting](#)

TIME	PRESENTER	AGENDA
9:00	Peggy Frisk	Call to Order
9:05	Greg Schmieg Jimmy Wilson Janet LaBreck Deane Belk	Pre-Employment Transition Services Project   Synergy Consulting Partners
9:30	Ann Martin Megan Grundbrecher	Region 2 Leadership Updates
10:00		BREAK
10:15	Jim O'Brien	Lynnwood Unit Updates
10:45	Jen Bean Doug Burkhalter	Client Assistance Program
10:55	Peggy Frisk	Public Comment
11:10	Peggy Frisk	Meeting Wrap-up
11:30	Peggy Frisk	ADJOURN

# DVR Interim Director Updates

**Presented by:** Cassi Villegas

**August 2023**

# DVR Interim Director Updates

- Introduction and Vision
- Timeline for DVR Director National Recruitment
- Staff Changes
- New EDAI Administrator
- Order of Selection Updates
- Enterprise Performance Management
- Visioning Work

# RSA Monitoring & Corrective Action Plan Overview

**Presented by:** Jamie Grund and Robb St. Lawrence

**August 2023**

# RSA Monitoring & Corrective Action Plan Overview

- **For program performance:** focused on developing internal controls to ensure completeness of case service record, accuracy and completeness of reporting, and timeliness toward IPE.
  - All corrections are planned to be in place the conclusion of PY 2023, which is June 30, 2024.
  - Key intermediate step in corrective action plan: submission of drafted policy/procedural guidance material to RSA for approval, January 31, 2024.
- **For fiscal:** three areas needing addressed, including formalizing processes for financial reporting, developing rate setting policies, and implementing contract monitoring processes.
  - Minor revisions to financial reports will be completed by end of calendar year 2023.
  - Rate setting policy will be fully implemented only after completion/implementation of cost-study for CRP services.
  - Contract monitoring processes implemented by conclusion of PY 2023.



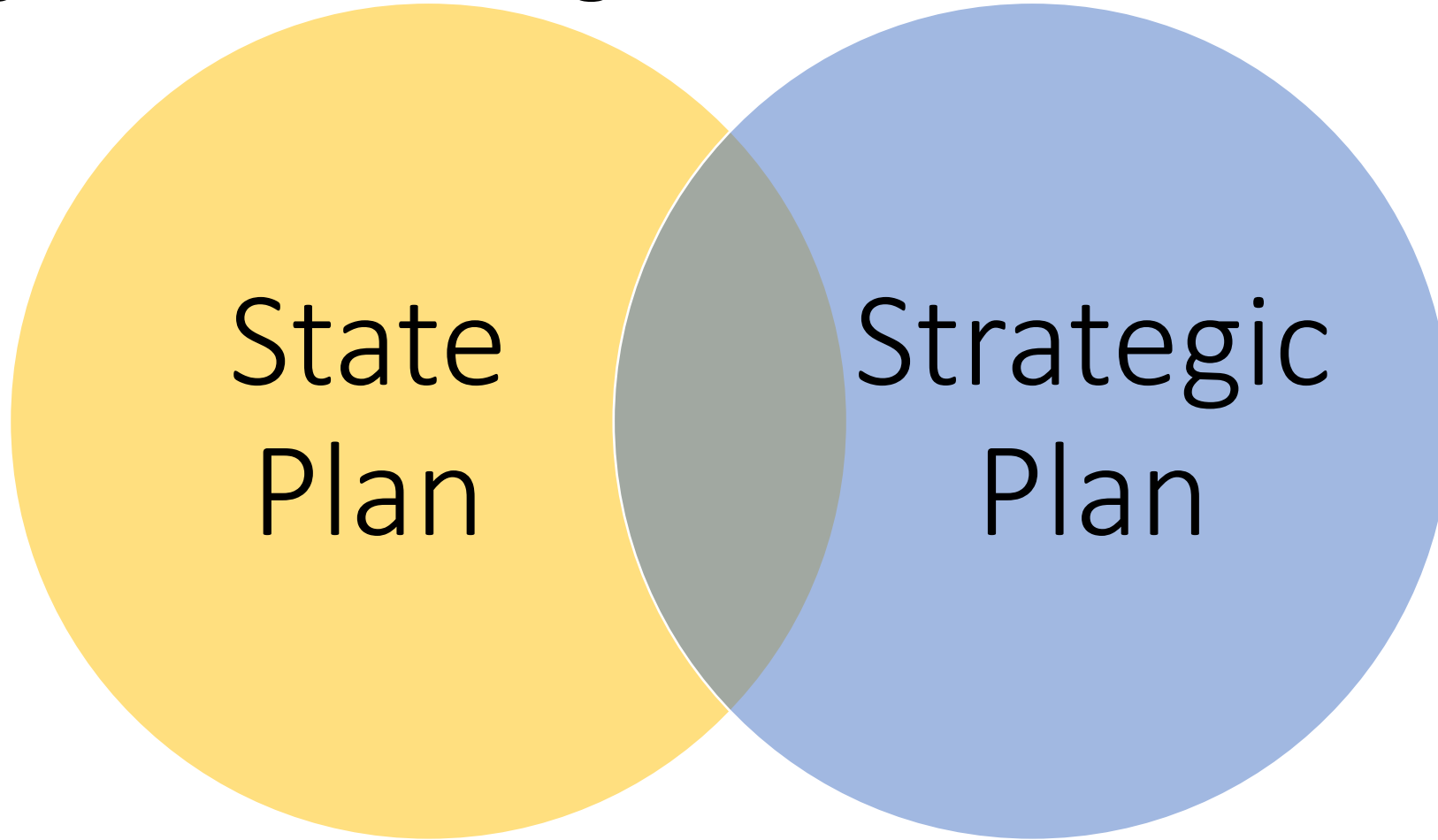
# State Plan 2024-2027

Mari Heusman, Jamie Rasmussen, Lauren Peterson

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

*DVR Services are provided by State and Federal VR Funds. The VR program typically receives 78.7% in Federal funds and 21.3% in State funds. For detailed information on the dollar amount of Federal funds for the program, please visit [Formula Grant Award Details / Rehabilitation Services Administration \(ed.gov\)](#)*

# Background: Strategic Plans and Initiatives



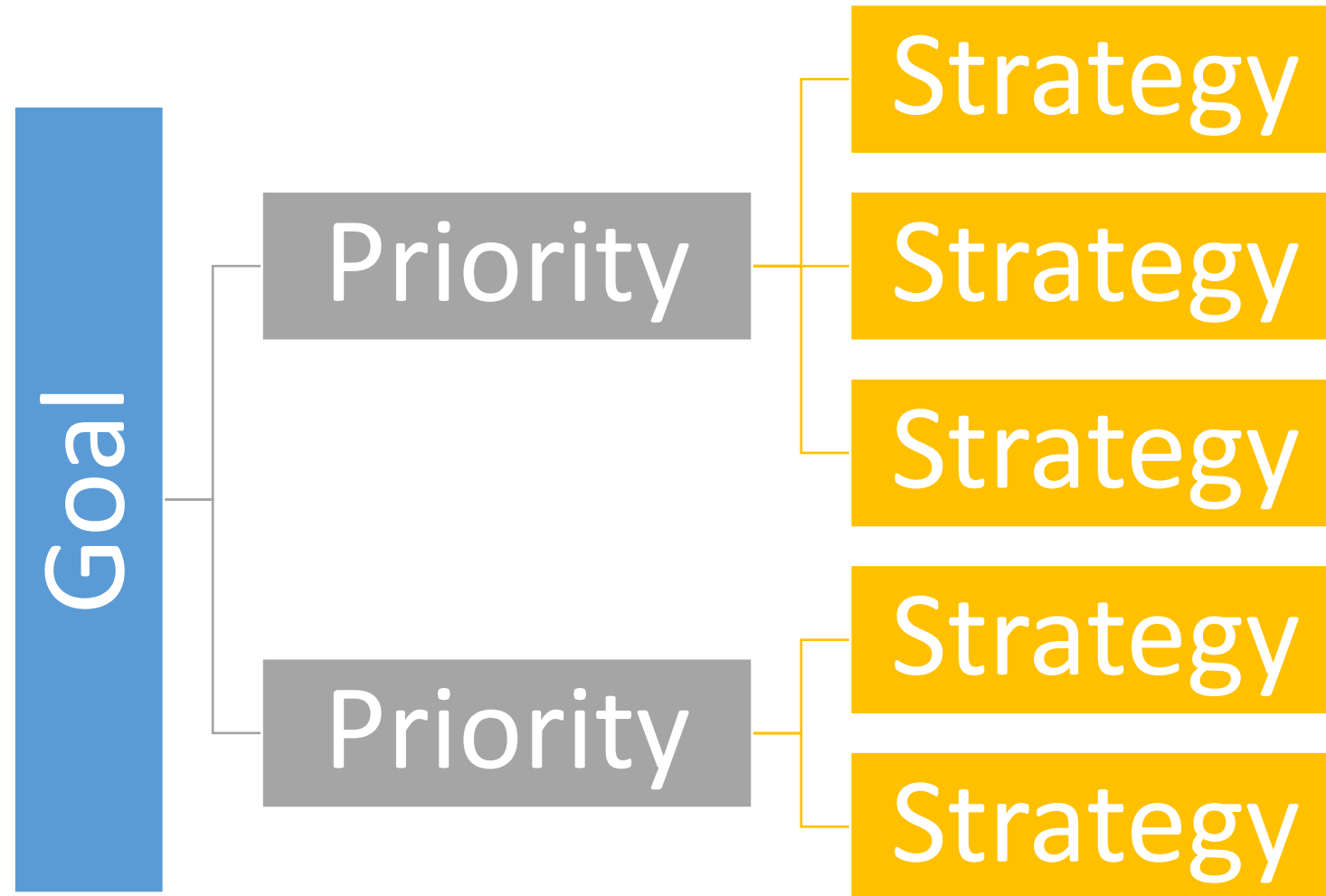
# What is the State Plan?

- Describes DVR's goals, priorities, services, and partnerships
- Based on evaluations of customers' needs, stakeholder input, and DVR services
- Plan Requirements determined by Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)
- Aligns with the Strategic Plan and contributes to the larger Combined State Plan
- State Plan is required every 4 years, per the Workforce Investment and Opportunities Act (WIOA)
  - Biennial updates (every two years)

# What is **in** the DVR WA State Plan?

- Input of the State Rehabilitation Council
- Partnerships & Cooperative Agreements
- Coordination with Education Officials
- Coordination with Employers
- Comprehensive System of Personnel Development
- Statewide Assessment
- State Goals & Priorities – Strategies to Achieve Goals & Priorities
- Order of Selection
- Annual Estimates
- Supported Employment Program
- Evaluation & Reports of Progress

# Goals, Priorities, and Strategies



# 2020-2023 Plan Goals

## State Plan Goals

## State Plan Priorities

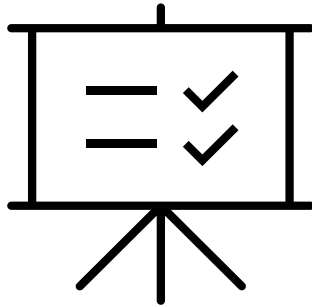
Motivate and Inspire High Performing Staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. DVR staff achieve mastery in their work.</li><li>2. DVR excels in key performance indicators.</li><li>3. DVR is an employer of choice</li></ol>
DVR Operations and Infrastructure Support our Work	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Establish a reporting framework that informs decisions and improvements at all levels.</li><li>2. DVR staff have modern, user friendly tools that streamline their work.</li></ol>
Customer Service and Outcomes are DVR's Highest Priority	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Customers experience timely, continuous progress throughout the VR process.</li><li>2. DVR customers achieve employment in living wage jobs with benefits.</li><li>3. Students are better prepared to engage in VR services after high school.</li><li>4. Individuals with disabilities have equitable access to DVR services.</li></ol>
DVR Collaborates with Businesses and Partners that Deliver Benefits to DVR Customers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Strengthen communication and collaboration with partners that deliver benefits to customers.</li><li>2. Formalize and implement targeted business engagement efforts.</li></ol>

# How are we updating our goals?

2020-2023 Plan Goals	2024-2027 Plan Goals
Motivate and Inspire High Performing Staff	Highly Engaged, Diverse and Skilled Team
DVR Operations and Infrastructure Support our Work	Effective, Efficient and Safe Operations
Customer Service and Outcomes are DVR's Highest Priority	Customer Service Excellence
	Successful Customer Outcomes
DVR Collaborates with Businesses and Partners that Deliver Benefits to DVR Customers	Strong Business and Community Relationships

# Will the priorities change?

- Depending on the strategies decided by staff, leadership, and stakeholders, the priorities may change.
- Feedback first, then priorities





# What has analysis shown to be important?

(in no particular order)

- Customer Service\*
- Program Outcomes\*
- Pre-ETS\*
- Partnership/Engagement\*
- The complex DVR process
- Behavioral Health
- Transportation
- Rural

\* WSRC communicated priority

# What is your job after lunch?

- Context: We will present evaluation of goals.
- What should DVR look like in 4 years?
- What do successful services look like to you?
- How would you like to see services change?
- How can we make that service change happen?
- What are we missing?

# Post Workshop: Next Steps

- Staff Survey
- Contribution from Subject Matter Experts
- Ongoing Collaboration with WSRC
- Formal Evaluation of Progress
- Tribal Contribution
- DVR In-Service
- Public Comment Period and Public Forum

# Contact Information

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# Region 2 Leadership Updates

**Presented by:** Ann Martin, Megan Grundbrecher

**August 2023**

# Region 2 Leadership Updates

## ❖ Recruitment and Retention Update

- Current vacancies
- All Region 2 meetings
- 1:1 Staff Welcomes
- Mariners Game: aka-having a little fun!

# Region 2 Leadership Updates

## ❖ Meaningful and Continuous Engagement

- Efforts to reduce days to Eligibility and Plan
  - Strategies, tools, practices

Region 2 /Lynnwood	Total Customers	New applications	Days to eligibility	Days to Plan
2023 Sept-July	4146/ 640	2224/ 386	39/ 34	89**/ 80
2022 Sept- July	3736/ 562	1793/ 273	42/ 38	104/ 82

\*\*R2 current 4-month average of days to plan is 75 days!

# Region 2 Leadership Updates

- ❖ Assistive Technology and Assessment Practitioner (ATAP) update
- ❖ Pre- Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) update
- ❖ Tribal VR Partnership/ 701 Plan update



# Lynnwood Unit Updates

**Presented by: Jim O'Brien**

**August 2023**

# Lynnwood Unit Updates

- Our Unit consists of 9 FT VRC's - 7 in Lynnwood and 2 in Redmond; 4 FT RT's – 3 in Lynnwood and 1 in Redmond; 1 BS. Fully staffed (retired VRC has been helping cover)\*.
- Experience ranges from 34 years to 6 months. Includes 2 VRC1's and 3 VRC2's.
- Lynnwood/Redmond Unit is serving the largest number in the region (>650), which is target capacity. Applications & in-person meetings have increased over the year.
- Engagement in WorkSource via Snohomish County Future Workforce Alliance Board and co-location at Redmond WorkSource (Sea-King WDC). Lynnwood affiliate closed 4/23.
- Active Business Specialist support in the unit; engaging with job seekers the priority.
- Return to in-person service delivery has improved teamwork & morale.

\*See staff Bios.

# Lynnwood Unit Updates

- Revisited WorkStrides in April; planning another in September.
- Support 2 Project Search locations – Swedish Edmonds and Providence Everett.
- Cross-county collaboration with Snohomish and King DD Cos for S2W.
- Challenged significantly by CRP wait lists and ES turnover.
- Striving to better utilize WOIS at application to provide meaningful engagement
- Challenged by added steps and paperwork (DDA Monitoring Plans; EDMS uploads)

**WASHINGTON DVR  
STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL  
PRE-ETS IMPROVEMENT PROJECT UPDATE  
AUGUST 11, 2023  
SYNERGY CONSULTING PARTNERS**

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**1. May, June, and July Activities** *(based on ELT feedback)*

- ✓ **Created several smaller work groups per focus area:**
  - **Pre-ETS Intent and Ensuring Access**
  - **Pre-ETS Operations**
  - **Service Improvements** *(WRT, WBL, and Self-Advocacy)*
  - **Vendor Relations**
  - **Vendor Billing**
  - **Budget**
- ✓ **Vendor survey** *(44 respondents)*
- ✓ **Intensive Week** *(in-person)* *(team members + vendors)*
- ✓ **Recommendations presented to ELT with ELT feedback**

**2. Deliverables**

- ✓ **Completed and Approved:**
  - **Pre-ETS Statement of Intent**
  - **Pre-ETS Statement of Access**
  - **Vendor Contract Amendments**
  - **Pre-ETS Budget\*** *(getting close to the 15% reserve)*
- ✓ **In-Process:** *(additional research or complete in coming year)*
  - **Additional operations improvements** *(roles, forms, etc.)*
  - **Additional service improvements**
  - **Formal Pre-ETS policies and procedures**
  - **Vendor billing simplified** *(WAVES case management)*
  - **Outreach and marketing efforts**

**3. Next Steps**

- ✓ **Now through September 30<sup>th</sup>:**
  - **Work groups will reorganize and continue to work**
  - **Work groups will collaborate with other DVR departments**
  - **Vendor contracts will be amended to include changes**
  - **Initiate regular fiscal reviews**
- ✓ **October 1<sup>st</sup> forward:**
  - **Continue to work on finalizing all recommendations**

## **Pre-ETS Statement of Intent**

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The intent of Washington State's Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) is to assist students with disabilities in preparing for future employment and successful transitions from school to post-secondary education, training, employment, and community life. These services aim to provide students with the necessary skills, resources, experiences, and supports to explore career options, develop job readiness skills, and make informed decisions about their current situation as well as their future.

The vision is Pre-ETS are accessible to all students with disabilities in the state of Washington with the goal of empowering them to achieve their career goals and live the meaningful life they choose.

## **Pre-ETS Access Statement**

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Washington State DVR, in collaboration with schools, community partners, and contractors, is working jointly to enhance the gateway for students with disabilities to obtain Pre-ETS within the communities in which they reside. The students' pathway to employment will be enriched by delivering services in all five Pre-ETS categories.

# Customer Satisfaction & Program Evaluation Subcommittee

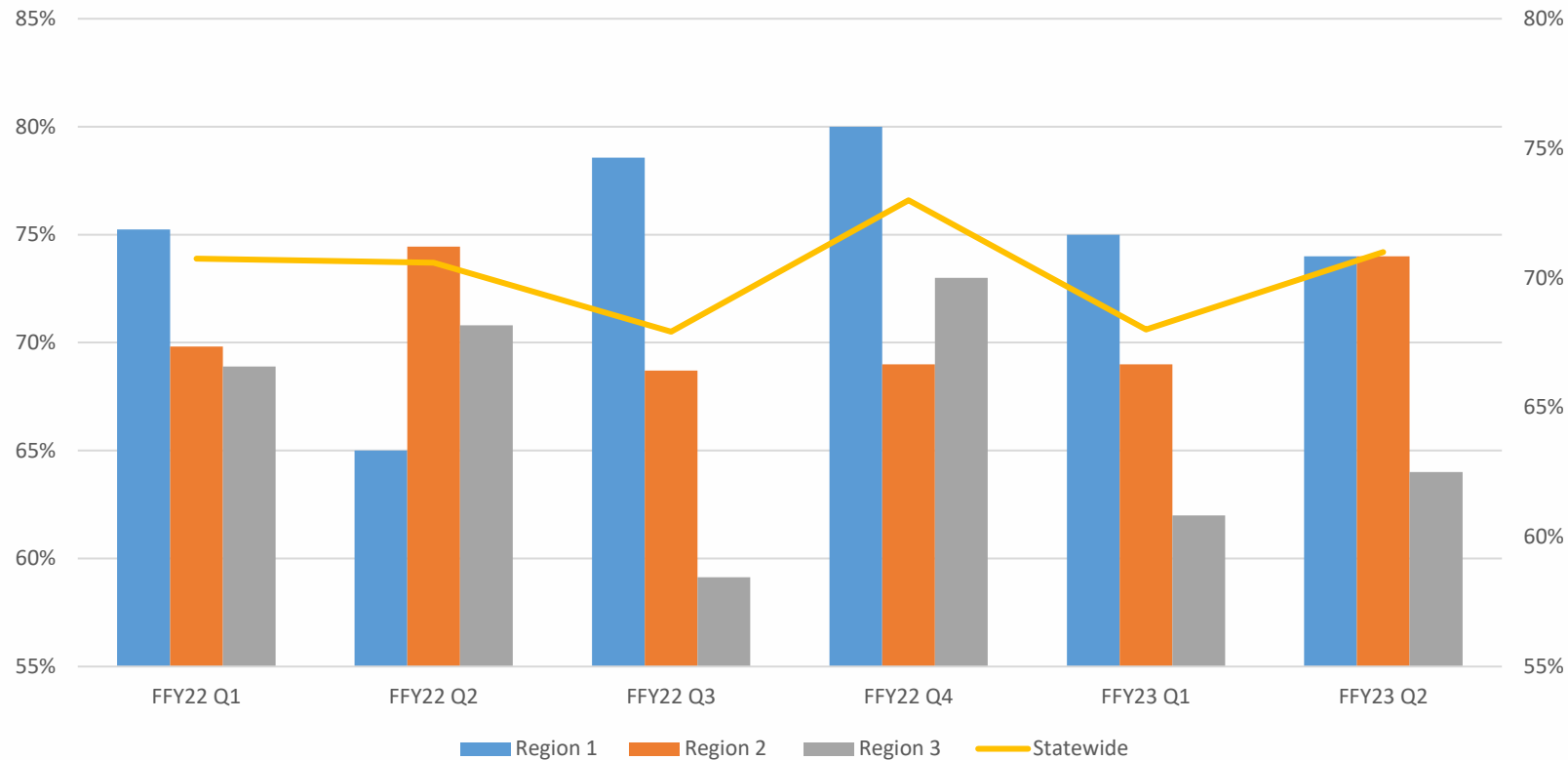
**Members:** Jen Bean – Chair, Peggy Frisk, Jen Chong-Jewell, Matt Newton, and  
Ed Nicholson

**August 2023**

# Customer Satisfaction Survey: FFY22 – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Highlights

- Customers Surveyed – 455
- Comments Received – 310
- Response Rate - 39%
- Overall satisfaction was 68% Statewide
  - Margin of Error is 4%

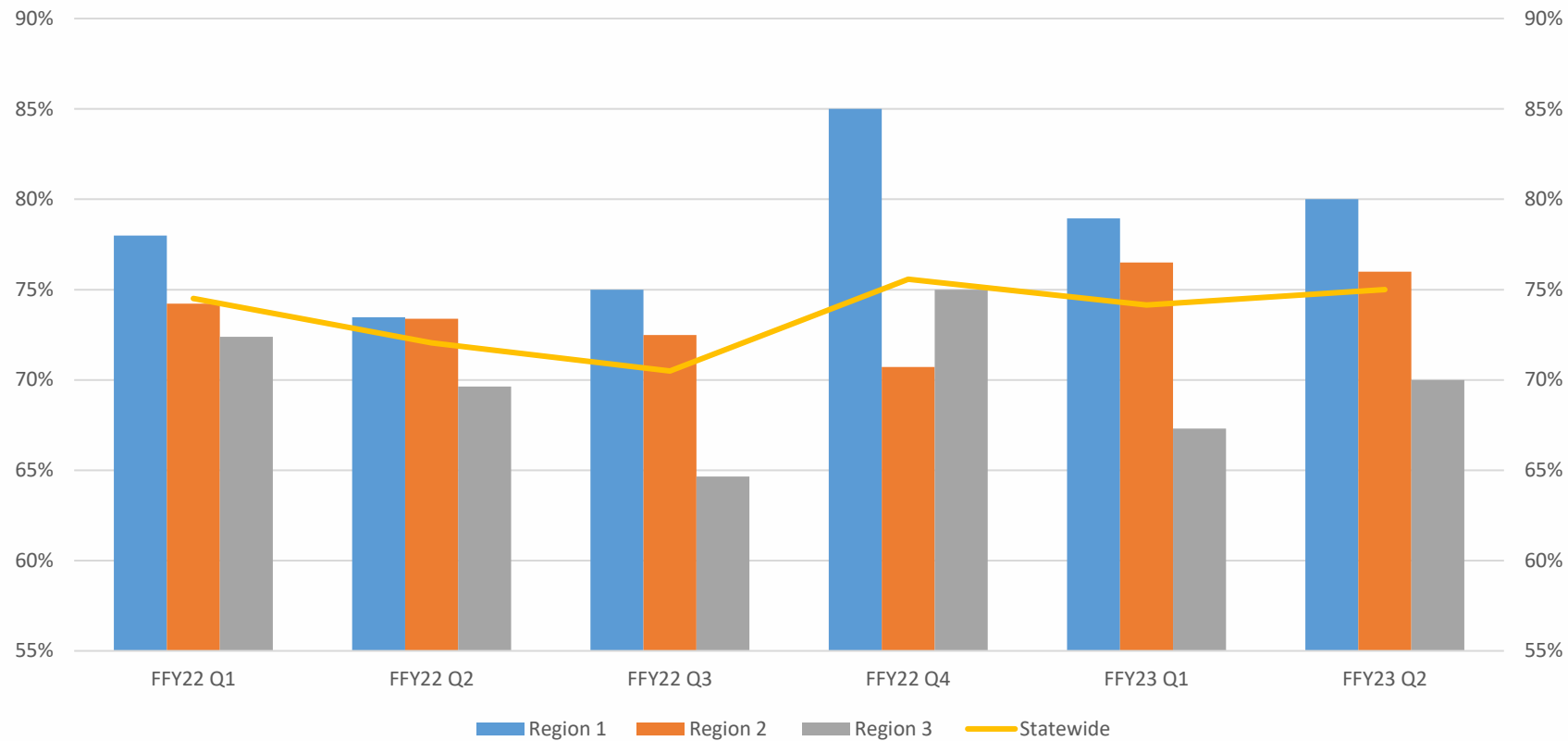
# 1. My Counselor does a good job of keeping in touch with me



All Regions Margin of Error – 4%

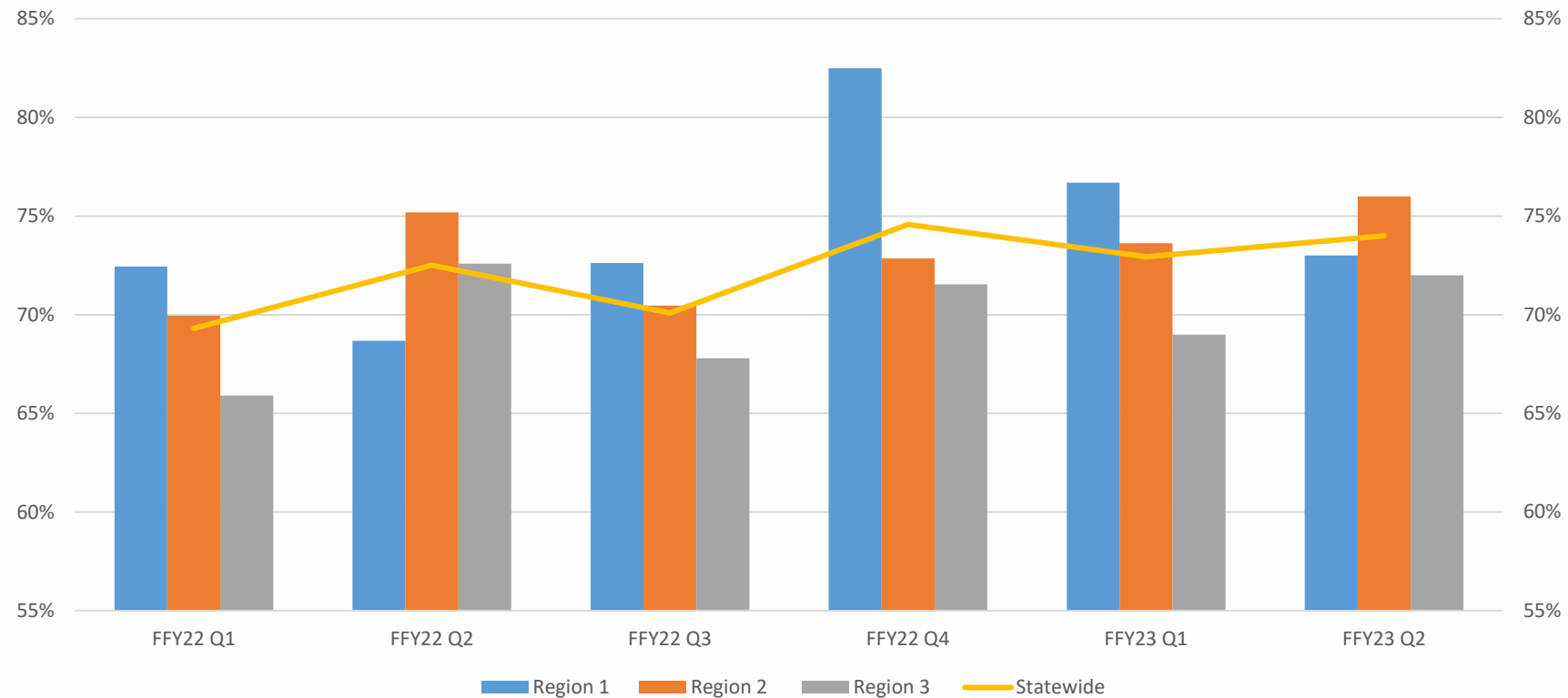


## 2. My counselor understands what's important to me



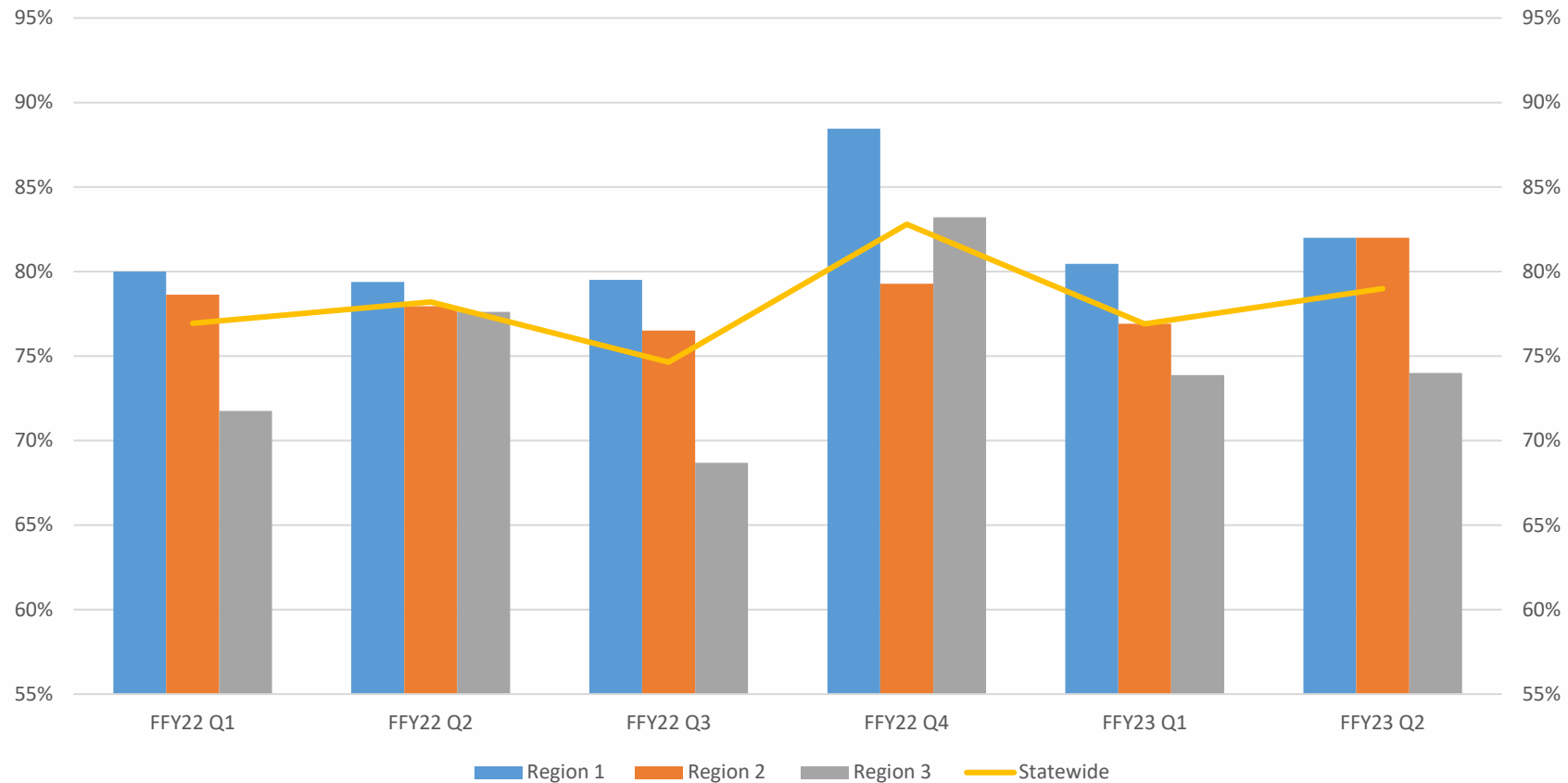
All Regions Margin of Error – 4%

### 3. My counselor understands how my disability affects me



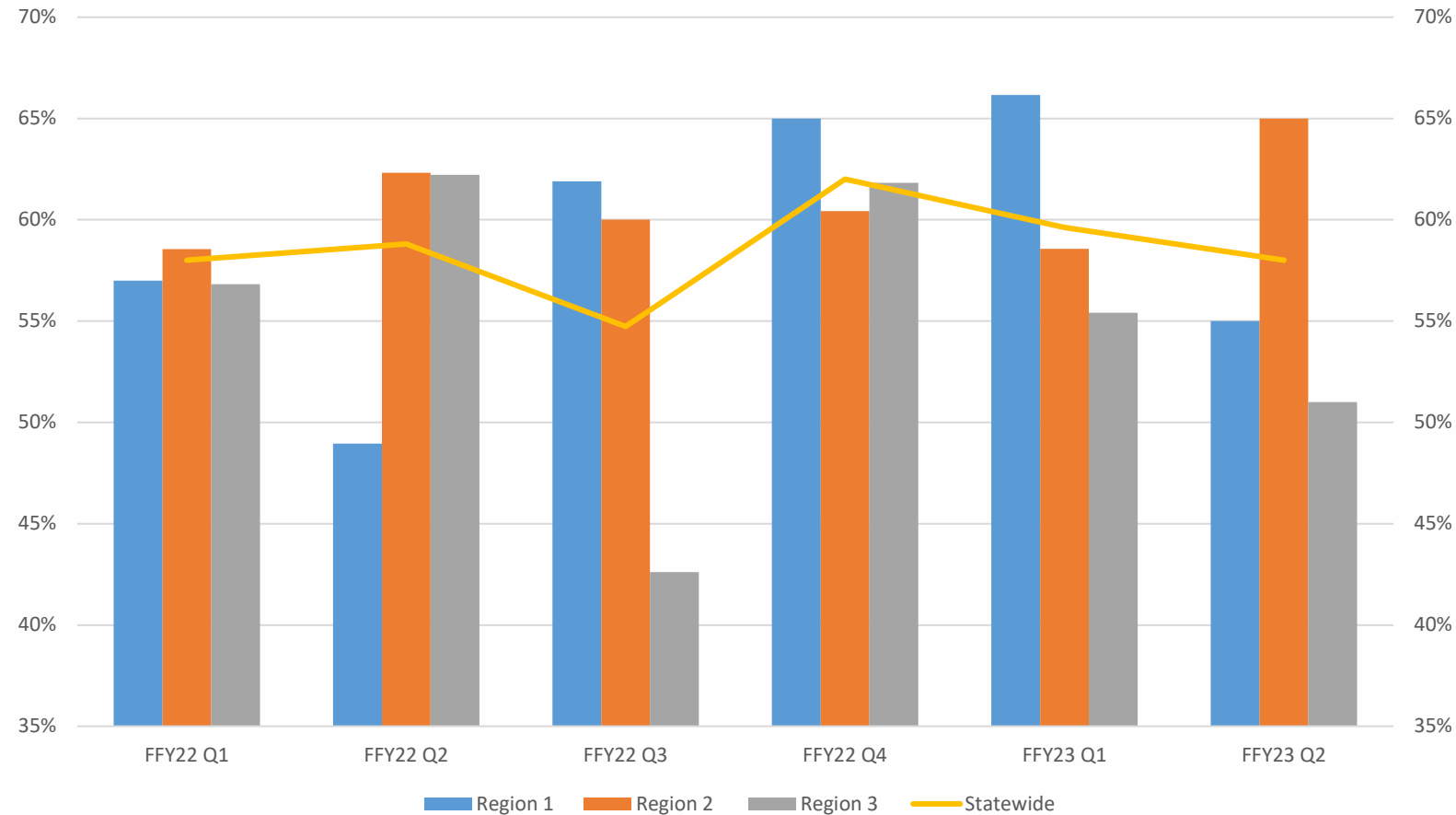
All Regions Margin of Error – 4%

## 4. My counselor cares about my input.



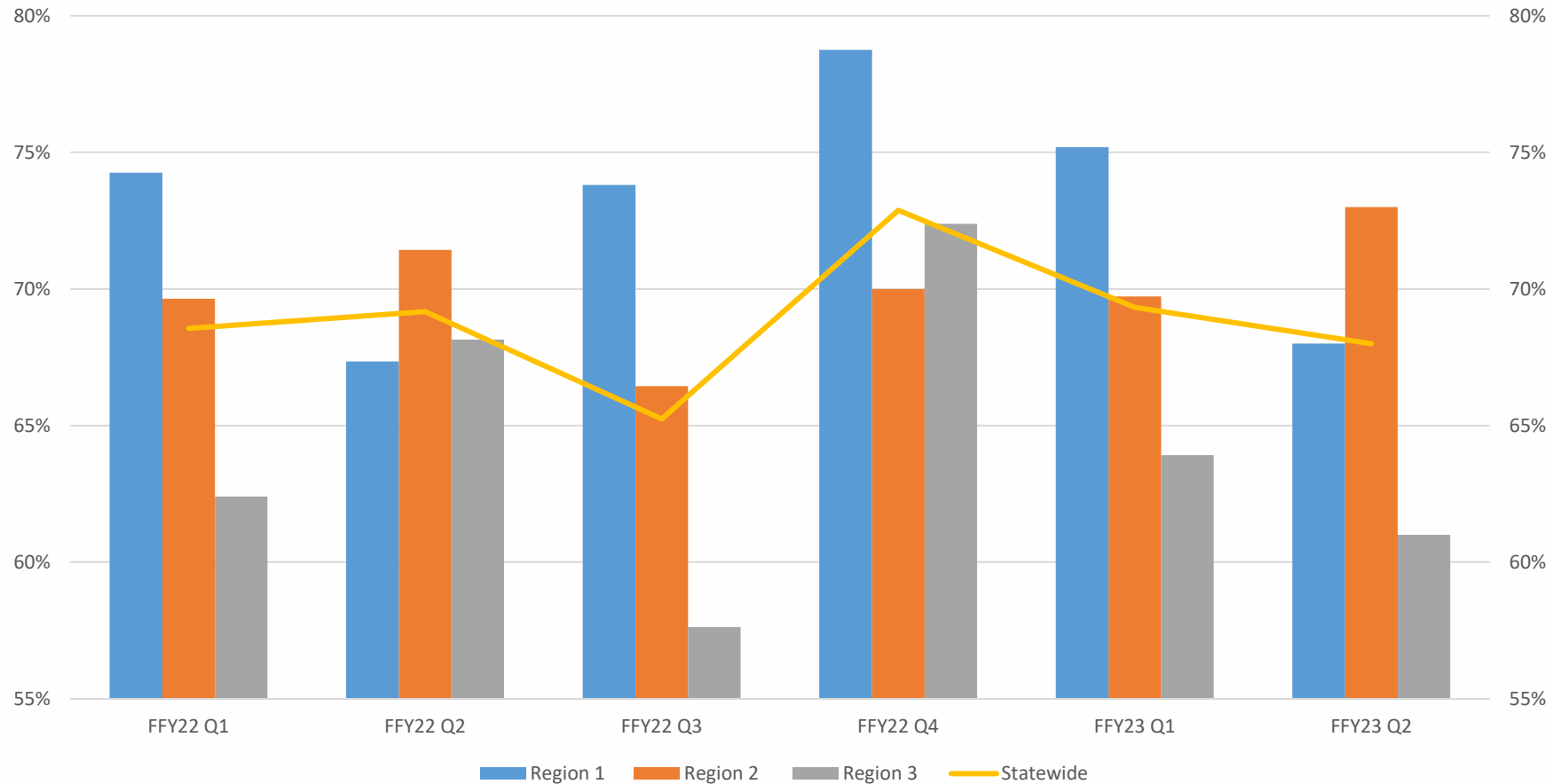
All Regions Margin of Error – 4%

## 5. DVR moves quickly enough for me.



All Regions Margin of Error – 4%

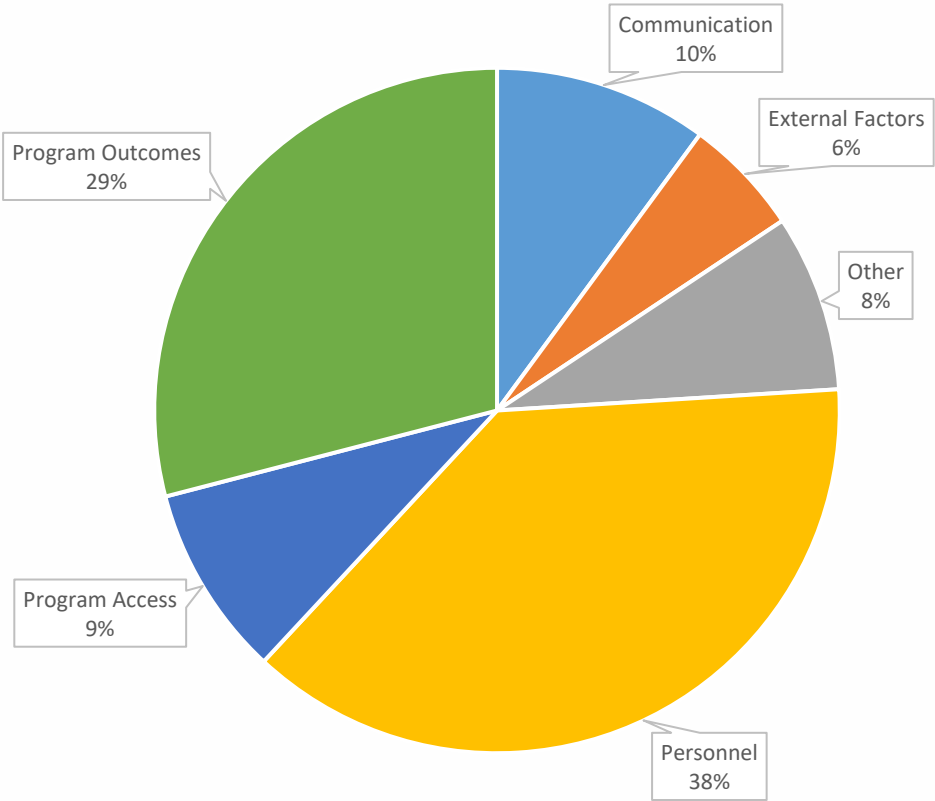
## 6. Overall, I'm satisfied with DVR.



All Regions Margin of Error – 4%

# Statewide Comment Themes

Statewide Comment Trends - FFY23 Quarter 2



# Comment Themes

## Overall:

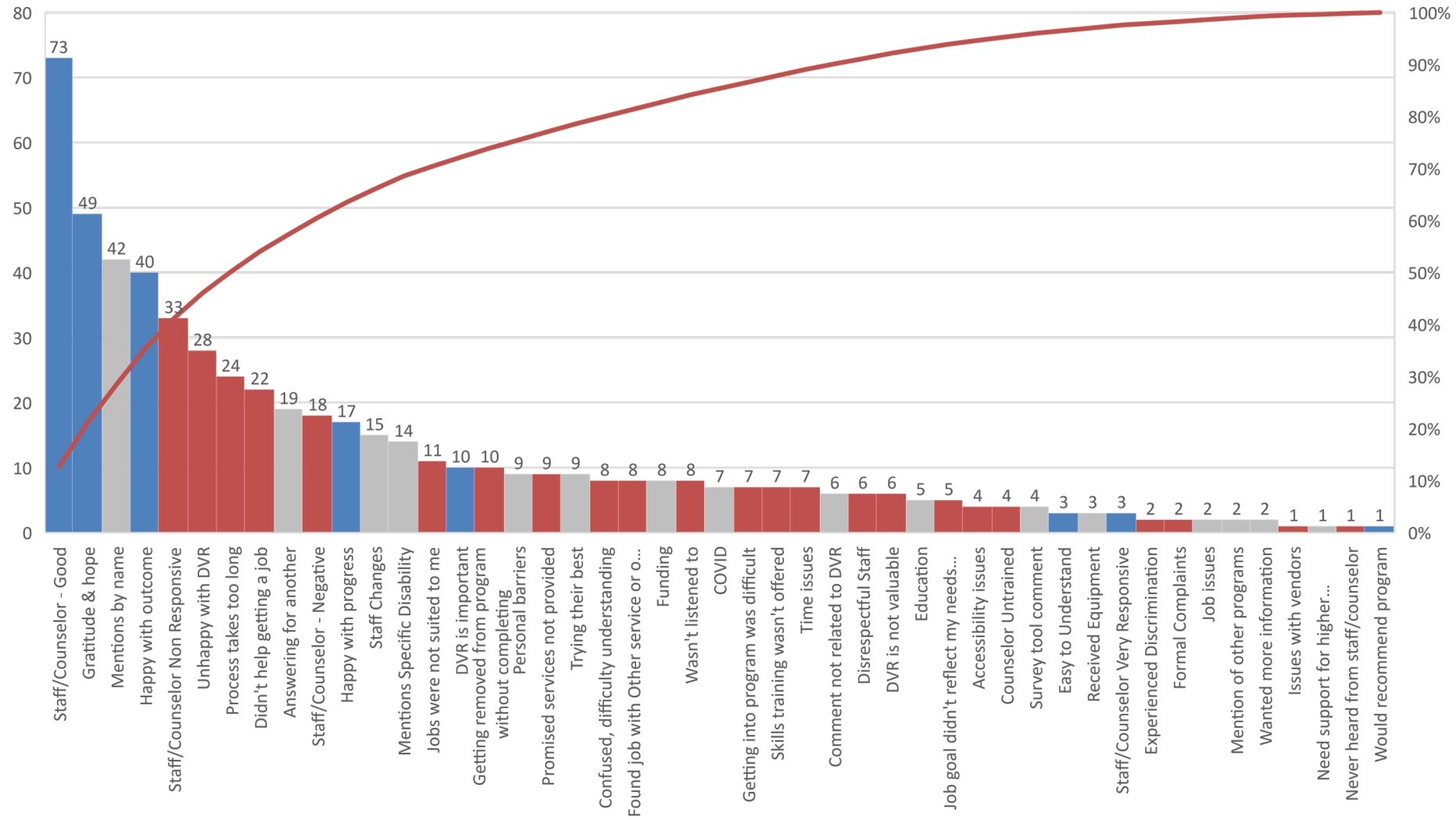
- Positive: 47%
- Negative: 34%
- Neutral: 19%

## Top Comment Themes\*:

- Personnel – 38%
- Program Outcomes – 29%
- Communication – 10%

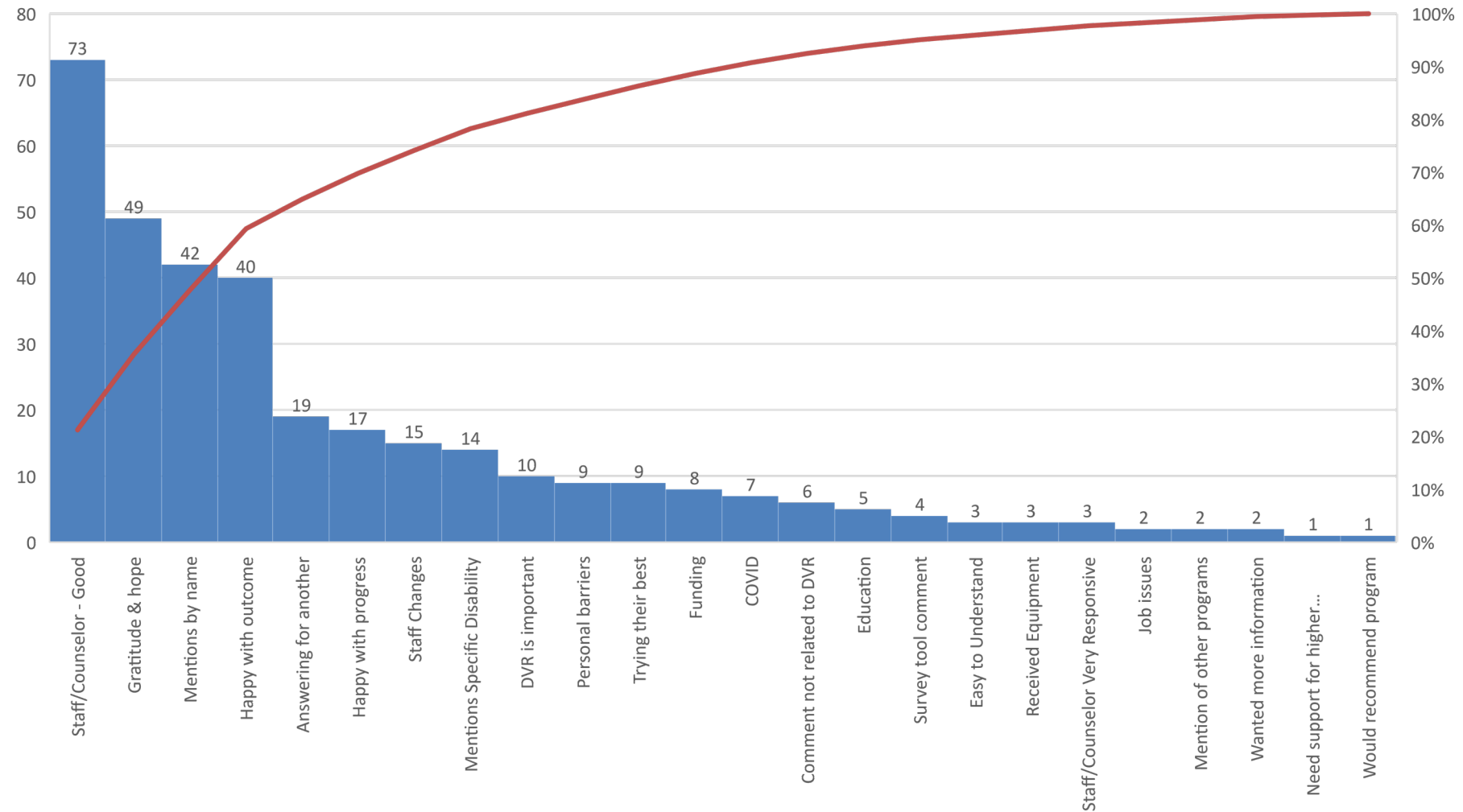
\**Same as last quarter*

# Systemwide Subtheme Distribution

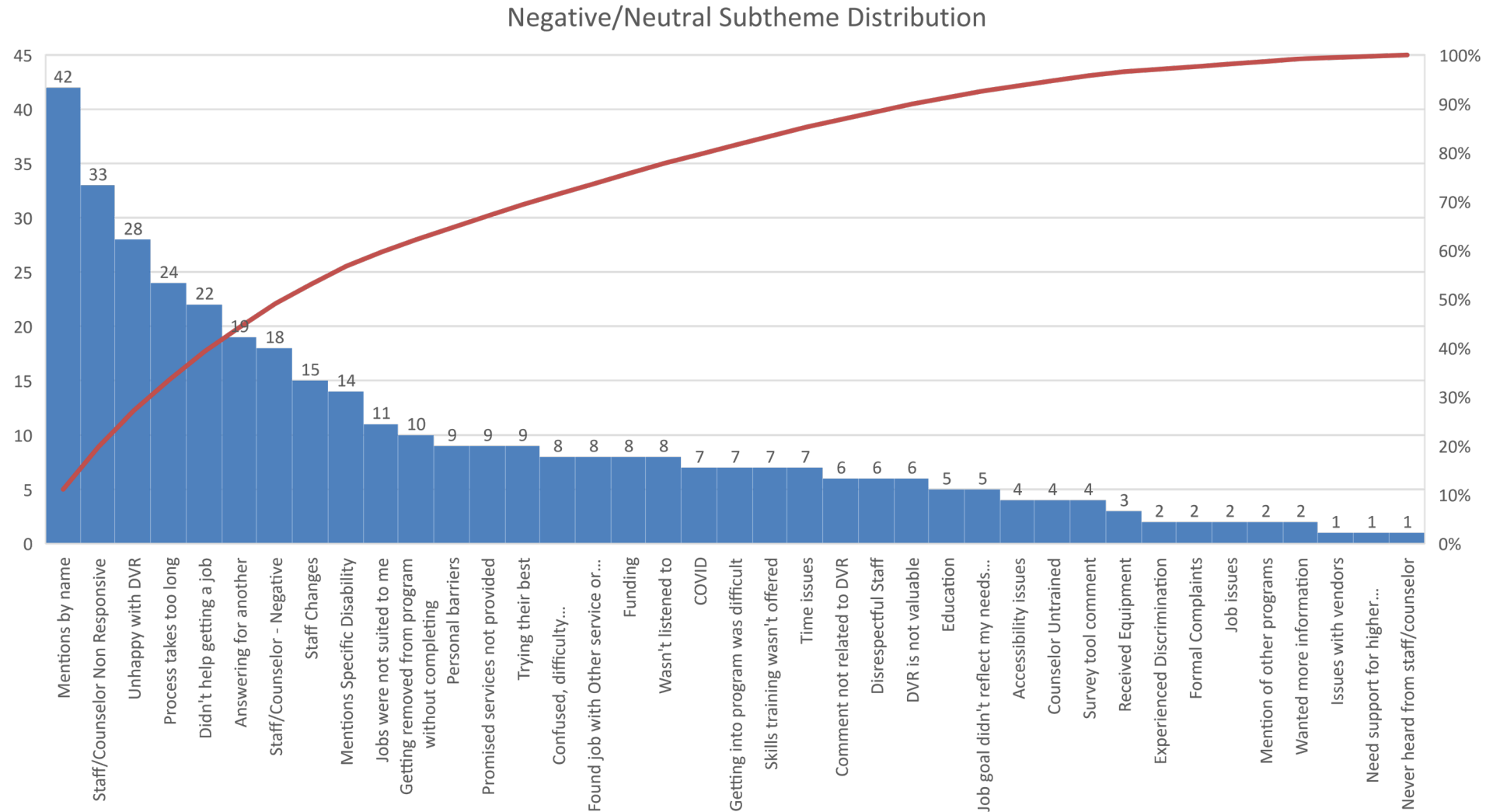




# Positive Subtheme Distribution



# Negative Subtheme Distribution





## **Partnership Subcommittee Updates**

### **August 2023 Quarterly Meeting**

#### **Washington State Independent Living Council (WASILC)**

1. Autonomy
  - Becoming either an independent state agency or a nonprofit to align with the federal Rehabilitation Act requirements for SILCs.
2. Statewide Community Needs Assessment (SCNA)
  - Starting contract with Kone Consulting LLC to begin planning and data collection with intersectionally diverse individuals with disabilities in communities all over the state.
3. Accessibility & Equity
  - Incorporating technical accessibility into all WASILC materials and communication channels; starting language access planning and engagement with intersectionally diverse communities statewide.
4. Email Management Software
  - Purchasing email management software to migrate WASILC contacts over to system that can handle user profiles and communication preferences e.g., who wants to know about accessible transportation? Who wants accessibility public policy updates? Who's interested in accessible housing? Who wants to get involved in deinstitutionalization work?

#### **Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC)**

1. DDC approved a budget to begin a few new initiatives, contingent on a No Cost Extension being granted from the Administration on Community Living, which includes a strategic planning process for the Community Advocacy Coalition (CAC), a Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Initiative and capacity building within the Arc of Washington's Advocacy Partnership Project. See more here (scroll all the way to the bottom of the document): [64c02e64821966e7963cadbc July 2023 Council Packet and Supplemental Budget.pdf \(website-files.com\)](#)
2. The Diversity Equity and Inclusion report as requested by the legislature has been finalized and posted here: [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Report | WADDC](#)
3. Next quarterly meeting will be in the Tri Cities region from 10/19-10/20.



Washington State  
**Rehabilitation Council**

## Additional Resources

# Program Improvement Updates

## Consent Form to Share Student Contact Information with State Transition Agencies – Now Published

To support a more seamless transition from school to post-school life for students with disabilities, SB 5790 (passed in the 2022 legislative session) directed OSPI to develop a data share system to notify the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the Department of Services for the Blind, counties, and any other state agency working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, of students potentially eligible for services. This information will be sent from OSPI to partner transition agencies annually and will include student information about three (3) years before the student's expected graduation date.

To facilitate the connection between school districts and employment agencies, OSPI has developed, and incorporated into the state model form for Individualized Education Program (IEP) Transition Plans, a consent page for sharing student information that can be found on the [Model Forms for Services to Students in Special Education](#) webpage.

This form can be downloaded in two forms:

- As a standalone [Consent Form to Share Contact Information with State Transition Agencies](#) or,
- As a component of the [IEP Form with Secondary Transition](#)

The directive to improve data sharing between school districts and employment services providers comes from the [Senate Bill 5790](#) (passed in the 2022 legislative session).

If you have questions, please email [speced@k12.wa.us](mailto:speced@k12.wa.us) and use the subject line "Transition Consent."

## Every Minute Counts Literature Review

### **Every Minute Counts: Calculating IEP Services to Improve Student Outcomes in**

**Washington State** is a project between members of the Institute for Innovation in Development, Engagement, and Learning Systems (IDEALS) and the Special Education Division of the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). The objective is to identify existing problems of practice related to IEP development and identify best practices for determining the amount and type of special education and related services contained in students' IEPs.

The initial stage of the project includes a [comprehensive report presenting the research literature](#) with an accompanying [summary](#), existing policies at the federal and state level, and other related resources. The next stages of the project include focus groups to further



understand the problem of practice and identify solutions, which will inform the development of a technical assistance guide that will be released in late spring.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES  
REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
WASHINGTON, DC 20202-2800

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CIRCULAR

RSA-TAC-23-03

DATE: July 11, 2023

ADDRESSEES: STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES  
STATE REHABILITATION COUNCILS  
AMERICAN INDIAN VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICE  
PROJECTS  
CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS  
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTERS

SUBJECT: Maximizing Services and the Use of Funds to Support Quality  
Employment Outcomes for Individuals with Disabilities through the  
Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Programs

PURPOSE:

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), within the U.S. Department of Education's (Department) Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, issues this technical assistance circular (TAC) to support State vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies' efforts and the mutual efforts of community rehabilitation programs, employers, families, and other stakeholders to maximize VR and supported employment services and supports that assist individuals with disabilities in achieving long-term labor market attachment in "competitive integrated employment," as defined in Section 7(5) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), and 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(c)(9). State VR agencies' intentional efforts and maximum investment of resources to provide comprehensive quality VR services will lead to improved employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, consistent with their unique strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice, that offer family-sustaining wages, long-term labor market attachment, and the opportunity for career advancement. Additionally, investing substantially in VR services and training that assists VR program participants to develop optimal skills and educational credentials will help to transform and improve workplace perceptions of the value of workers with disabilities and promote equity of employment opportunities for today's VR program participants and future generations of workers with disabilities.

Specifically, this TAC describes how VR agencies can maximize the use of funds to provide services that will strengthen quality employment outcomes through participant engagement, informed choice, investment in postsecondary training, access to assistive technology and critical support services, work-based learning experiences and apprenticeships, and meaningful partnerships within the workforce development system.

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

As authorized under the Rehabilitation Act, RSA provides Federal grant awards to assist States in operating statewide comprehensive, coordinated, effective, efficient, and accountable VR programs. State VR agencies are integral partners in their statewide workforce development and educational systems and are responsible for assessing, planning, developing, and providing VR services for individuals with disabilities, consistent with the individuals' unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice so that they may prepare for and engage in competitive integrated employment and achieve economic self-sufficiency (Section 100(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R. § 361.1). Thus, VR agencies are positioned to provide a range of services that contribute to improved "employment outcomes," as defined in Section 7(11) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(c)(15) for individuals with disabilities, including services that increase access to the VR program for individuals with disabilities who have diverse life-experiences and are often underserved.

The continuum of VR services offered by VR agencies provides opportunity for early engagement, career exploration, education and training, support services, and invaluable workforce experience. In today's ever-changing economy, it is paramount for VR agencies to evaluate their current service delivery models, develop a strategic approach to make full use of available funds, and assist individuals with disabilities to compete for high-paying careers in science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM), green industries, critical infrastructure fields, and other expanding industries. The discussion below highlights potential strategies for intentional investments in the provision of services to individuals with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities, to strengthen the attainment and long-term retention of competitive integrated employment.

### **Early Engagement of Students and Youth**

VR agencies and State educational agencies (SEA) can play a critical role in helping students and youth with disabilities and their families set high expectations for rewarding future careers and self-sufficiency. The formal agreement between the VR agency and the SEA must have clearly defined parameters for collaborating and coordinating the delivery of pre-employment transition services, as well as transition services that pave the way toward postsecondary success with clearly defined responsibilities for each entity as described in 34 C.F.R. § 361.22. Together, VR agencies and SEAs can ensure and coordinate services for students with disabilities that will lead to the development of high-quality postsecondary transition, career planning, and outcomes. Through outreach to parent, advocacy, and consumer organizations -- which offer information and support as well as mentoring and exposure to role models -- and active coordination with local educational agencies (LEAs) in transition planning activities associated with students' individualized education programs (IEPs), VR agencies can introduce students and youth with disabilities to the many opportunities and advantages offered through the VR program. Specifically, VR agencies can introduce the earliest set of services in the continuum of available VR services, i.e., "pre-employment transition services," defined in Section 7(30) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(c)(42), to engage all "students with disabilities," defined in Section 7(37) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(c)(51), regardless of whether they have applied or been determined eligible for the VR program. Pre-employment



transition services provide the opportunity for engagement in career exploration and, for many students with disabilities and their families, reveal the potential of the world of work in their future. As VR programs conduct regular assessments of and updates to policies, procedures, and practices, VR agencies should verify the strategies identified in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan are being fully implemented, including the formal interagency agreement with the SEA that provides for procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who are in need of transition services to move from school to postsecondary life and pre-employment transition services (34 C.F.R. § 361.22(b)(4)). VR agencies must make pre-employment transition services available statewide and should provide equitable access to all students with disabilities (Section 113(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R. § 361.48(a)). Additionally, VR agencies should include outreach to bilingual or multilingual students and families in their communities to help bridge access to and facilitate early engagement in pre-employment transition services.

Section 110(d)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R. § 361.65(a)(3)(i) require States to reserve at least 15 percent of their Federal VR grant for the provision of pre-employment transition services. Full investment in the provision of pre-employment transition services is essential to fulfilling the requirements of Section 113(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R. § 361.48(a), which require State VR agencies to use the reserved funds to provide, or arrange for the provision of, pre-employment transition services to all students with disabilities in need of such services who are eligible or potentially eligible for services under the VR program. On February 28, 2020, the Department published a notice of interpretation in the Federal Register (85 FR 11848) to clarify policy regarding the permissibility of using funds reserved for pre-employment transition services for auxiliary aids and services, as appropriate, for all students with disabilities, and for other VR services needed by students with disabilities determined eligible for the VR program to support their access to and participation in pre-employment transition services. VR services to eligible individuals are described in Section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R. § 361.48(b) and are provided in accordance with an approved individualized plan for employment (IPE).

VR agencies are encouraged to assess their current approach to the delivery and expansion of pre-employment transition services activities such as job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education (IHE), workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy (Section 113(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R. § 361.48(a)(2)). They should ensure policies, procedures, and practices align with the permissibility, flexibility, and expenditure of funds reserved for allowable pre-employment transition services, resulting in, at a minimum, the required expenditure of the reserved funds for the benefit of students with disabilities.

Early engagement of students and youth requires a commitment by VR agencies to attract these individuals and their families through meaningful and effective outreach strategies and in a relatable manner that demonstrates the valuable benefits and services available to participants in the VR program. To that end, the services should be effective, reflective of their needs, efficiently provided, and comprehensive to make their VR journey worthwhile.

## **Eligibility and Continued Engagement in the VR Process**

While students with disabilities may be introduced to the VR program while in school, for many individuals with disabilities, introduction to VR services occurs at referral or application to a VR agency by other programs and entities including the local American job centers. The initial interaction of individuals with disabilities with VR agencies creates the expectations and begins the experiences critical to ongoing engagement and an individual's long-term success. Investing in timely processing of referrals and applications (34 C.F.R. § 361.41) and subsequent eligibility determinations as outlined in 34 C.F.R. § 361.42(a) helps foster active participation and meaningful interactions between eligible individuals and VR counseling staff. Additionally, prompt engagement and the establishment of an ongoing positive relationship can result in VR agencies experiencing less attrition of applicants and eligible individuals, ultimately creating a greater opportunity to maximize the use of funds to benefit and serve a larger number of individuals with disabilities.

When determining whether an individual is eligible for VR services, there are prohibited factors (34 C.F.R. § 361.42(c)). The designated State unit (DSU) must ensure that no applicant or group of applicants is excluded or found ineligible solely based on the type of disability. The DSU must also ensure that eligibility requirements are applied without regard to the factors in 34 C.F.R. § 361.42(c)(2), including the type of expected employment outcome, an applicant's employment history or current employment status, and an applicant's educational status or current educational credential. Section 102(a)(1)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act allows for an individual with a disability, whose physical or mental impairment constitutes a substantial impediment to employment, to be determined eligible for VR services if he or she requires services to prepare for, secure, retain, advance in, or regain employment. RSA interprets the phrase "advance in employment," as used in Section 102(a)(1)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R. § 361.42(a)(1)(iii), broadly to include advancement within an individual's current employment or advancement into new employment. As VR agencies conduct regular assessments of and updates to policies, procedures, and practices, they must ensure there are no prohibitive approaches related to eligibility determinations when an applicant is interested in obtaining education or training to advance their career in current or future employment (34 C.F.R. § 361.42(c)(2)(ii)). VR agencies should understand and make every effort to mitigate and remove the substantial impediments and barriers experienced by individuals with disabilities in achieving or advancing in quality employment by maximizing services and providing the necessary resources to enhance and expand opportunities for meaningful careers.

Continuous engagement contributes to the quality of substantial vocational rehabilitation counseling and guidance, fosters active participation in VR services, enriches the development of the IPE, supports the achievement of milestones, and improves the likelihood of successful employment outcomes. Notwithstanding the challenge of staff limitations, which may require some innovative restructuring or realignment, VR agencies should understand the flexibilities when establishing an order of selection and carefully evaluate the need for implementing an order of selection, especially when funds are available to serve all individuals determined eligible for VR services. In the event that a VR agency is operating under an order of selection and has one or more closed priority categories (Section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R. § 361.36), it is required to provide information and referral services to individuals with

disabilities to other appropriate Federal and State programs, including other components of the statewide workforce development system as outlined in Section 101(a)(20) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R. § 361.37. An individual's record of service must contain the documentation on the nature and scope of services provided by the DSU to the individual and on the referral itself, consistent with the requirements of 34 C.F.R. § 361.37 (34 C.F.R. § 361.47(a)(13)). Information and referral services could be used routinely to engage and maintain contact with individuals who are in a closed priority of service category through the provision of accurate VR information and guidance (which may include counseling and referral for job placement) using appropriate modes of communication to assist them in preparing for, securing, retaining, advancing in, or regaining employment. Investments in activities and practices that maintain regular and meaningful contact may result in an increase in engagement of individuals with disabilities in VR services, reduce the number of case closures prior to plan, and increase successful employment outcomes.

### **Maximizing Informed Choice in IPE Development and Employment Goals**

VR agencies should employ methods and principles that ensure the use of VR funds to the greatest extent possible for the purpose of supporting and maximizing competitive integrated employment outcomes and careers for individuals with disabilities. Section 100(a)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act outlines the principles by which a VR program must be carried out, including the requirement that individuals who are applicants for such programs or eligible to participate in such programs must be active and full partners in the VR process, making meaningful and informed choices (Section 100(a)(3)(C) of the Rehabilitation Act). The Rehabilitation Act clearly places an emphasis on informed choice by requiring agencies to develop and implement an IPE in a manner that affords eligible individuals the opportunity to exercise informed choice in selecting an employment outcome, the specific VR services to be provided under the plan, the entity that will provide the VR services, and the methods used to procure the services (Section 102(b)(3)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act). Agencies must develop and implement written policies and procedures that enable an applicant or recipient of services to exercise informed choice throughout the vocational rehabilitation process (Section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R. § 361.52(b)).

A key component of informed choice and IPE development is financial literacy, including information related to the potential effects of employment on Social Security and other benefits that will dispel misinformation or misperceptions about the effect of work on their benefits and help individuals with disabilities to make well-informed decisions about the employment goals that best suit their needs. Section 102(b)(2) of the Act and 34 C.F.R. § 361.45(c)(3) require VR agencies to provide benefits planning information, including information about work incentives provided through the Social Security Administration (SSA). If the VR agency is unable to provide benefits planning, the VR agency should make a referral to a local certified work incentives practitioner or the SSA. Depending on individual circumstances, it may be appropriate to provide benefits planning during initial phases of the development of the IPE, during the implementation of the IPE as a service, upon employment, and again, when an individual receives a pay increase on the job.

Most often, an eligible individual will be made aware of the wide array of VR services available through the process of informed choice, decide which services are required for them to achieve employment, and learn how such services may be provided to assist them in achieving a specific employment outcome that is “chosen by the eligible individual, consistent with the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice of the eligible individual, [and] consistent with the general goal of competitive integrated employment” (Section 102(b)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R. § 361.46(a)(1)). Considering entry level jobs that do not reflect the full intent of the employment goal should not be encouraged over providing all the necessary services and making the appropriate expenditures to ensure the achievement of the IPE goal. The cost or the extent of VR services that an eligible individual may need to achieve a particular employment goal should not be a factor when considering or identifying the goal in the individual’s IPE.

Agency policy and practices should reflect the requirement of informed choice to ensure eligible individuals are made aware of the availability of in-State and out-of-State services related to career, training, and other support services without regard to cost, labor market conditions (if the individual is willing to relocate), or complexity of coordination for services. Out-of-State services can support an individual’s informed choice and employment goal when the availability of in-State service providers is insufficient, non-existent, or cannot meet the unique needs of the individual. Once the employment goal is identified, agencies are authorized to employ strategies that are consistent with Federal law and are obligated to locate comparable services and benefits for certain VR services (34 C.F.R. §§ 361.53 and 361.54). There is no Federal requirement that the financial need of individuals be considered in the provision of VR services (34 C.F.R. § 361.54(a)). VR agencies are encouraged to review, revise, or eliminate policies and practices related to financial needs tests and cost participation that may limit or discourage individuals with disabilities in their choice to access VR services or in the selection of career goals.

## **Postsecondary Training**

The Department has a long history of encouraging VR agencies to provide advanced training, when needed and appropriate, to assist eligible individuals with disabilities in achieving and maximizing their employment goals. SEAs, LEAs, and VR agencies can work together to provide counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at IHEs as one of the required activities under pre-employment transition services. Furthermore, they can promote opportunities for work-based learning experiences, and support eligible individuals in pre-apprenticeships, registered apprenticeships, and postsecondary training leading to recognized industry credentials. While VR agencies are required to enter into interagency agreements with public IHEs for purposes of negotiating financial responsibilities for accommodations and auxiliary aids and services (Section 101(a)(8)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R. § 361.53(d)), VR agencies may also seek additional avenues for greater collaboration to facilitate postsecondary services and success for individuals with disabilities (e.g., IHE disability services and 504 coordinators). Additionally, VR agencies can support dual enrollment activities (e.g., courses offered by a community college or other postsecondary education institution program where students earn college credit prior to high school graduation or participate in comprehensive transition programs) for secondary students with disabilities who have been determined eligible for the VR program by providing needed services to enable them

to fully access and participate in these opportunities. Section 103(a)(18) of the Rehabilitation Act specifically permits VR agencies to provide VR services that encourage qualified eligible individuals to pursue advanced training in the STEM fields, medicine, law, or business. Section 103(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act has historically permitted VR agencies to provide training at IHEs, including in advanced degree programs, to qualified eligible individuals, and the availability of support for graduate-level education in STEM and other fields through the VR program is reinforced in 34 C.F.R. § 361.48(b)(6).

VR agencies' policies that restrict or place limitations on the type, degree, and costs of support provided to individuals attending both in-State and out-of-State postsecondary IHEs can deter opportunities for individuals with disabilities to maximize their employment and careers. The full investment in postsecondary training offers VR agencies an avenue for continuous improvement in performance and the quality of employment outcomes for the individuals they serve.

Postsecondary training services assist individuals with obtaining both measurable skill gains and credential attainment. A "recognized postsecondary credential" is defined in Section 2(52) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act as a credential consisting of an industry-recognized certificate or certification, a certificate of completion of an apprenticeship, a license recognized by the State involved or Federal government, or an associate or baccalaureate degree, as well as graduate degrees for purposes of the VR program as required by Section 103(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act. To support attainment of a postsecondary credential, a VR agency's assistance could include graduate-level postsecondary education, as appropriate for the individual, if necessary to achieve the advancement in employment specified in the vocational goal on the individual's approved IPE or when such advanced career and technical training is required to compete for STEM careers, green industries, critical infrastructure fields, and other expanding industries.

Postsecondary training, including participation in career pathways programs focused on industry-recognized certificates or apprenticeships, can lead to credential attainment and good-paying competitive integrated employment outcomes. Career pathways are designed to serve a diverse group of learners, including youth, dislocated workers, veterans, individuals with disabilities, individuals who have low levels of literacy or English proficiency, new immigrants, women, and minorities. Career pathways programs, often a component of career training located within community colleges, provide opportunities for more flexible education and training, allow people to earn industry-sought credentials, and support the attainment of marketable skills that position individuals with disabilities to be highly desired candidates in today's competitive labor market. Interagency collaboration among VR agencies, SEAs and LEAs, and Career Technical Education (CTE) can result in strategic enhancements and strengthened transition programming to support students with disabilities in achieving career goals.

### **Assistive Technology and Other Support Services**

The overarching principle that individuals with disabilities, including individuals with the most significant disabilities, are capable of achieving and advancing in competitive integrated employment, when provided the appropriate supports and services (Section 100(a)(1)(C) of the

Rehabilitation Act), is woven throughout the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act and regulations in 34 C.F.R. parts 361 and 363. As VR programs conduct regular assessments of and updates to policies, procedures, and practices, agencies should ensure the strategies identified in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan are being fully implemented, including the provision of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices at each stage of the rehabilitation process (34 C.F.R. § 361.29(d)(1)). To improve equity in educational success for students with disabilities, SEAs and LEAs should work cooperatively with VR agencies to provide needed supports and services; however, in accordance with 34 C.F.R. 361.22(c), nothing must be construed to reduce the obligation under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.) of a LEA or any other agency to provide or pay for any transition services that are also considered special education or related services and that are necessary for ensuring a free appropriate public education to children with disabilities within the State involved.

To ensure full access to employment opportunities, VR agencies are encouraged to invest in and provide VR services, including rehabilitation and assistive technologies, that maximize the employment success of individuals with disabilities. Section 3 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, Section 7(3) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(c)(6)) define assistive technology, assistive technology device, and assistive technology service. Assistive technology is a broad term that encompasses any technology that is used in an assistive device or assistive technology service. An assistive technology device is any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. An assistive technology service encompasses the services that directly assist an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device (Section 3 of the Assistive Technology Act). Rehabilitation technology (Section 7(32) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(c)(45)) includes assistive technology devices and services. Leveraging rehabilitation technology solutions, including vehicular modification, telecommunications, sensory, and other technological aids and devices (34 C.F.R. § 361.48(b)(17)) to remove barriers and improve access to the range of available VR services for potentially eligible students and eligible individuals is one example of a critical investment in appropriate supports and services.

When an individual with a most significant disability, including a youth with a most significant disability, is supported in their competitive integrated employment setting, including customized employment, with readily available and easy to access on-the-job supports, they are often most successful in maintaining employment. VR agencies are encouraged to focus efforts on and investments in the seamless delivery of supported employment services (Section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(c)(54) and as outlined in 34 C.F.R. part 363), including the transition to extended services (Section 7(13) of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(c)(19), and 34 C.F.R. § 363.4(b)). Individuals with the most significant disabilities who require supported employment (Section 7(38) of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(c)(53)(i), and 34 C.F.R. § 363.1(b)) receive the maximum benefit from supported employment services when they are well-coordinated with necessary VR services provided prior to job placement and made available to assist an individual in achieving competitive integrated employment for a period of time not to exceed 24 months, unless a longer period is necessary based upon an individual's needs. For youth with a most significant disability, VR agencies are

authorized to provide, and fund extended services for a period not to exceed four years, or such time that a youth reaches the age of 25 and no longer meets the definition of a “youth with a disability” under 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(c)(58), whichever occurs first (34 C.F.R. § 361.5(c)(19) and 34 C.F.R. § 363.4(a)(2)). When making investments in supporting youth with the most significant disabilities VR agencies may need to develop policies, procedures, and practices to ensure expenditures for extended services for youth are readily available and offered by the VR agency, particularly when no other source of extended services is available.

### **Meaningful Partnerships Within the Workforce Development System**

VR agencies are uniquely positioned to influence the employment success of individuals with disabilities through the investment in training and services to employers as outlined in 34 C.F.R. § 361.32(c). Quite simply, employers should have access to skilled workers to compete in the global economy, and skilled workers with disabilities should have access to high-paying careers in areas such as STEM, green industries, critical infrastructure fields, and other expanding industries. VR agencies are required to provide consultation, technical assistance, and support to employers on workplace accommodations, assistive technology, and accessibility of facilities to enable the employers to recruit, job match, hire, and retain qualified individuals with disabilities who are recipients of or applicants for VR services. Additionally, VR agencies must ensure the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan describes how the DSU will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment opportunities and career exploration opportunities (34 C.F.R. § 361.24(c)). Work-based learning experiences arranged through the collaboration of VR agencies, SEAs and LEAs, and employers offer students with disabilities an excellent opportunity to explore interests and the world of work, raise family and individual expectations for the future, and build the soft skills that will open the door to post-school employment. Strategies and investments around these efforts will assist VR agencies in gaining a better understanding of the local labor market, developing meaningful relationships with employers and other partners in the workforce development system, designing VR services and training to meet employer needs, and providing opportunities for cross-agency coordination to help improve competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. When businesses are engaged with the technical expertise of VR agencies to support their efforts to recruit, train, and promote individuals with disabilities, they are better positioned to hire and retain skilled employees, and individuals with disabilities are better empowered to achieve long-term labor market attachment in competitive integrated employment.

#### **SUMMARY:**

Through maximizing all available resources, VR agencies are uniquely positioned to provide necessary VR services, including pre-employment transition services, education and training, assistive technology, and other appropriate supports that strengthen the viability of attainment and retention of employment outcomes that are consistent with the strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice of individuals with disabilities. VR agencies should be coordinating efforts with SEAs and LEAs in the provision of meaningful and necessary services for all students with disabilities, as early as possible during the transition planning process, including pre-employment transition services under the VR program, special education and related services under IDEA, and accommodations for students with disabilities for purposes of Section 504 of

the Rehabilitation Act. Today's economy has created demand for highly skilled talent to compete for high-paying positions in STEM careers, green industries, critical infrastructure fields, and other expanding industries. For individuals with disabilities engaged in VR services, the pathways to employment are varied and must be provided incorporating informed choice throughout the process and maximizing available services that will lead to quality employment. By regularly assessing and updating policies, procedures, and practices, VR agencies can inform the development and implementation of strategies to maximize the use of funds for providing VR services that elevate the competitiveness of individuals with disabilities in the local, regional, and global labor markets. State VR agencies should make full use of available funds by aligning the provision of the continuum of VR services with the permissibility and flexibility of using funds, increasing access and equity in employment, and leveraging the wide array of available services to provide multiple pathways to lasting careers and economic growth and success for individuals with disabilities.

#### CITATIONS:

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Sections 7(3), (5), (11), (13), (30), (32), (37), (38), and (39); 100(a)(1)(C), (2), (3), (3)(C); 101(a)(5), (8), (8)(B), (20); 102(a)(1)(B), (b)(2), (b)(3)(B) and (4), and (d); 103(a), (a)(5) and (18); 110(d)(1); 113(a) and (b); 504

Vocational Rehabilitation Program Regulations at 34 C.F.R. §§ 361.1; 361.5(c)(6), (9), (15), (19), (42), (45), (51), (53), 3 (54), (58); 361.22, (b)(4), (c); 361.24(c); 361.29(d)(1); 361.32(c); 361.36; 361.37; 361.41; 361.42(a), (a)(1), (a)(1)(iii), (c), (c)(2), (c)(2)(ii); 361.45(c)(3); 361.46(a)(1); 361.47(a)(13); 361.48(a), (a)(2), (b), (b)(6) and (17); 361.52(b); 361.53, (d); 361.54, (a); 361.65(a)(3)(i)

Supported Employment Program Regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 363; 34 C.F.R. §§ 363.1(b); 363.4(a)(2) and (b))

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Section 2(52)

Assistive Technology Act of 1998, Section 3

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\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Carol L. Dobak  
Deputy Commissioner,  
delegated the authority to perform the  
functions and duties of the Commissioner



# DVR State Plan Overview

# What is the DVR State Plan

- It is federal report that VR completes to document how VR helps people with disabilities find employment.
- It is submitted to RSA every 4 years to obtain federal funding for providing services to VR customers.
- It is not a strategic plan. VR reports on multiple different categories including the Goals, Priorities, and Strategies.
- It is a section of the larger Combined State Plan (per Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act), which all core partners in the public workforce development system write together.
- Submitted every 4 years, with an update after 2 years.
- It's based on a state program year (July 1-June 30<sup>th</sup>). It is due on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

# WSRC's Role in VR Services Portion of Combined State Plan

Federal Regulations for the VR program mandate that State Rehabilitation Councils have a strong role in assisting with the development of the VR Services Portion. It's mentioned in several different regulations:

- CFR 361.16 (Establishment of the WSRC)
  - DVR and the WSRC have to jointly agree to the State's goals and priorities
  - Requires the WSRC's summary of input and recommendations be included in Description A of the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan.
- CFR 361.17 (Functions of the WSRC)
  - Gives the regulatory authority for assisting in the development of the VR Services Portion
- 361.20 (Public Participations Requirements)
  - Mentions our role in reviewing the VR Services Portion
  - The proposed State Plan ICR reorganized the VR Services Portion. Attachments are now called Descriptions (lettered A through Q). Old attachment 4.2(c) is now Description A.

# What Info Should WSRC Review to Identify State Plan Priorities?

- Progress on last State Plan goals, priorities, & strategies
  - Goal One: Customer Service and Outcomes are DVR's Highest Priority
  - Goal Two: Motivate and Inspire High Performing Staff
  - Goal Three: DVR Collaborates with Businesses and Partners that Deliver Benefits to DVR Customer
  - Goal Four: DVR Operations and Infrastructure Support Our Work
- Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment
- Customer Satisfaction Survey trends
- Recommendations submitted to DVR

# WSRC Priorities 2020-2023

## **Goal #1: Customer Service and Outcomes are our Highest Priority**

- Customers experience timely, continuous progress throughout the VR process.
- DVR customers achieve employment in living wage jobs with benefits.
- Students are better prepared to engage in VR services after high school.
- Individuals with disabilities have equitable access to DVR services.

## **Goal #2: Motivate and Inspire High Performing Staff**

- DVR staff achieve mastery in their work
- DVR excels in key performance indicators
- DVR is an employer of choice

# WSRC Priorities 2020-2023

## **Goal #2: Motivate and Inspire High Performing Staff**

- DVR staff achieve mastery in their work
- DVR excels in key performance indicators
- DVR is an employer of choice

## **Goal #4: Improve DSHS/DVR's Systems and Performance**

- Establish a reporting framework that informs decisions and improvements at all levels.
- DVR staff have modern, user-friendly tools that streamline their work.

# WSRC Recommendations

- Counselor Reassignment
- Rapid Engagement
  - Rapid Engagement as a best practice to maximize the likelihood that customers will be active participants throughout the VR process.
  - Modernizing Technology
    - Implement Digital Signatures
    - Advancing records retention technology such as email to text + cell phone to text

# August Quarterly Prep | State Plan Priorities

Priorities	State Plan review	CSNA	Customer Satisfaction Survey	RSA Monitoring report	CAP Trends
Counselor Reassignment Best Practices ( <i>WSRC FR</i> )	x	x	x	x	x
Rapid Engagement ( <i>WSRC FR</i> )	x	x	x	x	x
Customers understanding DVR		x	x		x
*Vocational Assessment*	x	x	x		x
*Post secondary/skill gain/credential attainment*	x	x	x	x	x
*Business engagement*	x	x		x	
*Career pathways & high wage jobs*	x	x	x	x	x
*Job Placement*	x	x	x	x	x
EDAI/Outreach & services unserved/underserved	x	x	x	x	x
CRPs	x	x	x	x	x
Pre-Employment Transition	x	x	x	x	

WSRC FR – WSRC Formal Recommendation

\*Priority overlap, connected, tie together, etc.

Primary disabilities: Autism Spectrum Disorder, Mental Health

RSA Monitoring: Internal controls, formal tracking of trends



## Goal 1: Customer Service Excellence

### Evaluation of Progress

In order to increase access to services during the pandemic, equipment was distributed to customers, and the ability to authorize CRP services for technology skill development was approved. DVR has modified practice standards and upgraded technology in order to deliver remote services effectively. DocuSign is an example of technology which has been implemented to streamline hybrid delivery of services to customers. In order to address the impact to customers' case progress when staff vacancies occur, Lead Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor "floater" positions were created within each of the regions. These VRCs are assigned to step in and cover caseloads where there is the greatest need.

### Existing Strategies (Examples)

- a. Identify and address barriers to timely services and continuous progress for customers throughout the VR process.
- b. Integrate customer contact and response standards as performance measures for VR counseling staff.
- c. Establish an approach for reducing the impact to customers' case progress when staff transitions and vacancies occur.
- d. Develop a DVR outreach plan targeting under-represented populations in local communities who may lack awareness or understanding of DVR services.
- e. Build capacity throughout DVR for continuous improvement and innovation.
- f. Implement standard operating procedures and Lean techniques to achieve quality improvements.
- g. Identify training resources and experiential opportunities to develop DVR staff cultural awareness in working with individuals with disabilities with Native American or Alaska Native heritage.
- h. Ensure that benefits planning is offered to all customers who are eligible.

### New or Redefined Strategies (To achieve customer service excellence, DVR will: )

- i. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- j. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- k. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Prioritizing my Top Three Strategies

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Goal 2: Successful Customer Outcomes

### Evaluation of Progress

In order to expand the scope and availability of Pre-Employment Transition Services, DVR contracted with Synergy Consulting Partners to develop a plan of action. Workgroups are currently underway to address identified gaps and develop new processes and procedures for the delivery of Pre-ETS services.

### Existing Strategies (Examples)

- a. Increase rate of customers with IPEs that include job goals leading to self-sufficiency/financial security. *(How can we make this actionable?)*
- b. Identify career pathways and increase the rate of customers with IPEs that include post-secondary training resulting in employment in their field of study.
- c. Lead collaboration with individual school districts to identify gaps in services and CTE opportunities.
- d. Strengthen DVR knowledge and application of transition planning and practices that support positive post-secondary outcomes for youth.
- e. Expand the scope and availability of pre-employment transition services through new and extended contracts with Washington's community rehabilitation programs, workforce development Councils, community and technical colleges and educational service districts.
- f. Develop effective job search, job placement and other services that are readily available to all customers when they are job ready. *(How can we make this actionable?)*

New or Redefined Strategies (To increase successful customer outcomes, DVR will: )

- g. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- h. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- i. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Prioritizing my Top Three Strategies

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Goal 3: Highly Engaged, Diverse and Skilled Team

### Evaluation of Progress

DVR training has implemented onboarding for all staff and has established foundational and practical training via Internal and contracted trainers. DVR continues to pursue continuous improvement is by offering change management training to keep a change mindset. For recruitment and retention, DVR is striving to be an employer of choice by operating in a hybrid work model, offering more flexibility in schedules, and adopting and implementing a staff recognition approach. DVR rolled out an Equity, Diversity, Access and Inclusion (EDAI) program, including creating an EDAI Administrator role, and establishing a Community of Practice. DVR also created a Tribal Administrator Role with a Tribal Relations Core Advisory Team. Certified Diversity Executive credentialing is in process for key staff with Leadership already having completed this training program.

### Existing Strategies (Examples)

#### EDAI

- a. Increase understanding and adherence to language access and ADA plans through training, communication and accountability practices
- b. Center staff voices through listening sessions, regular EDAI conversations and surveys to further develop a culture of belonging and respect.

#### Recruitment and Retention

- a. Create and implement a consistent and repeatable statewide process to ensure consistency in hiring practices for the purpose of mitigating bias in the review, interview and hiring process.
- b. For staff recruitment purposes, offer internship programs and develop internal and external relationships, including with career centers and other diverse institutions nationwide.
- c. Improve mentorship and leadership development opportunities for all DVR staff through communications around personal and professional development opportunities.

#### Training

- a. Continue to build capacity and skills throughout DVR for continuous improvement and innovation.
- b. Obtain Certified Diversity Executive and Certified Diversity Professional credentialing for key staff and interested staff to support and promote EDAI objectives in the workplace.

### New or Redefined Strategies

- a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Prioritizing my Top Three Strategies

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Goal 4: Strong Business and Community Relationships

### Evaluation of Progress

Prior to implementing the 2023-2024 CRP/IL contract, DVR convened a workgroup for review. Results included increased fees and new outcome bonuses for CRPs. Addressing business relationships, DVR created a business engagement tracking tool to capture business contacts, and some Business Specialists now participate in Workforce development meetings in their local area. DVR created a 3-year Business Engagement Strategic Plan, and the strategy was updated to include “follow-up” for ongoing monitoring and collaboration. DVR implemented an interlocal agreement with Behavioral Health Administration to collaboratively serve supported employment customers eligible for Foundational Community Support and conducted Supported Employment training. DVR has also completed or updated other data sharing agreements to obtain performance data, to obtain wage data, and analyses of household poverty status for employed customers and post-secondary education and employment outcomes for youth.

### Existing Strategies (Examples)

- a. Collaborate with Community Rehabilitation Programs on contract changes that incentivize higher-quality outcomes based on established outcome measures.
- b. Increase coordination and collaboration with DSHS agency, workforce development and community partners to develop integrated service delivery models and expand access to the services and supports customers need for job success.
- c. Provide access to Foundational Community Supports by implementing an interlocal agreement with the Health Care Authority’s Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery.
- d. Ensure that benefits planning is offered to all customers who are eligible.
- e. *Follow-up* on newly created statewide plan establishing expectations and measure outcomes for the business engagement program. The plan should develop statewide expectations, outcomes, and staff roles and responsibilities for business engagement activities to expand employment opportunities and job placements for individuals with disabilities.
- f. Provide technical assistance to employers on the use of natural supports and disability DEI and etiquette in the workplace.
- g. Assess need for improvements to procedures addressed in the joint memorandum of understanding with Washington’s Tribal VR programs for referrals, joint cases, financial responsibility, shared training opportunities, information sharing and communication.

New or Redefined Strategies (To ensure strong business and community relationships, DVR will\_\_\_\_)

- h. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- i. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- j. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Prioritizing my Top Three Strategies

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Goal 5: Effective, Efficient and Safe Operations

### Evaluation of Progress

DVR measures success through established “Measures that Matter,” which are distributed through Power BI and a new Enterprise Performance Management System (called Results). These include data on case volume, performance measures at state and regional levels to support decision making, supervisor reports to monitor allotments and case expenditures, and preliminary analyses of customer demographics to assess possible disparities in access to services and outcomes. Through partnership with WSRC and WSU, full implementation of the DVR customer satisfaction survey was completed in 2021 and is reported out quarterly at Washington State Rehabilitation Council meetings. Work is mostly complete on the new case management system. DVR staff are working together with consultants to update and enhance the iDVR website, which will provide staff with easy-to-access internal information. The DVR IT portfolio was created and is updated once per month, which is a tool to track IT projects. This goal was accomplished, though ongoing collaboration is still important.

### Existing Strategies (Examples)

- a. Build reports/dashboards for DVR managers with easy access to performance data at the statewide, regional, unit, and office levels.
- b. Develop a reporting framework and database for overall agency reporting.
- c. Modernize DVR’s electronic case management system.
- d. Update and enhance the content and usability of the iDVR website to provide staff with easy access to clear, up-to-date program, policy, and administrative reference guides information.
- e. Implement new application to document Pre-ETS participant information and consent to participate in services and allow use of personal data for service delivery and reporting.
- f. Continued transparency and monitoring of the developed formalized IT portfolio management process to include a dashboard that allows staff to see how IT projects are prioritized.
- g. Monitoring and identify requirements, funding needs and priorities to maintain and update systems for case management and operations.

New or Redefined Strategies (To ensure effective, efficient and safe operations, DVR will:

- h. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- i. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- j. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Prioritizing my Top Three Strategies

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

# Department of Social and Health Services

## Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

### 2020-2023 State Plan Update

#### March 15, 2022

#### **A. Input of State Rehabilitation Council**

All agencies, except for those that are independent consumer-controlled commissions, must describe the following:

- 1. Input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including input and recommendations on the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, recommendations from the Council's report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other Council reports that may have been developed as part of the Council's functions;***

#### **Introduction**

This section has been jointly developed by the Washington State Rehabilitation Council (WSRC) and Department of Social and Health Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DSHS/DVR). Included herein are the input and recommendations of the WSRC, provided to DSHS/DVR during FFY 2020-2021, as well as DSHS/DVR's formal responses to each item.

#### **The Washington State Rehabilitation Council**

The WSRC provides guidance and advocacy to improve vocational rehabilitation services and makes recommendations about important or emerging issues. The WSRC met on a quarterly basis during the reporting period.

#### **Summary of Input & Recommendations**

##### **WSRC Item 1**

June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020

The WSRC recommends rescinding the Non-CRP Job Placement policy that was implemented in January 2019. The WSRC conducted an extensive case study of the Workforce System for the 2019 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment that included interviews of 11 of 12 Workforce Development Council staff and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Supervisors who are liaisons to the Workforce Development Councils. The results clearly outlined that while the WorkSource system has developed some promising practices in coordination with DVR, there are significant gaps in their ability to serve complex needs of DVR

customers with most significant disabilities. Staff providing direct service in these local offices, would require intensive disability training for successful implementation of this policies efforts.

## **WSRC Item 2**

June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021

The WSRC recommends rescinding the VRS Approval of Certain Services policy that was implemented in January 2019.

- DVR may not choose to provide only some services, or to delay services to eligible individuals with an IPE to reduce costs or to serve additional eligible individuals.
- VR Supervisor approval of all Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) provided Community Based Assessments, CRP Job Retention, and services supporting customer participation in post-secondary services in advance is not consistent with Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) requirements or customer informed choice.
- Timeliness has been the number one issue for the Council and for DVR customers. This guidance has added many new documentation and review processes to a system that is already administratively burdensome.

## **Summary of Consumer Satisfaction**

### **WSRC Summary**

Between October 1, 2020 and September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021, customer satisfaction input was gathered through Customer Listening Sessions & Customer Satisfaction Survey:

#### Customer Listening Sessions

Given public health safety concerns presented by the pandemic, the WSRC shifted the in person Focus Groups to virtual Customer Listening Sessions to ensure council members were able to connect directly with customers to hear their feedback on services. During this time, we conducted sessions with eight customers in the Wenatchee office and seven customers in the Bellingham office. WSRC members ask customer the following questions during the focus group:

1. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate DVR's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and providing services remotely?
2. Are there any barriers you have to receiving services during COVID-19 and throughout your DVR experience?
3. DVR has phases of service: eligibility, plan and closed. What phase are you currently in?
4. Have you been referred to a Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP)?
5. What has DVR done well?
6. How would you describe your overall satisfaction with DVR?
7. Is there anything else you would like DVR to hear?

#### Customer Satisfaction Survey

This reporting period we achieved our goal of beginning an external contract with Washington State University – Social & Economic Sciences Research Center for purposes of expanding our Customer Satisfaction Survey reporting capabilities to include regional and statewide

satisfaction rating by case status. We also now have the capability to receive customer comments reports separated by region and office location. This has allowed us opportunity to educate regional administrators and supervisors better on the trends in customer satisfaction. In addition, we will now be able to conduct supplemental surveys on an as-needed basis. The survey asks customers the following questions, allowing them opportunity to rate their responses on a 5-point Likert scale:

1. My counselor does a good job keeping in touch with me.
2. My counselor understands what is important to me.
3. My counselor understands how my disability affects me.
4. My counselor cares about my input.
5. DVR moves quickly enough for me.
6. Overall, I am satisfied with DVR

Customers receive an invitation by mail and email to participate in the survey via a web portal as well as a phone-in option. Customers are surveyed in each of the four respective phases of the VR process: eligibility, plan, closed-employed, and closed-other. Since we recently started this new contract and updated our methodology, we have only three quarters of data to share at this time from October 2020 to June 2021.

- Quarter 1 – October 2020 to December 2020
  - Region 1 – 72% (Margin of Error +/- 8%)
  - Region 2 – 66% (Margin of Error +/- 7%)
  - Region 3 – 69% (Margin of Error +/- 6%)
  - Statewide – 69% (Margin of Error +/- 4%)
- Quarter 2 – January 2021 to March 2021
  - Region 1 – 64% (Margin of Error +/- 8%)
  - Region 2 – 72% (Margin of Error +/- 7%)
  - Region 3 – 61% (Margin of Error +/- 7%)
  - Statewide – 65% (Margin of Error +/- 4%)
- Quarter 3 – April 2021 to June 2021
  - Region 1 – 69% (Margin of Error +/- 8%)
  - Region 2 – 67% (Margin of Error +/- 7%)
  - Region 3 – 59% (Margin of Error +/- 8%)
  - Statewide – 65% (Margin of Error +/- 4%)

These results provide a new baseline for the Customer Satisfaction Survey goal of 75% customer satisfaction.



## ***2. The Designated State unit's response to the Council's input and recommendations; and***

### **DSHS/DVR Response to WSRC Item One**

On August 12, 2020, DVR rescinded the procedural requirement for customers to access services from WorkSource prior to a referral for CRP Job Placement. At the time of the decision, the ability of DVR customers to benefit from WorkSource services was significantly impacted, due to closure of WorkSource locations to the public. To prevent delay of customers' progress toward stable employment due to DVR procedures, the requirement was removed in its entirety from DVR's Customer Service Manual.

### **DSHS/DVR Response to WSRC Item Two**

DVR rescinded the VRS Approval of Certain Services directive on July 23, 2021 and provided additional criteria for VRC approval of services, including referrals to CRPs for Community-Based Assessment and Job Placement and Retention services, postsecondary education, and self-employment services. DVR updated its Customer Service Manual to include some decision criteria to consider when purchasing these services. Journey level VRCs may approve these services, as necessary for their customers, and must document the justification in case notes.

## ***3. The designated State unit's explanations for rejecting any of the Council's input or recommendations.***

DVR did not reject any recommendations.

## **B. Request for Waiver of Statewideness**

Not applicable

## **C. Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Development System.**

Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system with respect to:

### ***1. Federal, State, and local agencies and programs;***

**Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA):** DSHS/DVR and WDVA have procedures for referring DSHS/DVR customers with military service to WDVA to determine eligibility for any state or federal Veterans' benefits. This collaboration has increased the use of Veterans' benefits as comparable services for DSHS/DVR customers who are veterans with disabilities.

**United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA):** DSHS/DVR has a cooperative agreement with the regional USDVA Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E) and its regional offices to facilitate improved service delivery for customers receiving USDVA benefits

by formalizing referral procedures, designating local referral liaisons, and coordinating services that contribute to the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

**Washington State Department of Social & Health Services (DSHS):** DSHS administers a wide range of programs that include, but are not limited to, developmental disabilities, long-term care and disability determination, and economic assistance services. DSHS/DVR continues close collaboration throughout DSHS.

**DSHS Community Services Division (DSHS/CSD):** DSHS/CSD administers the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Program, Aged, Blind, Disabled (ABD) Program (formerly known as the General Assistance - Unemployable (GAU) Program), Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) Program, and Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) Program. These programs provide time-limited income assistance and other support services to low-income families and individuals. Washington DSHS/DVR continues to work closely with CSD to mutually serve Customers.

**DSHS Developmental Disabilities Administration (DSHS/DDA):** DSHS/DDA is the primary agency that funds extended services for individuals with developmental disabilities who require supported employment. DSHS/DDA contracts for these services with Washington counties, and counties sub-contract with employment service providers to provide extended services to DSHS/DVR customers. DSHS/DVR has a cooperative agreement with DSHS/DDA to facilitate improved service delivery for customers receiving DDA by formalizing referral procedures, designating local liaisons, and coordinating services that contribute to the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

- DSHS/DVR and DSHS/DDA leadership meet on a regular basis, and are co-sponsoring several initiatives aimed at improving employment outcomes for youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities and advancing the skills of employment service providers and community rehabilitation programs that serve joint DSHS/DVR and DSHS/DDA customers.
- DSHS/DVR is represented as a member of the Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council.

**DSHS Aging and Long Term Support Administration (DSHS/ALISA):** DSHS/ALISA provides long-term care through personal care attendant services, Kinship Care, Roads to Community Living, “money follows the person” policies, New Freedom Services, the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Council, the Title V Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP), and the Medicaid Transformation Demonstration project Foundational Community Supports (FCS) Supported Employment program. DSHS/ALISA supports FCS network development and provider engagement. DSHS/DVR and DSHS/ALISA will explore the development of a cooperative agreement for serving joint customers.

**DSHS Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DSHS/ODHH):** DSHS/ODHH coordinates with DSHS/DVR’s assigned supervisor on multiple projects including accessibility and accommodations for DSHS/DVR customers. Specific liaison duties are distributed locally to supervisors and the 13 rehabilitation counselors for the deaf. DSHS/ODHH manages the Sign

Language Interpreter Contract and values feedback from all sources to improve the quality of interpreter services. DSHS/ODHH is the managing agency for DSHS/DVR's contract for Video Relay System (VRS) and Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) technologies.

**Washington State Board for Community & Technical Colleges:** The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) oversees the operation of thirty-nine Community and Technical Colleges across the state. DSHS/DVR will develop cooperative agreements with SBCTC programs authorized, and not authorized, by WIOA to jointly serve students with disabilities who require VR services to achieve competitive employment outcomes.

**Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families, Juvenile Rehabilitation (DCYF/JR):** DCYF/JR provides rehabilitative services to justice-involved youth. DSHS/DVR and DCYF/JR have a cooperative agreement to jointly serve JR youth who are eligible for Pre-Employment Transition Services and other DSHS/DVR services. Through coordinated services, DCYF/JR youth with disabilities will receive services supporting community re-entry along career pathways.

**Washington State Health Care Authority:** The Health Care Authority (HCA) administers Medicaid services to all eligible DSHS/DVR customer recipients. HCA is also the designated state mental health authority. DSHS/DVR and HCA closely coordinate to assure that individuals receive medical and behavioral health services necessary to achieve their employment goals. In addition, DSHS/DVR has a cooperative agreement with DSHS/DDA that describes how Title 19 services under the State Medicaid Plan, including community-based waiver programs, will be utilized to develop and support integrated, community-based employment opportunities for customers.

HCA contracts with Amerigroup, a Third-Party Administrator, to administer Foundational Community Supports (FCS), a Medicaid Transformation Demonstration project that provides supported employment services for individuals with behavioral health conditions or long-term care needs. HCA Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR) and the DSHS/Aging and Long-Term Support Administration (AL TSA) support FCS network development and provider engagement.

HCA also administers Health Care for Workers with Disabilities (HWD), a Medicaid buy-in program. DSHS/DVR coordinates with HCA/HWD to assist qualified individuals to receive medical benefits after they become employed.

**HCA Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR):** The Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR) was moved from DSHS to HCA in 2018 to integrate physical health with behavioral health, thereby providing whole-person care. HCA/DBHR manages the majority of public behavioral health services in Washington. HCA/DBHR provides a broad range of community based mental health, substance use disorder, and pathological and problem gambling services, using multiple funding sources to meet broad behavioral health needs. In addition, HCA/DBHR sponsors recovery supports and the development of system of care networks.

DSHS/DVR completed an Interlocal Agreement with HCA/DBHR in 2019 to establish a collaborative framework for both agencies to provide employment services for individuals with behavioral health conditions. This framework identifies shared eligibility criteria and defines roles and responsibilities for DSHS/DVR's Supported Employment Program and HCA/DBHR's FCS Supported Employment Program.

- DSHS/DVR and HCA/DBHR leadership meet on a regular basis for ongoing coordination and collaboration between systems.
- In addition, DSHS/DVR and HCA/DBHR participate in the FCS Amerigroup Advisory Committee with other FCS partners DSHS/ALISA and other FCS stakeholders.
- DSHS/DVR is represented as a member of the Washington State Behavioral Health Advisory Council.
- DSHS/DVR maintains active referral relationships with treatment providers at the local level that are funded through HCA/DBHR contracts with each county.
- DSHS/DVR is collaborating with HCA/DBHR the FCS program for shared supported employment customers, using Medicaid behavioral health funding. FCS is designed to integrate the Individual Placement Support (IPS) model of supported employment with DSHS/DVR supported employment services.
- DSHS/DVR and HCA/DBHR signed a Memorandum of Collaboration that establishes methods for Medicaid outpatient behavioral health services to be provided as extended services for joint DSHS/DVR supported employment customers.
- DSHS/DVR assigned liaison counselors that are assigned to work with behavioral health agencies across the state, facilitating access to DSHS/DVR services for behavioral health consumers.
- King County Behavioral Health and Recovery has become a Ticket-to-Work (TTW) Employment Network and is establishing a Partnership Plus Agreement with DSHS/DVR to build a revenue stream from the TTW Program that will fund extended services for those mental health customers who require a supported employment model.

**Tribal Programs:** DSHS/DVR and the Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) have a joint memorandum of understanding with twelve Tribal 121 programs, including eleven in Washington and one in Coeur d'Alene, ID. This joint memorandum outlines how all partners will ensure effective communication, collaboration, coordination, and cooperation in serving individuals with disabilities who are tribal members in Washington. The agreement, updated on an annual basis, outlines procedures for referrals, joint cases, financial responsibility, shared training opportunities, information sharing, and communication. Tribal 121 directors meet annually with DSHS/DVR and DSB directors in a government-to-government collaboration to promote partnership, maximize resources, and ensure high service quality.

Through DSHS, DSHS/DVR continues its cooperative working relationships and service delivery commitments with all federally recognized tribes in Washington, including those that do not operate federally funded Tribal VR programs. DSHS/DVR participates as a member on the DSHS Indian Policy Advisory Committee. This includes annual and quarterly meetings to review our partnership and identify service delivery improvements for individuals with disabilities who are

members of federally recognized tribes as well as those who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native.

**Governor’s Committee on Disability Issues and Employment (GCDE):** The DSHS/DVR Director participates as a member of the GCDE and partners with committee members on initiatives.

**Centers for Independent Living:** DSHS/DVR currently contracts Title VII, Part B funds to four independent living centers statewide. These centers use Part B funds to enhance and expand core independent living services with a focus on youth with significant disabilities. In addition to core services, independent living centers have been focusing on outreach to increase services in unserved or underserved geographic areas. Additional outreach efforts include targeted disability groups, minority groups, and urban or rural populations with the focus on youth with significant disabilities and 504 plans. The goal is to create a safe environment for youth with disabilities in which youth feel comfortable and confident when talking to allies. This goal will be accomplished by enhancing youth understanding of independent living philosophy, successful self-advocacy, and ways to engage with legislators about disability issues. The independent living centers’ Title VII, Part B contracts are aligned with and can be amended to meet the goals set forth by the State Plan for Independent Living, the strategic plan developed by the Washington State Independent Living Council.

**Washington State Office of Financial Management/State Human Resources (OFM/SHR):** The Office of Financial Management (OFM) division of State Human Resources (SHR) administers the Supported Employment in State Government (SESG) Program, adopted by the Washington State Legislature in 1999. Executive Order 13-02, effective May 22, 2013, requires each agency, board, commission, and other organization that reports to the Governor to participate in the SESG program. Positions are available to individuals with a development disability or a significant disability who require on the job training and long-term support to perform their job successfully. Candidates must also have a reliable source of long-term support.

DSHS/DVR has a SESG Program Memorandum of Understanding with OFM/SHR to designate a Statewide SESG Program Coordinator, market the SESG Program to state agencies, assist agencies to establish and fill positions, and ensure that employee needs for job modification, reasonable accommodations and long-term support are met.

Individuals with a developmental disability or a significant disability who require on the job training and long-term support and have a reliable source of long-term support are eligible for these positions. All SESG positions are regular classified positions, filled on a competitive basis per State recruitment and hiring policies and procedures

**Washington Workforce Association:** The Washington Workforce Association (WWA) is a nonprofit, non-partisan membership organization comprised of Washington’s twelve Workforce Development Councils (WDCs). The WWA partners with state, regional, and national organizations advocating for a coordinated and fully funded workforce development system focused on the needs of job seekers and businesses. To coordinate and align workforce development services at the local level, DSHS/DVR and the WWA have created and signed a *Shared Vision, Values, & Principles of Collaboration* document which outlines how DSHS/DVR

and WDCs will provide integrated services to individuals with disabilities in Washington's One-Stop Centers.

**Association of County Human Services - Developmental Disabilities:** The Association of County Human Services - Developmental Disabilities (ACHS-DD) is a nonprofit, non-partisan membership organization of the thirty-nine County Developmental Disabilities (CDD) Coordinators across the state who contract with DSHS/DDA to deliver residential, employment and other services to individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities.

**Disability Inclusion Network (Disability:IN):** The Disability:IN is a network of employers who educate and support businesses to hire, retain, and improve customer service for people with disabilities.

**Community Employment Alliance:** The Community Employment Alliance (CEA) is a statewide membership organization comprised of Community Rehabilitation Programs. CEA provides advocacy, education, and partnering opportunities to promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities. DSHS/DVR and CEA leadership meet quarterly to share information, hear concerns and collaborate on issues and special projects affecting employment services.

**Traumatic Brain Injury Strategic Partnership Advisory Council:** In the late 1990s, DSHS/DVR was the primary sponsor of a demonstration grant to identify gaps in providing services to individuals who sustained a traumatic brain injury (TBI). DSHS/DVR continues to be a represented member of the TBI Strategic Partnership Advisory Council. This group discusses TBI-related policy issues, system development, and the need for services to meet the needs of TBI survivors, family members, prospective employers, and community members. The TBI Strategic Partnership Advisory Council has identified gaps in housing, a lack of resources, and a need for support group facilitator training. This Council has successfully encouraged the Washington State Legislature to pass legislation that adds fees to specific traffic violations (e.g. negligent driving and speeding) which correlate with increased risk of injury accidents and TBIs. These collected fees are used to help fund TBI-related programs and resources. DSHS/DVR continues to be an active partner in addressing the needs of individuals who have been, or will be affected by, traumatic brain injuries.

**University of Washington Rehabilitation Program:** Since 2006, DSHS/DVR and the University of Washington Rehabilitation Medicine Unit have collaborated to maintain an on-site Rehabilitation Medicine-DSHS/DVR liaison. This mutually beneficial relationship improves inpatient and outpatient care at the University of Washington Medical Center (UWMC) by providing UWMC patients with direct access to DSHS/DVR services during their hospital treatment. The UWMC is the only regional rehabilitation medicine center in the Pacific Northwest for the treatment of spinal cord injuries and other severe disabling medical conditions. Early introduction in the medical setting provides DSHS/DVR with comprehensive insight into patient needs and makes the referral process more efficient. This relationship provides UWMC patients with additional resources for education, support, and funding. The liaison coordinates DSHS/DVR orientation and intake procedures for individuals referred from UW Rehab Medicine; determines eligibility for DSHS/DVR services; provides information and referral; participates in UWMC team staffing to coordinate DSHS/DVR services with the interdisciplinary treatment team; upon release from the

hospital, assists with transitioning the individual to a VR Counselor near their home; learns about extensive medical and other resources available through the UW Medical School; and shares resources with other DSHS/DVR counselors.

## ***2. State programs carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;***

DSHS/DVR has an Interlocal Agreement with the University of Washington, Center for Technology and Disability Studies, Washington Assistive Technology Act Program (WATAP), which is the state program carrying out activities under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998. WATAP provides training to DSHS/DVR, Tribal VR, and DSHS/DVR contractor staff; provides AT device demonstrations and evaluations, and lends AT devices to staff and customers. DSHS/DVR maintains a close collaborative relationship with WATAP, which includes DSHS/DVR representation on WATAP's Advisory Council.

DSHS/DVR customers will continue to have access to assistive technology devices, services, and consultations. DSHS/DVR counselors will assess whether assistive technology (AT) services or devices are needed to address all customers' barriers to employment as part of DSHS/DVR's standardized vocational assessment process. DSHS/DVR has three full-time Assistive Technology Assessment Practitioners (ATAPs) to provide customers with specialized AT assessments, consult with staff and customers regarding a full spectrum of AT services and products, coordinate service delivery with AT vendors, and disseminate information and resources about advancements in AT devices.

To ensure that DSHS/DVR staff is informed of ongoing developments in the AT field, assistive and rehabilitative technology will continue to be a core focus of the redesigned DSHS/DVR VR Institute curriculum.

DSHS/DVR will monitor AT service delivery in compliance with WIOA requirements. In addition, DSHS/DVR will renew its commitment to being an organizational role model in effective utilization of AT as accommodations for individuals with disabilities including, but not limited to, individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing and individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

## ***3. Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture;***

DSHS/DVR has not entered into agreements with programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

## ***4. Non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth; and***

DSHS/DVR has not entered into cooperative agreements with non-educational entities carrying out activities outside the state workforce development system that serve out-of-school youth.

## ***5. State use contracting programs.***

DSHS/DVR has not entered into state use contract agreements.

## D. Coordination with Education Officials

- 1. The designated State unit's plans, policies and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including Pre-Employment Transition Services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students.***

### Introduction

The 2014 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 profoundly enhance expectations for coordination between DSHS/DVR and education officials to provide early job exploration and work-based learning opportunities for secondary students with disabilities.

DSHS/DVR has developed a long-range plan to develop and strengthen the education-vocational rehabilitation infrastructure for the coming four years.

### Pre-employment Transition Services

With the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) mandate that state vocational rehabilitation programs allocate 15% of federal funds to provide five required Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to all students with disabilities, it is imperative that DSHS/DVR develop a strategic, thoughtful, and intentional plan to meet the needs of secondary students with disabilities statewide. These five required activities include 1) job exploration; 2) information regarding post-secondary opportunities at institutions of higher education; 3) self-advocacy instruction; 4) work readiness training; and 5) work-based learning.

The Code of Federal Regulations (CFRs) has expanded the population of students who receive services from DSHS/DVR. Secondary students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans who receive Pre-ETS may be either eligible for DSHS/DVR services or potentially eligible for services. Pre-ETS are provided as generalized services to groups of eligible or potentially eligible students with disabilities, or as individualized and intensive services for students with higher support needs.

For the provisions of Pre-Employment Transition Services, DSHS/DVR has defined a "Student with a Disability" as an individual with a disability in a secondary, postsecondary, or other recognized education program who:

- (A)(1) **Is not younger than the earliest age for the provision of transition services** under section 614(d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII)); and/or Washington Administrative Code 392-172A-03090 (1) (iii) (k) in part "Appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education"



- (B)(1) Is **not older than 21 years of age**; or (2) If the State law for the State provides for a higher maximum age for receipt of services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.), is not older than that maximum age; and
- (C)(1) Is **eligible for, and receiving, special education or related services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act** (20 U.S.C. 1411 et seq.); or (2) Is a student who is an individual with a disability, for purposes of section 504. (Authority: Sections 7(37) and 12(c) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; 29 U.S.C. 705(37) and 709(c))

While not all students receiving Pre-ETS will apply for DSHS/DVR services, engagement with transition staff and students will be in an effort to work toward alignment of IEP and High School and Beyond Plan goals.

DSHS/DVR staff will ensure all participants have an IPE (Individualized Plan for Employment) within 90 days of being determined Eligible or their name being removed from the Order of Selection list, whichever is later, unless there is a mutually agreed to extension as described within DSHS/DVR policies and procedures.

### **Coordinated Services for Students and Youth: Goals & Objectives**

**Strengthen and enhance the DSHS/DVR and education agency partnership at state and local levels so that students receive a seamless continuum of transition services.**

- Work with the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to improve communication regarding clarifying roles and responsibilities of each partner agency in coordinating activities that promote successful secondary transition services for students with disabilities.
- Follow the guidance given in the DSHS/DVR's Memorandum of Understanding with OSPI to help:
  - Disseminate the agreement to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) including special education directors and 504 coordinators, and to VR staff, and encourage further dissemination to school counselors and principals.
  - Promote outreach to identify potentially eligible students as early as possible, including students who are receiving special education services (who have an IEP), students receiving Section 504 accommodations, aids, and services (who have a 504 Plan), and students who have otherwise documented disabilities and may benefit from Pre-Employment Transition Services and/or transition services.
  - Communicate regularly among state and local entities to identify and address gaps in services.
  - Explore and identify the transition needs of students with disabilities at risk of drop-out or who have a history of incarceration and integrate supports into existing state initiatives as applicable.
  - Promote individualized and student-centered planning, with post-secondary goals consistent with student interests, strengths, preferences, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, and informed choice.

- Promote transition planning between LEAs and VR to ensure seamless and coordinated services for students.
- Share training materials developed by the agencies or their agents and extend invitations to trainings using these materials to LEAS and VR staff.
- Collaborate to identify and implement high quality pre-employment transition and transition services service delivery models.
- Invite partner agencies to statewide meetings as needed for cross training or education.
- Support eligible students with disabilities to engage with the broadest transition team possible and encourage LEAS to provide early invitations to VR staff for IEP consultation and technical assistance.

**Increase student access to Pre-Employment Transition Services and individualized transition services from DSHS/DVR.**

- Continue to Ensure every high school in the state, including public, private, and charter schools, as well as alternative and transition programs, and Juvenile Rehabilitation facilities is assigned a liaison VR counselor trained to provide outreach and comprehensive high school transition services.
- Continue to Ensure outreach is inclusive of all educational stakeholders including but not limited: Transition coordinators, Administrators, Guidance counselors/School Psychologists, 504 coordinators, School nurse, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Speech-Language Pathologists, Special education teaching staff, Alternative high school teachers, McKinney-Vento coordinator, and Career Technical Educators (CTE).
- Identify regularly scheduled check-ins with school staff.
- Lead collaboration with individual school districts to identify gaps in transition services using data from the state-wide needs assessment as well as school enrollment and demographic data obtained from OSPI
- Continue to develop interagency agreements and service contracts with organizations to provide Pre-ETS to potentially DSHS/DVR-eligible and DSHS/DVR-eligible students.
- Develop and maintain a DSHS/DVR student transition website that provides information for students and their families, DSHS/DVR staff, and school personnel.
- Provide ongoing transition best practices guidance, training and technical assistance to DSHS/DVR supervisors, counselors, staff, and community partners.
- Increase outreach to students in traditionally unserved and underserved disability populations, including those with 504 plans, those with emotional-behavioral challenges, students who are deaf or hearing, those who have specific learning disabilities, as well as other disability populations who often do not receive services.
- Increase outreach to students in traditionally unserved and underserved populations that include tribal youth, justice-involved youth, homeless youth, and students and youth receiving foster care.

## **2. Information on the formal interagency agreement with the State educational agency with respect to:**

- A. Consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;**

### **Consultation with Education**

As part of the formal interagency agreement developed in 2020 between DSHS/DVR, Department of Services for the Blind (DSB), and OSPI, DSHS/DVR consults with and provides technical assistance to staff at secondary schools and local educational agencies in transition planning for students with disabilities from school to post-school activities. This agreement defines partners' roles in Pre-Employment Transition Services, collaborative training activities, and consultation and technical assistance that support educational agencies in transition planning for students with disabilities.

- B. Transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs;**

### **DSHS/DVR and Individualized Education Plans (IEP)**

DSHS/DVR has designated counselor liaisons that work closely with local education agencies statewide; every high school in Washington has a designated DSHS/DVR counselor liaison, including tribally operated secondary schools. DSHS/DVR liaisons maintain close collaborative relationships with students, families, educators, and stakeholders. Their activities include, but are not limited to:

- Build and maintain relationships with educational stakeholders
- Explain the scope of VR services
- Coordinate outreach and training activities for students and families
- Address organizational problems between school and DSHS/DVR
- Maintain regular schedule at the school
- Provide individualized transition services (when appropriate)
- Participate in IEP planning and development
- Attend IEP meetings
- Ongoing consultation in the development of transition IEPs
- Dissemination of informational materials, to parents, students, and school staff

- C. Roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;**

## **Financial Resources and Personnel**

### **Financial Responsibilities**

DSHS/DVR provides any financial resources and services needed to establish eligibility for students and youth with disabilities. In addition, funds are made available for students' activities primarily related to employment services and Pre-Employment Transition Services. Activities primarily related to education are funded by educational agencies.

### **Personnel**

DSHS/DVR, OSPI, and local education agencies maintain lists of DSHS/DVR transition counselors on public-facing web sites. DSHS/DVR transition counselors conduct outreach and ongoing consultation to teachers, students, families, and stakeholders.

#### ***D. Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.***

### **Outreach and Identification Activities**

The current agreement between DSHS/DVR, DSB, and OSPI identifies outreach activities to increase the number of students with disabilities who engage in DSHS/DVR and DSB services. In addition, this agreement specifies that DSHS/DVR services should be available to all students with transition IEPs well before students prepare to exit secondary education.

Outreach and engagement activities include:

- An OSPI representative is a member of the Washington State Rehabilitation Council
- DSHS/DVR counselors are assigned as liaisons to each high school in the state
- DSHS/DVR and OSPI share training and information materials for cross-program professional development
- DSHS/DVR provides outreach and education about DSHS/DVR services to underserved populations, including students with disabilities

## E. Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations

Describe the manner in which the designated State agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit VR service providers.

### Introduction

This section describes how DSHS/DVR contracts with private vocational rehabilitation (VR) service providers, Washington's Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs), as well as the services these partners provide.

### CRP Contract & Services

DSHS/DVR contracts with CRPs to provide assessment, placement, retention, and training services. The majority of CRPs are private nonprofit providers. However, in some instances, the CRP contract is with a government organization or private, for-profit businesses.

The State of Washington requires contracts, in lieu of cooperative agreements, for procuring goods and services. These contracts meet requirements specified within CFR 361.31. DSHS/DVR's CRP contract is procured through an open Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process and is renewed every two years. The RFQ defines the services, expected outcomes of service delivery, payment systems, uniform fees, and the qualifications prospective contractors must meet to be granted a CRP contract. DSHS/DVR does not currently limit the number of contractors who may respond to the RFQ and contractors choose which of the contracted services they provide. Currently, approximately 120 organizations have a CRP contract with DSHS/DVR.

The following services are defined, and provided to DSHS/DVR customers through, the CRP contract:

- Vocational Evaluation: Customers participate in one or more types of standardized vocational tests used to obtain objective information requested by a DSHS/DVR counselor regarding work-related strengths and limitations.
- Trial Work Experience: Customers' ability to benefit from DSHS/DVR services is assessed in a real work setting(s) arranged by the contractor. Results are used to determine eligibility based on clear and convincing evidence whether the individual's disability is too significant to benefit from services.
- Community Based Assessment: Customers' work interests, abilities, and employment barriers are assessed in realistic work settings arranged by the contractor. These assessments collect information and help identify the nature and extent of supports or accommodations needed for the customer to obtain and maintain competitive employment.
- Job Placement: Customers are placed into paid and integrated employment, arranged by the contractor, through mutual agreement between the DSHS/DVR counselor, customer, and contractor.
- Intensive Training (Supported Employment): Customers attain job stabilization with job supports, meet their employers' expected levels of work productivity, and transition to long-term Extended Services provided by an entity other than DSHS/DVR through one-

on-one job skills training and support provided at the supported employment job site by the contractor.

- Job Retention: Customers learn the essential functions of a job, meet the employer's expected level of performance, and retain employment for ninety calendar days after placement through individualized training and support services provided by the contractor.
- Off-Site Psycho-Social Job Support Services: Customers who have not disclosed their disabilities to their employers or customers whose employers prohibit access to the worksite receive regular therapeutic interaction. Off-Site Psycho-Social Job Support Services enables customers to maintain satisfactory job performance and successful interactions with others at the workplace.
- Pre-employment Transition Services: Students with disabilities participate in pre-employment activities as appropriate, and in coordination with their schools. These services include 1) job exploration; 2) information regarding post-secondary opportunities at institutions of higher education; 3) self-advocacy instruction; 4) work readiness training; and 5) work-based learning.

Trial Work Experience, Community Based Assessment, Job Placement, Intensive Training, and Job Retention are available at four levels of service. Customers' universal and unique barriers determine which intensity level, and commensurate support level, is needed; the fourth level is reserved for customers who are deaf/blind.

All contracted service payments are outcome based; delivery of the expected result or outcome is required to receive full payment. The expected outcome is specific to the service as indicated in the definition with a report detailing the activities associated with the provision of service and outcomes attained. Bonus payment incentives for employment outcomes under certain circumstances (e.g. employment that offers health insurance) are included in the contract.

## **Collaborative Activities**

DSHS/DVR has established workgroups of DSHS/DVR and CRP staff. These workgroups collaborate on a series of initiatives, which will improve service quality, promote better outcomes, and improve DSHS/DVR and CRP partnerships.

Workgroup Initiatives include:

1. Reviewing the current contract model to determine needed improvements or modifications.
2. Developing guidance for DSHS/DVR and CRP staff on coordinating service delivery to effectively service customers.
3. Disseminating guidance to DSHS/DVR local office staff regarding best practices for improving communication and collaboration with local CRPs.

Beginning in FFY 2018, DSHS/DVR implemented quarterly state-level meetings between CRPs and DSHS/DVR staff. These quarterly meeting provide CRPs and DSHS/DVR staff with regular updates and information sharing opportunities, and improve communication and collaboration.

DSHS/DVR will continue to conduct these state-level quarterly meetings to improve partnerships statewide between DSHS/DVR and CRPs.

## **F. Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services**

Describe the designated State agency's efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

### **Supported Employment Partners & Agreements**

DSHS/DVR identifies and makes arrangements with private non-profits (community rehabilitation programs/CRPs) as identified in the response to Description (e) Cooperative Agreements with Private Non-Profit Organizations, to provide supported employment services for individuals with most significant disabilities including youth.

DSHS/DVR collaborates with state and local entities including, but not limited to the DSHS Developmental Disabilities Administration (DSHS/DDA), Health Care Authority Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (HCA/DBHR), DSHS Aging and Long Term Support Administration (DSHS/AL TSA), the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, workforce development system, business partners, community behavioral health agencies, local education agencies, and local developmental disabilities employment providers to provide competitive integrated supported employment services to eligible individuals.

DSHS/DVR primarily provides supported employment services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and behavioral health conditions (mental health or substance use disorder, or co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorder). Of these customer groups, individuals with developmental disabilities represent the majority of supported employment outcomes.

DSHS/DVR's success in serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities is based on a long-standing relationship with DSHS/DDA. DSHS/DVR and DSHS/DDA signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2018, which was renewed in 2021, for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities receiving services from both DSHS/DVR and DSHS/DDA. This agreement provides staff of both agencies with referral, eligibility and funding criteria, and case management guidelines and designates liaisons for ongoing coordination and collaboration. DSHS/DDA is committed to funding extended services for all of its clients who achieve a supported employment outcome through DSHS/DVR.

For individuals with behavioral health conditions, DSHS/DVR's primary supported employment partner is HCA/DBHR. DBHR's Foundational Community Supports (FCS) Supported Employment Program is a new resource for meeting the long-term job support needs of individuals with behavioral health conditions. DSHS/DVR and HCA/DBHR completed an Interlocal Agreement (ILA) in 2019 to provide a collaborative framework for providing employment services to

individuals with behavioral health conditions. The ILA identifies shared eligibility criteria and defines roles and responsibilities for DSHS/DVR's supported employment program and for DBHR's FCS Program.

DSHS/DVR continues to promote the use of Ticket to Work as a potential revenue source for developmental disability, behavioral health disability, and traumatic brain injury service providers to build their capacity for providing extended support services.

DSHS/DVR will collaborate with DSHS/ALISA to explore the development of a cooperative agreement for individuals with physical impairments and long-term care needs, such as individuals with traumatic brain injuries and other significant disabilities, who require supported employment and are eligible for both ALISA's FCS Program and DSHS/DVR services.

Many individuals with disabilities would benefit from supported employment, yet do not have access to a long-term funding source for extended services.

DSHS/DVR strategies for expanding the availability of supported employment services:

- Participate in an interagency service committee, which supports initiatives to improve employment outcomes for persons living with developmental disabilities, mental health disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, and traumatic brain injuries.
- Train staff and partners on Social Security Ticket to Work incentives, which includes Plan to Achieve Self Sufficiency (PASS Plan), to expand revenue sources.
- Provide staff training on the use of natural supports and other behavioral health treatment modalities that can be utilized for DSHS/DVR Supported Employment customers for extended services.
- Coordinate cross-program training opportunities on innovative supported employment strategies.
- Coordinate cross-agency program training opportunities on the FCS Individual Placement and Support evidence-based model and the DSHS/DVR HCA/DBHR Interlocal Agreement.
- Participate in the FCS Advisory Committee.

## **G. Coordination with Employers**

Describe how the designated State unit will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of:

### **1. VR services; and**

#### **Introduction**

This section describes DSHS/DVR's contributions to coordinated business engagement activities. DSHS/DVR and its workforce development partners will embrace a dual—customer model, serving both Washington's businesses and Washingtonians living with disabilities.



Businesses will have enhanced access to talented and highly skilled job seekers with disabilities, while enjoying DSHS/DVR's training and technical assistance supports. Concurrently, DSHS/DVR and its partners will provide Washingtonians living with disabilities with the full breadth of best practice rehabilitation, training, and employment services needed to thrive in Washington's workplaces and communities.

This dual-customer model will close skill gaps for businesses, promote the economic self-sufficiency of Washingtonians living with disabilities, and contribute to a more prosperous Washington.

### **Businesses & Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

In coordination with workforce development partners at the state and local level, DSHS/DVR establishes the following business engagement objectives for PY 2020 - 2023:

- Define the role of the Business Relation Specialists (BRS's) and the role of the Business Relations Manager, including the position descriptions, outcomes and statewide goals.
- Define the areas/counties/cities need BRS's and Job Coaches/Employment Specialists.
- Provide a 5-year Strategic Plan for Business Engagement. Include year-by-year details and implementation recommendations.
- Engage in the development and implementation of coordinated business engagement from a national level to a local level.
- Partner and participate in WorkSource business engagement strategies and provide opportunities with career pathways programs throughout the state.
- Utilize DSHS/DVR Business Relation Specialists to assist with the recruitment and referral of qualified job seekers with disabilities to meet businesses' demands.
- Provide businesses with training and technical expertise services such as Americans with Disabilities Act reasonable accommodations and disability etiquette.
- Coordinate local WDC/WorkSource in the engagement of federal contractors and subcontractors, linking these contractors to skilled job seekers with disabilities to help the business meet their 7% utilization goal for people with disabilities, per Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Develop partnerships with the OFCCP.
- Create marketing tools to increase visibility through a methodical outreach and marketing plan. This also includes Business Relations Specialists to participate in local chambers of commerce, membership in professional organizations such as Society for Human Resource Management and local chambers of commerce, representation at career and recruitment fairs.
- Support and expand innovative disability hiring initiatives with businesses to promote the hiring of individuals with disabilities in high-skill and high-demand occupations.

### ***2. Transition services, including pre-employment transition services, for students and youth with disabilities.***

#### **Businesses & Transition Services**

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) provide value to both students and businesses. In the dual-customer model, Pre-ETS will engage Washington's businesses in actively molding the

future workforce. By exposing students with disabilities to hands-on and realistic work experiences, these students will enter the workforce well prepared to meet business' skill needs and expectations. As a result, business will experience higher productivity, better engagement, and reduced turnover.

DSHS/DVR will collaborate with workforce development, education, and community partners to:

- Build relationships with businesses who will work with students and youth by developing internships and on-the-job training programs.
- Partner with DSHS/DVR Transition Consultants to provide opportunities for youth career exploration, including workplace tours, job shadows, internships/apprenticeships, and OJT's at businesses across Washington.
- Develop business training and outreach materials that address hiring youth and students with disabilities.
- Promote the development and expansion of on-site job exploration and internship programs, such as Project Search, statewide.
- Partner with businesses, leveraging pre-employment experiences to prepare youth for the realities and expectations of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workplace.

## H. Interagency Cooperation

Describe how the designated State unit will collaborate with the State agency responsible for administering each of the following programs to develop opportunities for competitive integrated employment, to the greatest extent practicable:

### ***1. The State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act;***

#### **Health Care Authority (HCA)**

The Health Care Authority (HCA) administers Medicaid services to all eligible DSHS/DVR customer recipients. HCA is also the designated state mental health authority. DSHS/DVR and HCA closely coordinate to assure that individuals receive medical and behavioral health services necessary to achieve their employment goals. In addition, DSHS/DVR has a cooperative agreement with DDA that describes how Title 19 services under the State Medicaid Plan, including community-based waiver programs, will be utilized to develop and support integrated, community-based employment opportunities for customers.

HCA contracts with Amerigroup, a Third-Party Administrator, to administer Foundational Community Supports (FCS), a Medicaid Transformation Demonstration project that provides supported employment services for individuals with behavioral health conditions or long-term care needs. HCA Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (HCA/DBHR) and the Department of Social and Health Services Aging and Long-Term Support Administration (DSHS/AL TSA) support FCS network development and provider engagement.

HCA also administers Health Care for Workers with Disabilities (HWD), a Medicaid buy-in program. DSHS/DVR coordinates with HWD to assist qualified individuals to receive medical benefits after they become employed.

## ***2. The State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities; and***

### **DSHS Developmental Disabilities Administration (DSHS/DDA)**

DSHS/DDA is the primary agency that funds extended services for individuals with developmental disabilities who require supported employment. DSHS/DDA contracts for these services with Washington counties, and counties sub-contract with community rehabilitation providers to provide extended services to DSHS/DVR customers. DSHS/DVR coordinates with DSHS/DDA in the following ways:

- DSHS/DVR and DSHS/DDA leadership meets on a regular basis, and is co-sponsoring several initiatives aimed at improving employment outcomes for youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities and advancing the skills of employment service providers that serve joint DSHS/DVR and DSHS/DDA customers.
- DSHS/DVR is represented as a member of the Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council.

## ***3. The State agency responsible for providing mental health services.***

### **HCA Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (HCA/DBHR)**

The Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR) was moved from DSHS to HCA in 2018 to integrate physical health with behavioral health, thereby providing whole-person care. DBHR manages the majority of public behavioral health services in Washington. HCA/DBHR provides a broad range of community-based mental health, substance use disorder, and pathological and problem gambling services using multiple funding sources to meet broad behavioral health needs. In addition, HCA/DBHR sponsors recovery supports and the development of system of care networks.

DSHS/DVR entered into an Interlocal Agreement with HCA/DBHR in 2019. The purpose of the agreement is to establish a collaborative framework for both agencies to provide employment services for individuals with behavioral health conditions. This framework identifies shared eligibility criteria and defines roles and responsibilities for DSHS/DVR's supported employment program and HCA/DBHR's Foundational Community Supports (FCS) supported employment program.

DSHS/DVR and HCA/DBHR coordinate in the following ways:

- DSHS/DVR and HCA/DBHR leadership meet on a regular basis for ongoing coordination and collaboration between systems.

- DSHS/DVR and HCA/DBHR participate in the FCS Amerigroup Advisory Committee with DSHS/ALTSA and other FCS providers and stakeholders.
- DSHS/DVR is represented as a member of the Washington State Behavioral Health Advisory Council.
- DSHS/DVR collaborates with HCA/DBHR's FCS to serve shared supported employment customers, using the FCS Individual Placement Support (IPS) model of supported employment and DSHS/DVR supported employment services.
- DSHS/DVR maintains active referral relationships with treatment providers that are funded through HCA/DBHR contracts with each county.
- DSHS/DVR assigned liaison counselors to work with behavioral health agencies across the state, facilitating access to DSHS/DVR services for behavioral health consumers.
- DSHS/DVR and DBHR signed a memorandum of collaboration that establishes methods for Medicaid outpatient behavioral health services to be provided as extended services for joint DSHS/DVR supported employment customers.
- King County Behavioral Health and Recovery has become a Ticket-to-Work (TTW) Employment Network and is establishing a Partnership Plus Agreement with DSHS/DVR to build a revenue stream from the TTW Program that will fund extended services for those mental health customers who require a supported employment model.

## **I. Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development (CSPD)**

Describe the designated State agency's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated State unit, including the following:

### **1. Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development**

#### **A. Qualified Personnel Needs.**

Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs with respect to:

- i. ***The number of personnel who are employed by the State agency in the provision of VR services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;***

#### **Personnel Data**

DSHS/DVR employs a total of 282 field service personnel to serve approximately 17,000 individuals per year. Personnel providing direct services to customers are employed in eight distinct classifications. DSHS/DVR's direct service personnel are chiefly comprised of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs) and Rehabilitation Technicians (RTs), representing DSHS/DVR's professional and paraprofessional personnel, respectively.

- ii. *The number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and*

**Personnel Data & Vacancies**

***DSHS/DVR Field Service Personnel Levels and Vacancies by Classification, January 26, 2021***

Classification	Personnel on 1/26/21	Vacancies on 1/26/21	Classification	Personnel on 1/26/21	Vacancies on 1/26/21
VRC 1 In-training	19	0	RT 2 Business Specialist	8	3
VRC 2 In-Training	10	0	VR Supervisor	20	3
VRC 3 Journey	53	10	Assistive Technology Assessment Practitioner	3	0
VRC 4 Lead	47	8	Office/Admin. Assistant	7	0
RT 1 Case Aide	65	9	Program Specialist	1	0
RT 2 Case Aide	2	1	Administrator/Manager	6	0
RT 2 Benefits Tech	7	0	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>34</b>

- iii. *Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the State agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.*

**Personnel Data & 2021 – 2025 Projections**

***DSHS/DVR Projected New Staff Needs by Personnel Classification, 2021 – 2025***

Personnel Classification	Projected Number of Positions to be Filled, 2021 – 2025
VRC 1 In-Training	20
VRC 2 In-Training	20
VRC 3 Journey	44
VRC 4 Lead	44
RT 1 Case Aide	40
RT 2 Benefits Technician & Business Tech	16
Supervisor	20

## **B. Personnel Development**

Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

- i. A list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program;***

### **Higher Education Vocational Rehabilitation Programs**

Western Washington University (WWU) offers the only graduate program in Washington that directly prepares vocational rehabilitation professionals. Currently 32 students are enrolled in the Master of Arts in Rehabilitation Counseling program. In FFY 2019, 10 graduates completed this program and attained the credentials for certification as a rehabilitation counselor.

- ii. The number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and***

#### **WWU Master of Arts in Rehabilitation Counseling Participants and Sponsorships, FFY 2020**

Students Enrolled	32
DSHS/DVR Sponsored	0
RSA Sponsored	10

- iii. The number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.***

Students Enrolled	32
DSHS/DVR Sponsored	0
RSA Sponsored	6
Graduates	10
DSHS/DVR Sponsored	0
RSA Sponsored	5

## ***2. Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel***

Describe the development and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated State unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

### **Recruitment, Preparation, & Retention of Qualified Personnel**

DSHS/DVR's FTE allotment is capped at 318.0 FTEs until June 30, 2021. The division is able to recruit all field service vacancies as they occur but may not exceed this FTE cap. Approval by the DSHS Secretary is required to fill any newly established exempt or program management positions, as part of ongoing budget savings policies.

### **Qualified Personnel Recruitment & Preparation Strategies**

DSHS/DVR will maintain recruitment linkages and concentrated efforts with regional higher education institutions offering rehabilitation counseling programs. These include:

- Western Washington University
- Idaho State University
- Portland State University
- Western Oregon University
- San Diego State University
- Fresno State University
- Utah State University

DSHS/DVR will also continue to send recruitment announcements to higher education institutions offering rehabilitation counseling programs nationwide.

Recruiting qualified candidates in sufficient numbers to fill VRC positions is a continuing challenge. The national shortage of qualified VRC applicants has significantly affected DSHS/DVR's ability to fill vacancies in a timely manner, especially in rural and high-cost-of-living locations. Counselor turnover in our most populous county, King County, results in insufficient staffing levels to adequately meet customer needs.

In response to recruitment challenges, DSHS/DVR has broadened its list of qualifying master's degrees to include psychology, counseling, or a field related to vocational rehabilitation (i.e. fields that promote the physical, psychosocial, or vocational well-being of individuals with disabilities). While the list of qualifying master's degrees has broadened, the required competencies that a VRC candidate must demonstrate have remained unchanged.

Per Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) revisions to Rehabilitation Act CSPD requirements, DSHS/DVR has incorporated the Bachelor's level education qualifications into the VRC classification series. This has resulted in a broader recruitment pool and more timely appointments to vacant positions. However, a consequence of hiring graduates without a

Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling is the additional time required for these new staff to master the work.

New counselors without a Master's in Rehabilitation complete 18 credit hours in rehabilitation counseling within their first two years with DSHS/DVR. New counselors with a Bachelor's degree have two years to complete a Master's Degree. These counselors also carry fewer cases than journey-level counselors while completing the educational requirements and learning the job.

A particular focus of recruitment continues to be attracting candidates who identify as African-American, Latino, and American Indian, as these individuals are presently under-represented among DSHS/DVR personnel and in comparison to our caseload demographics. Targeted recruitment will continue in collaboration with Latino community-based organizations, American Indian VR Programs and other Tribal organizations, as well as African-American community-based organizations.

### **Retention & Advancement**

To ensure that new employees have the support they need to be successful, DSHS/DVR continues to use a comprehensive employee onboarding program. Supervisors use this set of activities when new employees are hired to ensure that individuals receive adequate orientation and training to perform their roles and responsibilities and serve customers well.

An activity to support new staff was implemented in one of DSHS/DVR's regions this year. New VR counseling staff formed a cohort that met monthly with two senior DSHS/DVR managers to discuss policy, practices and principles related to their vocational rehabilitation work. The sessions have proven to be valuable to new staff, and other areas of the state plan to implement similar approaches.

DSHS/DVR conducts an employee survey bi-annually, and uses the results to identify ways to improve employee job satisfaction.

### **3. Personnel Standards**

Describe the State agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) and 34 CFR 361.18(c) to ensure that designated State unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

- A. Standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and***

#### **Personnel Standards**

In accordance with 101(a)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act, DSHS/DVR maintains consistent standards for all rehabilitation personnel. These standards include prior education and experience requirements as well as specific core competencies. All current DSHS/DVR



counseling personnel (Field Services Administrator, Regional Administrators, VR Supervisors, and VRCs) hold credentials that are consistent with either the state-based VRC registration requirements or the national certification standards of the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC).

DSHS/DVR continues to apply educational qualifications for new hires into VRC 2, VRC 3, VRC 4, and VR Supervisor classifications that require the following credentials:

- A master's degree in rehabilitation counseling, psychology, counseling, or a field related to vocational rehabilitation (i.e. fields which promote the physical, psychosocial, or vocational well-being of individuals with disabilities; or
- CRCC Certification; or
- A master's degree in a closely related field, plus 18—quarter (12—semester) credit hours in specified rehabilitation counseling courses at the graduate level.

DSHS/DVR has adopted education qualifications at the Bachelor's level for the VRC1 classification as an entry point in to the VRC classification series. However, the VRC1 has been designated as an "In-training" classification that requires incumbents to obtain a Master's degree within two years of hire.

***B. The establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, in accordance with section 101(a)(7)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.***

### **Staff Development - 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education & Experience**

DSHS/DVR specifications for the VRC classification series are as follows:

VRC1 – "In-training" classification that requires incumbents to have at least one year of experience and obtain a Master's degree within two years of hire.

VRC2 – "In-training" classification that requires incumbents to have a Master's degree with less than three years of experience.

VRC3 – "Journey" classification that requires incumbents to have a Master's degree with at least three years of experience.

VRC4 – "Lead" classification that requires incumbents to have a Master's degree with at least four years of experience.

DSHS/DVR completes an annual Performance and Development Plan (PDP) with each employee that covers the period September 1 to August 31. The PDP is a standard State of Washington tool used to evaluate job performance and emphasize individualized staff development needs. Specific development needs identified for each employee are to be addressed in the following year. In addition to determining individual training needs, DSHS/DVR compiles results to plan overall training and developmental priorities conducted staff-wide. While specific priorities

evolve year-to-year, DSHS/DVR consistently addresses vocational assessment, counseling and guidance, vocational planning, job placement, as well as assistive and rehabilitation technology. New and ongoing training and continuous improvement activities specifically target the development of staff competencies using labor market and industry sector data.

#### **4. Staff Development.**

Describe the State agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that, consistent with section 101(a)(7)(C) of the Rehabilitation Act, all personnel employed by the designated State unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

##### **A. System of staff development**

A system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated State unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and

##### **Professional Development**

DSHS/DVR provides staff development and training for all staff, and in so doing, provides training opportunities (required and optional) to enhance staff competencies and skills. DSHS/DVR offers training to both professional and paraprofessional staff in core subjects through online (eLearning), instructor led virtual, and in-person instructor led training. Under Order of Selection, a larger proportion of DVR's caseload is comprised of individuals with the most significant disabilities, presenting challenges in meeting customer needs that are more complex. The role of the paraprofessional technician has become more critical to the effective management of caseloads.

DSHS/DVR tracks each staff member progress on assigned training through the Learning Center, the State's learning management system (TLC). Employees use the Learning Center to register for instructor-led and on-demand e-learning modules.

Many internally created and externally contracted DSHS/DVR courses are pre-approved through the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) to provide continuing education hours to those counselors who hold a CRC. DSHS/DVR currently has 39 Certified Rehabilitation Counselors.

##### **Identifying Training Needs**

DSHS/DVR utilizes various methods of reviewing staff performance, like monthly supervisor case reviews and annual performance evaluations, to drive the creation of individual performance development plans of all staff. Additional information is collected to identify strengths and deficiencies among staff and related training needs from other methods including:

- Statewide case reviews conducted by the Division’s Planning and Performance team.
- Contributions from all field staff via a statewide training needs assessment.
- Recommendations from the State Rehabilitation Council and the State Independent Living Council.
- Annual Social and Health Services Client Survey.
- Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA).
- Regional Training Specialists, State Training Team, and DSHS/DVR management.

### Statewide Training Team

In 2021, DSHS/DVR transferred their six Regional Training Specialists to a statewide Training Team with a new Training Manager to develop and deliver training to field staff in core VR competencies and customer service, with a focus on effective, timely, consistent eligibility and plan development.

The Training team plans to rebuild the core VR curriculum with a multi-faceted approach:

- Analyze current training needs by each role in the agency
- Design or remodel courses using adult learning best practices
- Use multimedia development tools to build engaging, accessible learning experiences
- Design and deliver consistent, comprehensive new hire training curricula through the Learning Center, regardless of an individual’s work location
- Use the DSHS/DVR’s SharePoint site to deliver an ever-growing library of accessible reference documents and videos available on-demand to employees statewide
- Support and maintain proper documentation for DSHS/DVR training requirements
- Training will be competency-based and designed to build knowledge and skills in case management practices. Training will be available in various modalities such as online interactive modules (eLearning), instructor-led, video, and remote instructor-led training.
- DSHS/DVR’s new statewide Training Team is also planning to replace Rehabilitation University with improved courses and content offered through the Learning Center. The new in-service curriculum will be more comprehensive, engaging, conversational, practical, and task-based, while maintaining accessibility.

DSHS/DVR also created a Training Steering Committee to provide quality assurance and support training development with subject matter expertise. The committee meets monthly to provide input on projects in development.

One of the first large-scale projects the DSHS/DVR statewide Training team will take on is the agency-wide training of Waves, the new case management system. The team will develop a series of quick tutorial videos and complementary job aid documents and have them easy to access on SharePoint, so employees can quickly find and follow along with the video tutorials whenever they need them. The team will also offer remote Waves tours by screenshare to acclimate agency employees to Waves and the SharePoint reference site. This three-pronged

approach gives every employee multiple ways to learn the new software at their own pace and style.

### Onboarding/New Employee Orientation (NEO)

DSHS/DVR offers New Employee Orientation twice a year, with the expectation that all staff will attend a session within six months of starting employment. DSHS/DVR currently boasts a completion rate of over 95 percent for this 2-day training event. The New Employee Orientation covers such subjects as:

- Vocational Rehabilitation Process
- Client Assistance Program (CAP)
- Washington State Independent Living Council (SILC)
- Washington State Rehabilitation Council (WSRC)
- Office of Indian Policy
- Washington Federation of State Employees Union
- DVR Customer Rights/Informed Choice
- DVR Information Technology
- DVR Policy
- DVR Public Records
- DVR Fiscal/Travel
- DVR Planning and Performance
- DVR Business Engagement
- DVR Training

### Vocational Rehabilitation Institute (VRI)

Washington DSHS/DVR along with the Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation (CCER) at University of Washington continues to deliver in-depth, foundational training in core VR topics to DSHS/DVR counseling staff. These classes are facilitated at a graduate level, enabling staff to build the knowledge needed to perform at a highly professional level. New Counseling staff begin attending the VR Institute within 12 months of hire.

VRI offers multiple sessions of each topic, and each topic is covered over several sessions. These topics include:

- Counseling Theories and Techniques
- Foundations of Rehabilitation and Ethics
- Medical, Psychosocial and Vocational Aspects of Disability
- Case Management and Caseload Management
- Vocational Assessment
- Labor Market Information and Job Placement
- Behavior Change/Engagement
- Suicide Prevention Competency and Secondary Trauma
- Supervisor and Leadership/Management Skills Development cohorts

DSHS/DVR has numerous policies related to appropriately and adequately prepare and train personnel, including rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals. One of the primary sources of knowledge for staff is the standard operating procedure related to required training. This document has a matrix of courses that pertain to specific positions or that can be accessed by staff who want to build skills for career advancement.

### ***B. Acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge***

**Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.**

Washington DSHS/DVR distributes significant information in emails, statewide and regional face-to-face meetings, video teleconferencing, weekly newsletters, Agency SharePoint sites, and Microsoft Teams

Washington DSHS/DVR staff at all levels attend numerous conferences every year to gain knowledge and skills. Conferences include Workforce Development, Transition, Supported Employment, Program Evaluation, and many others. Individual staff members also request and are granted approval to attend training or conferences related to serving specific populations or areas of specialization.

DSHS/DVR Benefit Planners receive specialized training through Cornell University to confirm the delivery of quality services when working with customers that receive monetary or medical benefits. Benefits Planners have provided ongoing training and support statewide with over 17 classes conducted for counseling staff on basics of social security and work incentives for customers.

## ***5. Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs***

**Describe how the designated State unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.**

DSHS/DVR continues to assure full communication access for all individuals with limited English proficiency. In addition to bilingual DSHS/DVR staff, contracted interpreter and translation services are available. DSHS/DVR forms and publications are available in Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, Laotian, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Somali. Translations are available in other languages when needed.

DSHS/DVR has staff who act as the Language Access Advisor and Language Access Coordinator to ensure the division is adhering to the department's Language Access Plan. These staff serve as subject matter experts and support field staff in obtaining effective translation and interpretation services.

Individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing may communicate with DSHS/DVR staff at all locations via video phone, video relay, voice relay, American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters,

real-time captioning, augmented listening devices, and UbiDuo devices. DSHS/DVR's Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCDs) provide effective and culturally competent services for customers who are Deaf.

All DSHS/DVR-sponsored trainings include an invitation for potential attendees to request accommodations as part of the registration process. When an accommodation is requested, Training staff follow up to assure the accommodation is arranged.

### ***1. Coordination of Personnel Development Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act***

**As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.**

#### **Coordination of Personnel Development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**

Washington DSHS/DVR works closely with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to coordinate personnel development activities under an interagency agreement with OSPI and the Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) to address mutual issues. This agreement is intended to facilitate the required coordination with education and provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services, as required under WIOA. In addition, this agreement allows DSHS/DVR, DSB, and OSPI to identify necessary training for DSHS/DVR and education staff regarding new services, new coordination, and best practices in serving students with disabilities.

## J. Statewide Assessment

(Source: **2019 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)**, WA DSHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.)

### **1. Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, particularly the VR services needs of those:**

#### **A. With the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;**

#### **Introduction**

Washington DVR's 2019 CSNA draws upon secondary data and reports, DVR service data, and survey and interview responses to assess vocational service needs. The following sources and data collection methods were used to complete the required components of the assessment:

- Analysis of 2017 American Community Survey data.
- Analysis of DVR service data for cases that closed in program years 2017 & 2018 (July 1, 2017-June 30, 2019).
- Surveys of subject matter experts, existing research, and DVR service data information on supported employment needs and programs.
- Survey and interviews of stakeholders about unserved and underserved populations, undertaken by Washington State University, Social and Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC).
- Interviews of Workforce Development Council (WDC) representatives and DVR liaisons to WDCs about people with disabilities served by other parts of the workforce system.
- Existing research and DVR service data about youth and students with disabilities.
- Survey of community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) and DVR data about services provided by CRPs.

#### **Washingtonians Living with Disabilities**

American Community Survey (ACS) data for 2017 indicate that 12.9% of Washington's residents --942,318 individuals -- are living with a disability. The rate of disability for Washington's population has remained nearly constant over the past five years.

More than half of all people with disabilities are in their prime working years, between the ages of 18 to 64 years. For working age individuals with disabilities, 40.5% are employed, 5.4% are unemployed, and 54% are not in the labor force. The unemployment rate, which excludes individuals not in the labor force, is 11.8%. Compared to people without disabilities, people with disabilities are three times as frequently unemployed or out of the labor force as people without disabilities. Although disability and illness are commonly cited reasons for not working, the need for vocational rehabilitation services well exceeds available resources.

DVR service numbers are significant when compared to the 26,096 unemployed working age adults with disabilities but represent a very small portion of the 259,784 individuals with

disabilities who are out of the labor force. During program years 2017 and 2018, DVR closed cases for 9,503 customers who were participating in a service plan. Completion of services led to employment for 5,115 individuals.

Washingtonians with disabilities earn about one-third less and are twice as likely to live in poverty as people without disabilities. Lower earnings are attributable to both low hourly wages and less than full time work. Washingtonians with disabilities earn an average of \$27,052 annually. DVR customers who obtained employment in program year 2018 had median earnings of \$12 per hour and \$19,682 annually.

Unemployment and low earnings are related to lower education levels and reflected in high rates of poverty. Compared to people without disabilities, Washingtonians with disabilities are nearly twice as likely to lack a high school diploma or equivalency and about half as likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher. Nearly 18% of Washingtonians with disabilities live below the federal poverty level, compared to a statewide rate of about 9%. More than 28% of people with disabilities have incomes below 150% of the poverty level.

DVR's service population in program years 2017 and 2018 was similar to that of working age people with disabilities statewide, with a few notable exceptions. DVR underserved females, in comparison to the gender make-up of working age adults with disabilities. Although minority groups were proportionately represented in DVR's service population, several groups had lower than average rehabilitation rates. Additionally, Black/African American and American Indian/Alaska Native populations are underrepresented in DVR's workforce.

County and regional comparisons show that DVR services were not provided in proportion to the population of working age people with disabilities in some counties. Regions 1 and 2 served a larger percentage of customers than would be expected from the population data, although cases more frequently closed without a job in Region 1. Region 3 -- especially Pierce County -- and rural areas in regions 1 and 3 are underserved, compared to their share of working age individuals with disabilities.

## **Need for Supported Employment Services**

### **DVR Service Data for Most Significantly Disabled and Supported Employment**

DVR reviewed cases that closed during the two-year period July 1, 2017-June 30, 2019 and consulted with experts to assess service rates for individuals with most significant disabilities (MSD) and the need for and availability of supported employment services.

DVR implemented an Order of Selection on November 1, 2017 and prioritized services for individuals with the most significant disabilities. Since that time, the proportion of active cases with MSD determination and needs for supported employment have grown.

Nearly two thirds of closed cases during the review period had MSD determinations, compared to about 50% prior to entering Order of Selection. About half of MSD customers had supported employment needs identified on their IPE; 75% of these customers had a cognitive disability and 16% had a psychosocial disability.



DVR service data suggest that DVR has greater challenges assisting individuals with psychosocial, physical/mobility, and vision impairments to move from eligibility determination to plan development than individuals with cognitive disabilities. Since the need for supported employment is assessed in the plan development process, service needs are likely to be greater than indicated by the data for customers in plan.

When compared to individuals determined significantly disabled (SD) or not significantly disabled (NSD), MSD cases were equally likely to have an employment outcome but were much more likely to close before plan. MSD cases with supported employment needs were more successful in obtaining employment than cases overall.

### **Supported Employment Services and Systems**

Funding for supported employment services is segmented among DVR, DSHS/Developmental Disabilities Administration (DSHS/DDA), the Health Care Authority Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (HCA/DBHR), and DSHS Aging and Long-Term Services Administration (DSHS/ALTSA). DBHR and ALTSA have program oversight responsibility for Foundational Community Supports (FCS), which provides resources for supported employment. Coordination among these lead agencies is complicated and insufficient. Ideally, DDA and FCS services are complementary to and braided with DVR's services, to enable individuals to access resources from both systems when needed and as appropriate to their needs.

DVR services are time-limited, whereas both DDA and FCS can be ongoing. DVR typically provides assessment, job placement, intensive training services, and support services needed by the individual to obtain a job and achieve stable job performance. DDA or FCS long-term supports begin when the customer reaches stabilization on the job. DDA and FCS can provide job placement services and short-term supports for customers ineligible for DVR services; however, the range of services is more limited than those available from DVR.

Supported employment resources have expanded statewide with the startup of FCS in 2018 but availability of long-term supports is insufficient to meet the need and is often a determining factor in access to VR services. DVR customers with behavioral health needs may not qualify for FCS or be connected to behavioral health services. Additionally, permanent adoption of FCS is not yet assured. DVR could also expand long-term supports by encouraging supported employment providers to focus on developing natural supports within customers' workplaces.

Definitions and understanding of eligibility for services, readiness to participate, and long-term support differ among the three programs. To effectively serve customers, these differences need to be bridged and staff and providers need to be knowledgeable about the different systems and services. Additionally, customers and their families or advocates need better access to benefits planning and understanding of the impact of work on other benefits, to make an informed choice about pursuing employment.

### **DVR-DDA Collaboration**

Services and interagency coordination are in place and function well, for the most part, for customers with intellectual and development disabilities. DVR and DDA work collaboratively with

county agencies, employment service providers, and school districts to effectively coordinate transition and vocational rehabilitation services for mutual customers. Respective roles and responsibilities are defined by a memorandum of understanding. DDA and DVR both contract with community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) to provide employment services to customers.

Shared customers of DVR and DDA are highly successful in getting jobs. According to a January 2019 report by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC), Washington leads the nation in helping DDA clients get jobs and 80% of DDA supported employment customers who use DVR services get a job. However, few earn a living wage and only 10% earn more than the federal poverty level. Earnings are below poverty level for 99% of individuals with high support needs, who work an average of 21 hours per month. Individuals with low support needs work an average of 88 hours per month and have higher earnings, though only 35% make more than the poverty level.

For shared DDA-DVR customers, service capacity and availability to those who qualify are not major impediments to accessing supported employment services. Challenges pertain to conflicts in service models and processes, lack of procedures for coordination in some offices, confusing communications, and inadequate access to benefits planners. The path to accessing services can be confusing to customers and their families or advocates, especially with recent changes to practice that require customers to apply to DVR first, which can also lead to a referral to WorkSource.

Sometimes DVR's "ability to benefit from services" criterion conflicts with DDA's philosophy that all people can work or the vocational assessment or the job goal developed through DVR's service planning process conflicts with an existing job placement.

Coordination could be improved by clarifying roles in the transition process, agreement on readiness of referrals, joint participation in presentations to customers about services, engaging customers earlier, and holding each partner accountable for outcomes.

### **DVR-FCS Collaboration**

Foundational Community Supports (FCS) is a Medicaid demonstration program that funds supported employment services for targeted populations, including people with behavioral health conditions, long-term care needs, or physical impairments that necessitate assistance with work activities. The demonstration program is intended to show that supported employment services reduce the overall healthcare costs of Medicaid-eligible individuals. During the demonstration phase, the number of customers that can be served is limited and the program is nearing that capacity.

FCS supported employment provides job placement and retention, with the expectation that participants will be connected to other needed health services, such as outpatient behavioral health and long-term care. Ongoing supported employment services can be provided for the individual to remain employed.

The State Health Care Authority's Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery and DSHS Aging and Long-term Support Administration are responsible for developing and supporting the statewide

provider network. FCS services are provided by community health, behavioral health, tribal, and social service agencies, which include community rehabilitation programs. Gaps in service delivery arise when providers do not have policies and procedures for sharing information with other agencies, to facilitate customer access to services provided by other agencies.

Coordination of services for customers shared by FCS and DVR is in early stages. DVR has established standard operating procedures for working with individuals who are eligible for FCS to support coordinated service delivery for mutual customers and is in the process of implementing an interlocal agreement with DBHR to provide a collaborative framework for serving people eligible for FCS.

The episodic nature of behavioral health conditions and differing philosophies about readiness for employment present challenges to coordinated service delivery. With the exception of CRPs, DVR has limited experience partnering with FCS providers to serve customers, particularly community health and behavioral health agencies. Knowledge about those service systems and how to work effectively with FCS customers is inconsistent across DVR and its service providers. Additionally, when a customer receives FCS services from a provider that is not a DVR contractor, they cannot use the same provider for DVR services. Providers must be vendors for both FCS and DVR services for coordination to function optimally.

#### ***B. Who are minorities;***

People who identify as American Indian/Alaskan Native have the highest rate of disability in the State, with 17.5% reporting a disability, or about one out of every six individuals. Disability rates of 7.1% and 8.1% among Asian and Hispanic/Latino individuals are lower than the State's 12.9% rate of disability.

The diversity of DVR's service population is similar to that of working age people with disabilities. However, employment outcomes differed by race/ethnicity: all minority groups except Asians experienced lower than average rates of successful case closure.

See section C for further assessment.

#### ***C. Who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;***

##### **Service Needs and Barriers to Access**

In July 2019, DVR contracted with Washington State University, Social and Economic Studies Research Center, to assess the needs of individuals with disabilities who are unserved or underserved, including racial and ethnic minorities. The two-part study included a web-based survey, completed by 33 stakeholders, and follow-up phone interviews with 23 of the survey completers. The survey was designed to identify service needs and barriers to accessing services by populations that are not well-served by DVR. Interviews were held to gain insight into barriers to employment and ways to improve DVR services to underserved groups. Stakeholders were also asked about the appropriate roles of DVR and Washington's broader workforce system in serving people with disabilities and ways to ensure DVR services are culturally competent and responsive to customers.

**Service Needs:** Core VR services of Job Placement, Job Retention, Transition Services for Youth, Job Exploration, and training or education ranked highest among the services most needed by unserved and underserved populations. The table below shows the top service needs, based on weighted rankings of stakeholders' selection of their top three priorities.

<b>Service Needs</b>	<b>Overall Rank</b>	<b>% Ranked #1</b>	<b>% Ranked #2</b>	<b>% Ranked #3</b>
Job Placement	1	34%	14%	20%
Job Retention	2	2%	25%	17%
Transition Services for Youth	3	13%	8%	9%
Job Exploration	4	7%	12%	11%
Technical/Vocational Training	5	10%	4%	5%
On-the-Job Supports or Coaching	6	3%	7%	18%
Internships/Apprenticeships	7	7%	8%	4%
Vocational Assessment	8	3%	11%	3%
Restoration/Rehabilitation	9	5%	2%	4%
Independent Living	10	3%	4%	4%
Literacy/Basic Education	11	4%	2%	2%
Assistive Technology	12	2%	2%	1%
Post-Secondary Education	13	0%	2%	3%

**Barriers to Access:** Transportation to services, awareness of/understanding of service availability, language or cultural factors, and wait time for services were most frequently selected.

<b>Barriers to Access</b>	<b>Overall Rank</b>	<b>% Ranked #1</b>	<b>% Ranked #2</b>	<b>% Ranked #3</b>
Transportation to Services	1	13%	14%	13%
Awareness/Understanding of Service Availability	2	15%	12%	13%
Wait Time for Services	3	10%	10%	13%
Language/Cultural Factors	4	12%	7%	8%
Provider Lack of Expertise Related to Needed Services	5	10%	8%	9%
Behavioral Health Factors	6	3%	14%	6%
Location of Services	7	8%	4%	9%
Provider Lack of Expertise Related to Disability Type	8	5%	6%	4%
Criminal History	9	5%	6%	4%
Homelessness/Housing Insecurity	9	4%	4%	5%
Physical Accessibility of Services	11	5%	3%	1%
Health Factors	12	3%	5%	3%
Literacy/Educational Level	13	1%	6%	4%
Assistive or Other Technology Needs	14	0%	3%	3%
Cost of Services	15	0%	2%	2%

## **Barriers to Employment**

The following barriers to employment were most frequently identified by stakeholders:

Complexity of the Customer Context: A primary barrier to employment for groups that are not well-served is the inability of workforce system partners to recognize and address the complexity of the customer's life context. These circumstances are often social and economic in nature, experienced especially by homeless people and ex-offenders. Issues such as transportation, housing, mental or physical health, and substance abuse, make it much more difficult for them to access DVR services or maintain employment. These types of obstacles are not typically considered or well-assessed when evaluating barriers to employment and eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services. Order of selection restricts DVR's ability to serve these populations when the significance of their disability does not account for these types of limitations.

For racial and ethnic minorities, a general lack of cultural awareness among workforce system partners' limits access to services. The system is designed to respond to people seeking assistance. However, some cultures rely more on families to care for people with disabilities and may not seek assistance. Stakeholders also identified a failure to recognize that diversity exists within cultures, for example subgroups within the Asian, African American, and the deaf community.

Accessing DVR: Access to DVR services was primarily described in terms of customer lack of awareness about services and DVR's limited capacity to take new customers, which is intensified by order of selection. The most frequently identified racial and ethnic groups who lack awareness of DVR services and would benefit from outreach included Native Americans, sub-cultures in the broader Asian community, and East Africans. Others thought that DVR needs to engage students and youth at younger ages, indicating that they lack an orientation to planning for their future and understanding their options. Veterans and people living in rural areas were also thought to be in need of greater DVR outreach.

Order of selection was noted as a barrier to services since it excludes individuals whose disabilities are determined to be less severe. This has especially impacted deaf and deaf-blind populations and people with mental health disorders.

Timelines and Timeliness: Many stakeholders mentioned that more time is needed for some customers to be successful. For example, trusting relationships between ex-offenders and employers take time to develop. For other populations, it can take additional time to engage the customer, fully understand their needs, recognize their potential, and figure out the right resources for the individual.

Issues were also noted in relation to cultural differences in perception of time and timeliness. Cultural differences can affect a customer's ability to keep to appointments and impact case progress timelines.

## **Strengths and Challenges of the Workforce System**

Interview questions also addressed the strengths and challenges of DVR and the broader workforce system in meeting the vocational rehabilitation needs of people with disabilities. Changes to workforce system programs have emphasized stronger relationships and coordination across programs, with the goal of establishing a seamless service delivery network that enhances customer access to services. All workforce development programs are expected to be accessible to people with disabilities. At the same time, DVR services are more focused on assisting people with the most significant disabilities and youth in transition from school to work.

### **DVR Successes and Challenges**

**Better Partnerships:** Stakeholders commented that DVR has been successful in building stronger partnerships with groups such as the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Developmental Disabilities Administration, Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs, and Economic Security Administration programs. Additionally, DVR has improved communications with workforce system partners and provided expertise on disability-informed approaches and making programs accessible to people with disabilities.

**Customer Focus:** Customer relationships and focus on individual needs were also identified as areas of DVR strength. Developing staff skills to address specific service needs, providing multiple vendor options to customers, and finding a good fit between employer and customer were noted areas of improvement. Counselors have good relationships with their customers and work closely with them to understand their vocational goals. Communications with customers on the waiting list have improved.

**Community Impact:** DVR has changed perceptions about people with disabilities working in a competitive setting, which has helped de-stigmatize disabilities.

**Limited Capacity:** In addition to Order of Selection, procedural bottlenecks (e.g., supervisor approval and data entry requirements), high caseloads, and understaffing contribute to long wait times for services and restrict DVR's capacity to serve more people. However, emphasis on timeliness can act against a client-centered approach, which requires flexibility in response to customer circumstances.

**Other Challenges:** Location of services and customer access to transportation were also mentioned as issues.

### **DVR Role in the Broader Workforce System**

**Subject Matter Expertise:** DVR's disability expertise can benefit all partners in the workforce system. Value is provided at the customer level, by coordinating a comprehensive, individualized approach to service, and at the system level by training partners on disability matters and available resources.

**Partnership and Advocacy:** DVR can be the connector for customers, workforce system partners, and employers to ensure that resources throughout the system are available to

people with disabilities. DVR also has an advocacy role with respect to initiating partnerships at all levels of operations and educating employers about the contributions that people with disabilities can bring to the workplace.

### **Broader Workforce Successes and Challenges**

Improved Collaboration: Communications and information sharing among workforce system partners have improved, although data sharing remains an issue. Efforts have also been made to coordinate client referrals, develop job and retention services for people who need additional support, and provide more individualized services. Some Workforce Development Councils actively work with DVR to develop plans to address barriers to access.

Changing Attitudes: The WIOA mandate to make services accessible and available to underserved groups has challenged the system to improve services for people with significant disabilities. The combination of the policy directive and DVR's outreach and education have led to more positive attitudes about people with disabilities and brought greater focus to underserved groups in the workforce system.

Lack of Experience with Disabilities: The broader workforce system lacks understanding about disability and is not equipped to provide the individualized services needed by people with significant disabilities. The system is oriented to market needs and priorities.

Workforce System Design: WorkSource centers are locally designed and host a variety of employment assistance programs offered by different agencies, which do not always work well with DVR. DVR is unable to develop a standardized approach to collaborating with WorkSource, due to local variations in design and operations of the WorkSource centers.

### **DVR Training Needs**

Cultural Humility: Cultural humility training is needed for DVR staff at all levels of the organization, to better understand cultural differences and the cultural context of people of color, Native Americans, and migrant communities. Connecting with groups that specialize in working with minority populations will better ensure that DVR decisions reflect the needs of their communities.

DVR can also help to ensure that services are culturally aware and responsive by hiring a diverse staff that reflects the populations served. In combination with training, engagement with a more diverse workforce will increase cultural awareness throughout DVR. Dedicating staff to address cultural humility issues would also be beneficial.

Other Training: Awareness training was recommended in relation to several populations, including homeless individuals, ex-offenders, students and youth, older adults, and veterans. This training would provide insights into how to interact with and help customers access resources, identify assumptions that enter into interactions with customers, and gain greater understanding of social stratification and power dynamics that characterize counselor-customer relationships.

***D. Who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce development system; and***

**Washington's Workforce Development System**

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is one of six core programs in Washington's workforce development system. Each program depends on the strengths of other partners to maximize the resources available to serve businesses and job seekers. Ten additional partners bring supplemental resources to the service delivery system.

Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board is the State's federally-designated Workforce Investment Board, which collaborates with business, labor organizations, state agencies, 12 Workforce Development Councils (WDC) and other program partners to develop the Combined State Plan.

WDC's oversee the local one-stop service delivery system and coordinate with a broad range of local partners, including business, labor organizations, education, social services and government. One-stop partners, also known as WorkSource, administer a set programs to provide integrated streamlined services to customers.

There are three types of WorkSource centers: comprehensive center, affiliate, and connection sites. Twenty-two Comprehensive centers are physical locations where job seeker and employer customers access programs, services, and activities of the core WorkSource partners. Twenty-four Affiliate sites provide access to one or more partner programs and the availability of staff is determined at the local level. Seventy-two Connection sites offer virtual resources and services of the WorkSource system.

WorkSource centers assists a broad population of job seekers secure employment. This system presumes that those it serves are coming to the job search with a base level of skills and the ability to utilize the tools and training opportunities the system provides, maintain a degree of self-direction in the job seeking process, understand and follow directions to report outcomes to the personnel, and pursue opportunities independently. The role of these services is not to craft a job to suit the particular skills and abilities of an individual jobseeker.

DVR serves a narrow constituency of jobseekers with significant disabilities who have barriers to employment. Customers interested in services must meet eligibility requirements and demonstrate they will benefit from services. A professionally trained Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor provides substantial counseling and guidance and helps the customer develop an individualized plan to identify and overcome disability-related barriers to their employment goal.

In 2015, DVR and the Washington Workforce Association (WWA) developed "Shared Vision, Values & Principles of Collaboration between the DSHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation & Washington Workforce Association", to reflect commitments to be included in the WorkSource Memorandum of Understanding with each WDC. This agreement emphasizes DVR's participation in a locally driven, fully integrated WorkSource service delivery system.



The challenge presented by a federally mandated, locally driven system, is the difficulty for DVR to develop a statewide standard of practice for integration. Success in serving people with disabilities relies on the effective collaboration of local workforce partners.

### **WorkSource as a Resource for People with Disabilities**

In July 2019, Washington State Rehabilitation Council (WSRC) and DVR conducted an assessment of the employment services available to people with disabilities within the broader workforce system. WSRC interviewed 11 of the 12 WDCs and surveyed DVR liaisons to WDC's and DVR stakeholders. The responses provided insight into how the greater workforce system views the responsibility for services for individuals with disabilities, both offered through the WorkSource one-stops and by DVR.

#### **What's working well:**

- Each WorkSource location meets ADA certification requirements for job seekers with disabilities.
- DVR staff are co-located at 14 of 22 comprehensive WorkSource centers and 2 of 24 WorkSource affiliates. An example of successful co-location is the WorkSource-imbedded DVR Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors or Business Specialists, who work closely with one-stop system navigators to bolster partnerships within the workforce system.

#### **What's not working well:**

- Order of Selection has impacted job seekers and the workforce system, as more people with disabilities seek services from WorkSource one-stop centers and the centers lack sufficient resources and expertise to serve them. At the same time demand for services has grown, funding for WorkSource services has been declining.
- One-stop locations offer employment training and job search assistance but are not experienced in assessing disability-related barriers to employment nor have the expertise to provide substantial counseling and guidance.
- WDC partners identified training needs around disability etiquette and reasonable accommodation, basics of disability services, and recognizing disabilities, including behavioral health conditions.
- The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board reports that 11% of customers served by the workforce system self-reported as having a disability; 4% of those customers receive services through the vocational rehabilitation programs and the balance are served by other workforce programs. The disability data gathered is self-reported by the customer at time of intake. Without prior knowledge of available services or eligibility requirements of various workforce programs, a customer may be less likely to report their disability, thereby failing to access some types of vocational services.
- The current data tracking system for the WorkSource locations is unable to systematically track and report the percentage of job seekers with a disability. Only 5 of the 11 WDC partners were able to provide data on the number of people with disabilities they serve.

## Promising Practices

The following promising practices were mutually identified by both WDC's and DVR Liaisons:

- Benton-Franklin WDC/Columbia Basin WorkSource & Olympic WDC— Actively participating in cross training with DVR staff on supporting customers with disabilities.
- Spokane and South Central WDC – Each offer daily training opportunities for partners to provide center staff with a broader understanding of each program.
- Pacific Mountain WDC/Tumwater WorkSource - The DVR open lab was created in collaboration with DVR for customers with disabilities who have an Individualized Plan for Employment. A Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) is available every Wednesday for 2 hours providing hands on access to center resources, assistance to identify job leads and complete applications. In addition, the DVR Business Specialist is integrated into the centers business outreach team.
- Southwest WDC/Vancouver WorkSource - Business specialist acts as referral service for jobseekers with disabilities & provide consultation to WorkSource staff. Integrated service model includes 2 DVR staff to connecting WorkSource customers with services by providing referrals, training, supports and job development.
- Seattle-King WDC/North Seattle WorkSource – DVR staff facilitates jobseeker workshops in collaboration with WorkSource staff.
- Workforce Central WDC – DVR staff are included in all strategic planning, operational planning and day to day needs. The WorkSource front office staff meet quarterly with DVR staff so we can discuss strategies for referrals and brainstorm ideas for improvement. DVR staff are represented on core leadership groups designed to improve customer experience.
- Eastern WDC - Because of rural nature, coordination and collaboration is very strong between DVR and system partners. Utilize and leverage each other's resources appropriately.
- Northwest WDC - DVR staff considered Disability Specialists, regularly assisting WorkSource staff with questions and training resources.
- Workforce Snohomish WDC – DVR staff have regular office hours at the WorkSource Lynnwood affiliate location and the time is rotated among all the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Business Specialist and Supervisor, so that all VR staff are engaged in becoming familiar with services, programs and partner staff.

## Most Significant Challenges

The workforce system in Washington State frequently faces challenges to providing employment services to people with disabilities. Examples include:

- Resource limitations and high costs of interpreters for language access is problematic across the state.
- Accessing transportation, especially in rural communities is difficult for non-drivers.
- Lack of awareness and expertise in building disability awareness for employers and WorkSource system is a challenge.

- Insufficient funding limits service availability, which is compounded by Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) and DVR currently being in order of selection. The cost and training to provide assistive Technology access, is a barrier to assisting customers in their job search.
- Completing paperwork and providing supporting documentation to qualify for program services was identified as a burden for customers.

### **Partner Strengths**

DVR and the broader workforce system offer unique and specific services to benefit job seekers. Workforce partners indicate DVR can best provide benefits planning, job carving, disability-related training for WorkSource staff, and accessibility/accommodation expertise. DVR is better prepared and trained to offer employment services for individuals with significant barriers to employment and long term employment support. DVR is best suited to offer substantial vocational rehabilitation counseling and guidance for customers with disabilities.

The broader workforce system offers networking, jobseeker classes, job fairs, business partnerships, outreach, short-term employment opportunities, and can open up one-stop centers for co-location and collaboration. They can also step in to offer job search supports when funding limitations create situations like Order of Selection for DVR.

***E. Who are youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including, as appropriate, their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services.***

### **Need for Pre-Employment Transition Services**

In 2017, DVR contracted with the Center for Change in Transition Services (CCTS) at Seattle University to conduct an assessment of student needs for the five required Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). CCTS used data from the State's Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) to identify the total number of students with disabilities age 15-21, who are potentially eligible for vocational rehabilitation services. CEDARS maintains data used for federal reporting on students with disabilities who receive services under IDEA and students with a 504 plan.

The CCTS study reported 49,812 potentially eligible secondary school students with disabilities in Washington in the 2015-16 school year: 34,882 (70%) were receiving special education or related services and 14,930 (30%) had a 504 plan. Based on an analysis of the transition services already available to students, CCTS estimated that between 17,500 and 29,500 students need additional Pre-ETS. Needs data were provided for each school district and regional education service districts. The assessment did not investigate the number of potentially eligible students attending recognized education programs at institutions of higher education.

Updated enrollment data from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) show the total number of students with disabilities in the 2018-19 school year is 47,743, a decrease of 4% since the CCTS study. Students receiving special education or related services decreased by 8% while those a 504 plan increased by 4%. Since the number of students estimated to be in

need of transition services by the CCTS study was wide ranging, these changes are not expected to have a substantial impact on the statewide need for additional for Pre-ETS.

OSPI's 2018 Secondary Transition Planning Implementation Plan provides data on the student population expected to meet eligibility for services from the State's Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDA), specifically students with Autism, Intellectual Disability, and Multiple Disabilities. In 2017, about 7,500 Washington students between the ages of 15 and 21 were eligible under those disability categories. Data from a 2015-16 post-school outcome survey shows that these groups are much less likely to be engaged in education, training, or employment after leaving school.

### **DVR Services for Students and Youth**

DVR serves students with disabilities through its Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) program and general Vocational Rehabilitation program, which includes School to Work projects. Pre-ETS services are available to students statewide who are in school and potentially eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, based on having a documented disability. DVR Pre-ETS program participation data shows 3,199 students received group Pre-ETS services during the 2018-19 school year, which is 11% to 18% of the range of need identified by the CCTS study. Services were provided to students enrolled in 281 public, private, and tribal schools.

In DVR's general vocational rehabilitation program, 30% of customers with closed cases in program years 2017 and 2018 were youth; 1,681 youth between the ages of 16 and 24 obtained employment during that period. The rehabilitation rate of 56.5% for youth was about 4 points higher than for individuals age 25 and above. Nearly three-fourths of participating youth were 21 years of age or under.

### **Service Coordination and Priorities**

The CCTS assessment also identified the relative need for each of the five required Pre-ETS, based on an assessment of the types of services most commonly available in students' schools and alignment with DVR Pre-ETS service categories. Workplace Readiness Training and Work Based Learning were the least available, followed by Instruction in Self-Advocacy. However, service needs vary considerably from one school district to another.

Preliminary results of recent DVR Pre-ETS statewide needs assessment indicate that work-based learning and self-advocacy/peer mentoring continue to be among the highest priorities. DVR's Pre-ETS program has focused on work-based learning and workplace readiness and has recently modified its program to make peer mentoring more accessible.

OSPI's transition plan addresses the transition-related skills that are most important for students with disabilities, based on a survey of stakeholders, including parents/family members, educators, service providers, state agency representatives and students. Preliminary results of the survey show that skills identified as "Very Important" in the stakeholder survey reinforce the service gaps identified in the CCTS study and subsequent assessment.

The following transition-related resources and services were rated as “Very Important” by survey respondents:

- Alignment of transition-related documentation;
- Cross-agency staff knowledge of requirements;
- Information on similarities and differences among transition support agencies; and
- A directory of contacts for schools, service providers, and DDA and DVR offices.

The Plan acknowledges the complexity of transition planning and navigating between OSPI, DVR, and DDA, for students, families, school staff, and agencies. Centralized information and a crosswalk to support understanding of differences in terminology and requirements of the three systems are recommended.

## ***2. Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State; and***

Information on collaborative research, service delivery improvement, and training activities is described in detail in the Cooperative Agreements with Nonprofit Organization section of this State Plan.

### **Services Provided and Challenges Faced by CRPs**

Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) provide the majority of vendor-provided assessment and employment services for DVR customers. For the two-year period from July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018, CRPs provided 100% of paid job placement and short-term job support services, 87% of assessments, and 83% of supported employment services for customers who completed services. Two-thirds of customers with a successful employment outcome received services from CRPs. Job placement for the other one-third of successful customers was either supported by DVR staff or self-directed.

DVR held contracts with 117 CRPs based in 23 of the State’s 39 counties during this period. Since entering Order of Selection, DVR is serving fewer customers and a larger proportion of customers are most significantly disabled. DVR has also implemented practice changes to maximize the use of in-house assessments and refer customers to WorkSource for job search and placement services, when appropriate. These changes have presented significant challenges for CRPs and impacted customer services. As of July 2019, DVR has 16 fewer CRP contracts and lost access to CRP services in two rural counties; however statewide providers are available to serve these communities.

In August 2019, in conjunction with DVR’s quarterly CRP web conference, DVR and WSRC presented a questionnaire about customer access to services and ways they are adapting to changes in the vocational rehabilitation service environment. This forum allowed DVR to reach a broad representation of CRPs across the state to learn about the current challenges faced in serving DVR customers and provide opportunities for information and training on DVR and partner programs. CRPs were asked for their perspectives on the following questions:

1. What are the barriers to DVR customers being able to access services when needed?

2. Given the changes in DVR practice, how are CRPs adapting to meet customer needs that are not addressed by DVR resources?
3. What does WorkSource do well in providing services to people with disabilities?

### **Barriers to Service Access**

Coordination and Service Integration between DDA and DVR: DDA and DVR have shared but distinct areas of responsibility for serving individuals with intellectual and development disabilities. As a provider for both agencies, CRPs help customers navigate the requirements and processes of each agency to access services. CRPs indicated that requiring DDA customers to access DVR services without sufficient braiding of DDA and DVR services results in burdensome approval processes, customer confusion, and delays in receiving services. They identified needs for more information sharing between DDA and DVR, expedited review and approval processes, seamless access to DVR services, and improved DVR-CRP liaison relationships. Recommendations ranged from allowing DDA customers to bypass DVR altogether and receive all services from DDA to establishing a common process to qualify customers for services for both programs at the same time.

Inadequate and Restricted Resources: Order of Selection, which has restricted services to only those with Most Significant Disabilities (MSD), creates the challenge of obtaining funding for other job seekers with disabilities. Accessing supported employment funding is a major source of frustration for CRPs. Challenges include when to access additional funds, unpaid staff hours while trying to allocate new funds for customers, and eligibility restrictions for available supported employment; for example, Foundational Community Supports (FCS) is only available for individuals with diagnosed behavioral health conditions who are also eligible for Medicaid. Transportation is also an often-noted challenge for CRP customers.

Customer Service Concerns with Timeliness and Responsiveness of Services: CRPs and their customers have experienced impediments to effective employment services due to lack of timeliness in each aspect of the vocational rehabilitation process – initial appointment, intake, eligibility determination, plan completion, and the time between appointments. Delays in processing service authorizations and payments were also mentioned. One CRP noted that, in their local DVR offices, the number of counselors are insufficient to address the needs of all individuals seeking jobs. Some noted concerns about timely response to phone calls.

Customer Participation Challenges: Customer lack of participation or willingness to engage in their own job search was noted as an additional barrier. Some CRPs indicated that customer skills and abilities are not well-matched to expectations for their participation and the job goal. Customers with mental health barriers are not getting sufficient support.

### **Adaptations to Meet Customer Needs**

Communication with Customers about Changes in Service Access: DDA participants and their families are confused about the process for obtaining employment services and why they need to access DVR services. This is especially difficult for customers who have not received DVR services in recent years. CRPs have been working to provide correct and consistent information about the changes to participants and their families.

Reductions in CRP Staff and Operational Expenses: CRPs have had to adapt financially and operationally to the decline in referrals from DVR. CRPs have implemented hiring freezes or staff reductions, eliminated raises, reduced operational costs, sought out additional funds, and made more referrals to community-based services to mitigate the losses.

Accessing Foundational Community Supports and Other Resources: To narrow the funding gap, CRPs report accessing other resources such as Foundational Community Supports (FCS), Ticket to Work, private pay, and county funding through county Developmental Disabilities agencies. While FCS is a critical new resource, providers note that the program's services are limited in comparison to the range available from DVR. CRPs also noted that they make referrals to other community-based services that have capacity and funding to serve customers.

### **The Workforce System as Employment Services Partners**

WorkSource an Ineffective Alternative for DVR Customers: When asked about WorkSource, CRPs stated that the greater workforce system, in its current capacity, is not effectively serving individuals with disabilities. WorkSource expects participants to demonstrate a high level of personal initiative, follow through, planning, and focus, whereas people with significant disabilities need individualized assistance. Customers referred to WorkSource report not knowing what to do when they go there.

CRPs agreed that local WorkSource centers lack the expertise to serve people with disabilities specifically and provide the one-on-one assistance needed by individuals with many barriers to meeting their employment goals.

### ***3. Include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.***

See 1.e. above and Section D. Coordination with Education Officials.

## K. Annual Estimates

Describe:

### ***1. The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services;***

#### **Introduction**

This section identifies estimated numbers of customers DSHS/DVR expects to serve and associated case service costs. Specific attention is given to the impact of order of selection implementation on customer volumes, costs, and outcomes.

#### **Annual Estimates**

DSHS/DVR estimates the following services will be provided for the remaining two years of the 2020-2023 State Plan.

**Applications:** 5,000 annually

**Eligibility Determinations:** 4,800 individuals annually

**Customers in an IPE:** 3,200 new plans and 8,200 receiving services in a plan annually

**Case Service Expenditures:** \$42 million

### ***2. The number of eligible individuals who will receive services under:***

#### ***A. The VR Programs***

#### **Service Delivery under an Order of Selection**

#### **VR Eligibility, Service Volume, Wait List, & Cost Projections**

*DSHS/DVR Eligibility, Wait List, Service, & Cost Projections: Total for FFY 2023 & FFY 2024*

<b>FFY 2023-24</b>	<b>Eligibilities Determined</b>	<b>Wait List</b>	<b>New IPEs</b>	<b>Total IPEs</b>	<b>Total Case Service Costs</b>
Priority Category 1	6,800	0	4,000	5,600	\$28,600,000
Priority Category 2	1,400	0	900	1,200	\$6,200,000
Priority Category 3	1,000	0	650	800	\$4,200,000
Priority Category 4	300	300	400	530	\$2,600,000
Priority Category 5	100	100	50	70	\$400,000



## **Annual Estimates**

### **Priority Category 1: Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities**

- Eligibilities Determined: 3,400
- Customers Placed on a Wait List: 0
- New IPEs: 2,000
- Total Customers Served under an IPE: 5,600
- Total Case Service Costs: \$14,300,000

### **Priority Category 2: Individuals with Significant Disabilities**

- Eligibilities Determined: 700
- Customers Placed on a Wait List: 0
- New IPEs: 450
- Total Customers Served under an IPE: 1,200
- Total Case Service Costs: \$3,100,000

### **Priority Category 3: Individuals with Disabilities**

- Eligibilities Determined: 500
- Customers Placed on a Wait List: 0
- New IPEs: 325
- Total Customers Served under an IPE: 800
- Total Case Service Costs: \$2,100,000

### **Priority Category 4: Individuals with Disabilities**

- Eligibilities Determined: 150
- Customers Placed on a Wait List: 150
- New IPEs: 200
- Total Customers Served under an IPE: 530
- Total Case Service Costs: \$1,300,000

### **Priority Category 5: Individuals with Disabilities**

- Eligibilities Determined: 50
- Customers Placed on a Wait List: 50
- New IPEs: 25
- Total Customers Served under an IPE: 70
- Total Case Service Costs: \$200,000

***B. The Supported Employment Program; and***

**Supported Employment Estimates**

DSHS/DVR provide supported employment services under the Title VI Supported Employment Grant. For program years 2022 - 2023, DSHS/DVR estimates 800 customers will receive supported employment services annually through Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs), resulting in 400-500 supported employment outcomes per year. At these levels, DSHS/DVR estimates serving approximately 3,200 supported employment IPEs and producing 1,800 supporting employment outcomes during the four-year period of this plan.

DSHS/DVR aligns Supported Employment services and resources with Priority Category 1 customers; only individuals with the most significant disabilities receive Supported Employment services.

***C. Each priority category, if under an order of selection;***

Please see Section VI.K.2.A.

***3. The number of individuals who are eligible for VR services, but are not receiving such services due to an order of selection; and***

Please see Section VI.K.2.A.

***4. The cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services. If under an order of selection, identify the cost of services for each priority category.***

Please see Section VI.K.2.A.

## L. State Goals and Priorities

The designated State unit must:

### ***1. Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed***

Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions.

The goals and priorities established in this State Plan reflect DSHS/DVR's ongoing commitments to customer service, successful outcomes, staff development, organizational system improvement, strong partnerships, and business engagement. These goals and priorities were collaboratively developed by DSHS/DVR and leadership of the Washington State Rehabilitation Council.

### ***2. Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs.***

#### **Introduction**

This section identifies the goals and priorities that DSHS/DVR intends to achieve throughout the planning cycle for program years 2020–2023. Activities described herein align with Washington's strategic plan for workforce development as well as the operational components of this Combined State Plan. This alignment is intended to realize the letter and intent of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), to implement a coordinated service delivery system which supports the long-term labor market engagement of individuals with disabilities and improves services to businesses.

These goals and priorities also reflect analyses of DSHS/DVR's performance as well as the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, which examines the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities in Washington.

#### **Goals & Priorities**

##### **Goal One: Customer Service and Outcomes are DVR's Highest Priority**

Goal one reflects DSHS/DVR's focus on providing high-quality services that result in high-quality employment outcomes. Based on Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) findings and stakeholder input, this goal prioritizes the importance of supporting customers in high-quality employment which offers the pay and benefits that support financial security and stability.

To achieve this goal, DSHS/DVR establishes the following priorities:

1. Customers experience timely, continuous progress throughout the VR process.
2. DVR customers achieve employment in living wage jobs with benefits.
3. Students are better prepared to engage in VR services after high school.
4. Individuals with disabilities have equitable access to DVR services.

## **Goal Two: Motivate and Inspire High Performing Staff**

Goal two priorities reflect CSNA results, internal case review results, staff and stakeholder input which challenge DSHS/DVR to provide staff with clear performance expectations, training, and working conditions that support their success.

To achieve this goal, DSHS/DVR establishes the following priorities:

1. DVR staff achieve mastery in their work
2. DVR excels in key performance indicators
3. DVR is an employer of choice

## **Goal Three: DVR Collaborates with Businesses and Partners that Deliver Benefits to DVR Customers**

Goal three priorities will improve outcomes for individuals with disabilities served by Washington's workforce development system, as well as other agency partners and DSHS/DVR service providers. As a core WIOA program, DSHS/DVR will contribute its value, expertise, and strengths to maximize outcomes for individuals with disabilities and business customers. These priorities align with the strategic and operational elements of this Combined State Plan and reflect the needs of individuals with disabilities served system-wide.

To achieve this goal, DSHS/DVR establishes the following priorities:

1. Strengthen communication and collaboration with partners that deliver benefits to customers.
2. Formalize and implement targeted business engagement efforts.
3. Provide candidate (VR customer) referrals to employers to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

## **Goal Four: DVR Operations and Infrastructure Support Our Work**

Goal four reflects DSHS/DVR's commitment to improving the systems and practices that support DSHS/DVR staff and, in turn, affect customer service.

To achieve this goal, DSHS/DVR establishes the following priorities:

1. Establish a reporting framework that informs decisions and improvements at all levels.
2. DVR staff have modern, user friendly tools that streamline their work.

### ***3. Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:***

DSHS/DVR's goals and priorities are based on ongoing analyses of program performance, the results of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, the feedback of customers and the Washington State Rehabilitation Council, findings of research activities, and preliminary evaluations of DSHS/DVR's performance under WIOA Section 116.

***A. The most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;***

The results of the 2019 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) and subsequent updates contained in the Statewide Assessment description of this State Plan guided the collaborative development of DSHS/DVR's goals and priorities. DSHS/DVR's emphases on timely service delivery, high-quality employment outcomes, targeted outreach to unserved and underserved populations, and coordinated service delivery are directly based on CSNA findings.

***B. The State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and***

DSHS/DVR's goals and priorities align with the strategic vision and the operational elements of this Combined State Plan. These goals and priorities promote improved employment retention, increased earnings, and strengthened educational progress for Washingtonians living with disabilities. The role of DSHS/DVR staff in coordinated business engagement and industry sector strategies is woven throughout this plan. By pursuing these goals and priorities, DSHS/DVR will deliver high performance on the performance accountability standards identified in Section 116.

***C. Other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and finding and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.***

These goals and priorities were established based on the full range of DSHS/DVR's evaluation and research activities. The activities include ongoing internal monitoring and case reviews, DSHS program performance reporting conducted by the Department of Social and Health Services, evaluation studies coordinated by the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, ad hoc research and program evaluation activities, and customer forums and satisfaction surveys conducted by the Washington State Rehabilitation Council.

## M. Order of Selection

Describe:

**1. *Whether the designated State unit will implement an order of selection. If so, describe:***

**A. *The order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services.***

### Introduction

This section describes DSHS/DVR's plans, policies, justifications, and projected service and outcome goals for serving individuals with disabilities under an order of selection. Additional information is provided describing how an order of selection may affect students with disabilities and Pre-Employment Transition Services.

This section was developed in partnership and consultation with the Washington State Rehabilitation Council (WSRC) and the Client Assistance Program (CAP). In August of 2017, DSHS/DVR provided public notice of its intent to amend the State Plan to implement an Order of Selection. Customers, partners, and stakeholders were invited to provide input regarding the implementation of an Order of Selection and the draft amendments to the State Plan. DSHS/DVR and WSRC received public comment throughout the months of September and October 2017. Three State Plan Public Forums were held online and at in-person locations across Washington on September 18, 2017. DSHS/DVR customers, staff, partners, and stakeholders reviewed the draft Order of Selection amendment, asked questions, and provided input and comment. The public comment process and resulting dialogue emphasized impacts on current DSHS/DVR customers, students with disabilities, and customers who need specific services or equipment to maintain employment.

### Implementing an Order of Selection

In accordance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, and its regulations, a designated state unit must implement an order of selection when there are insufficient resources to serve all eligible customers who apply for services.

Fiscal and case service studies project that DSHS/DVR will not have sufficient resources to serve all eligible individuals who apply for services in FFY 2018 and FFY 2019. Therefore, DSHS/DVR implemented an order of selection on November 1, 2017.

By implementing an order of selection, DSHS/DVR will ensure resources and services are prioritized for individuals with disabilities who need them most.

### Priority Categories & Order of Selection

As part of every customer's eligibility determination process, a qualified DSHS/DVR Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) will evaluate: 1) disability-related functional limitations; 2) anticipated number of needed services; and 3) whether services are anticipated to be needed over an extended period to time. The VRC will use these criteria to assign eligible customers to

one of five priority categories, based on the severity of the customer's disability. Priority categories ensure that DSHS/DVR services are prioritized for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

#### **Priority Category 1: Individuals with a most significant disability**

An eligible customer is assigned to Priority Category 1 if:

- The customer experiences serious functional limitations in four or more of the following areas in terms of an employment outcome: mobility, communication, self-care, cognition and learning (self-direction), interpersonal, work tolerance, and work skills; and
- The customer requires multiple VR services over an extended period of time.

#### **Priority Category 2: Individuals with a significant disability**

An eligible customer is assigned to Priority Category 2 if:

- The customer experiences serious functional limitations in three of the following areas in terms of an employment outcome: mobility, communication, self-care, cognition and learning (self-direction), interpersonal, work tolerance, and work skills; and
- The customer requires multiple VR services over an extended period of time.

#### **Priority Category 3: Individuals with a significant disability**

An eligible customer is assigned to Priority Category 3 if:

- The customer experiences serious functional limitations in two of the following areas in terms of an employment outcome: mobility, communication, self-care, cognition and learning (self-direction), interpersonal, work tolerance, and work skills; and
- The customer requires multiple VR services over an extended period of time.

#### **Priority Category 4: Individuals with a significant disability**

An eligible customer is assigned to Priority Category 4 if:

- The customer experiences serious functional limitations in one of the following areas in terms of an employment outcome: mobility, communication, self-care, cognition and learning (self-direction), interpersonal, work tolerance, and work skills; and
- The customer requires multiple VR services over an extended period of time.

#### **Priority Category 5: Individuals with Disabilities**

An eligible customer is assigned to Priority Category 5 if:

- The customer is determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services but does not meet the criteria for Priority Categories 1-4.

Priority categories will be assigned consistently, objectively, and with customer rights to review and due process. Consistent with federal regulations, DSHS/DVR will not consider duration of residency in Washington State, type of disability, age, sex, race, color, national origin, type of expected employment outcome, source of referral, particular service needs or anticipated service costs, individual or family income level, when assigning a priority of service category. In addition, applicable State law and DSHS/DVR policies regarding anti-discrimination apply to eligible customers who are assigned a priority of service category.

### **Selecting Eligible Customers for Services**

Per federal regulations, DSHS/DVR will provide the full range of uninterrupted VR services to all existing customers with Individualized Plans for Employment as of November 1, 2017, regardless of the priority category to which they are assigned.

Under an order of selection, when sufficient resources are not available to serve all new eligible customers, new customers may be placed on a wait list for services. This wait list will be statewide and based upon customers' priority categories and application dates. As resources become available for DSHS/DVR to serve additional individuals, DSHS/DVR selects names from the waiting list in the priority category being served at the time. Within a priority category, the date the individual applied for VR services determines the order in which they are released from the waiting list. Individuals placed on a wait list will receive information and guidance about other federal or state programs that offer services to help them meet their employment needs, if available.

Should sufficient resources be available to provide the full range of VR services to both existing and new customers, DSHS/DVR will serve eligible individuals assigned to Priority Category 1 first. This ensures that services are prioritized for individuals with the most significant disabilities. Customers in Priority Category 1 who have been placed on a wait list will be released based on the date they applied, with the oldest application dates being released first.

If resources are available after all existing customers and all new Priority Category 1 customers are assured the full range of VR services, DSHS/DVR will serve eligible individuals assigned to Priority Category 2. Customers in Priority Category 2 who have been placed on a wait list will be released based on the date they applied, with the oldest application dates being released first.

If additional resources are available after all existing customers and new customers in Priority Categories 1 and 2 are assured the full range of VR services, DSHS/DVR will serve eligible individuals assigned to Priority Category 3. Customers in Priority Category 3 who have been placed on a wait list will be released based on the date they applied, with the oldest application dates being released first.

If additional resources are available after all existing customers and new customers in Priority Categories 1, 2 and 3 are assured the full range of VR services, DSHS/DVR will serve eligible individuals assigned to Priority Category 4. Customers in Priority Category 4 who have been placed on a wait list will be released based on the date they applied, with the oldest application dates being released first.



If additional resources are available after all existing customers and new customers in Priority Categories 1, 2, 3, and 4 are assured the full range of VR services, DSHS/DVR will serve eligible individuals assigned to Priority Category 5. Customers in Priority Category 5 who have been placed on a wait list will be released based on the date they applied, with the oldest application dates being released first.

### **Students with Disabilities & Pre-Employment Transition Services**

Students with disabilities can receive ongoing Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) while placed on an order of selection wait list, as long as they have participated in a Pre-ETS prior to eligibility determination for DSHS/DVR services. However, federal regulations prevent students with disabilities who were determined eligible for DSHS/DVR services prior to receiving Pre-ETS from subsequently receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services while placed on an order of selection wait list. Therefore, students, families, advocates, and educators are advised to carefully consider the potential risks of applying to DSHS/DVR before participating in a Pre-Employment Transition Service. DSHS/DVR recommends students participate in a Pre-Employment Transition Service before applying for DSHS/DVR services, in the event they are placed on the DSHS/DVR wait list.

Potentially eligible students with disabilities (i.e. students who only receive Pre-Employment Transition Services and who do not apply for DSHS/DVR services) will not be affected by order of selection and will continue to receive uninterrupted Pre-Employment Transition Services.

#### ***B. The justification for the order.***

Beginning in FFY 2016, DSHS/DVR experienced a significant increase in the number of customers served under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPEs). This rapid increase occurred after the drafting of the DSHS/DVR 2016 - 2020 State Plan. By the end of federal fiscal year 2017, the number of IPEs had increased by 13%.

Increased service volumes led to corresponding increases in case service expenditures. Monthly average purchased service expenditures increased steadily from about \$2.4 million in FFY 15 to \$2.8 million in FFY 2017.

While service volumes and costs increased, DSHS/DVR's funds did not increase to meet the demand. Because revenue streams remained consistent, DSHS/DVR directed carry-over funds to meet increasing service demands and costs. Consequently, carry-over funds rapidly diminished. DSHS/DVR carried over \$34,366,000 into FFY 2015, \$29,052,638 into FFY 2016, \$20,302,559 into FFY 2017 and \$14,391,272 into FFY 2018.

Had DSHS/DVR continued to expand services and costs at its former rate, DSHS/DVR would have overspent all revenue sources by late FFY 2018. Therefore, an order of selection was necessary to ensure services remained available for all customers with IPEs, without overspending available funds. In addition, DSHS/DVR projected that implementation on November 1, 2017 would allow Priority Category 1 to remain open, ensuring individuals with the most significant disabilities access to services without a wait list.

Current case service and budget projections indicate that DSHS/DVR will require a case services budget of approximately \$20-22 Million annually for FFY 23 and 24. FFY 2021 projections indicate this budget is sufficient to serve existing customers with IPEs, new Priority Category 1 and Priority Category 2 customers, and customers released from the waiting list on a monthly basis.

The FFY 2023 costs of serving existing and new IPE customers and an estimated 1,200 customers released from the waiting list is projected to be \$21 million annually.

***C. The service and outcome goals.***

**Projected Service & Outcome Goals for FFY 2023-24**

<b>FFY 2023</b>	<b>Total IPEs</b>	<b>New IPEs</b>	<b>Total Case Service Costs</b>	<b>IPE Cases Closed</b>	<b>Rehabilitated Cases</b>	<b>Wait List</b>
Category 1	5,600	2,000	\$14,300,000	2,500	1,200	0
Category 2	1,200	450	\$3,100,000	570	300	0
Category 3	800	325	\$2,100,000	300	170	0
Category 4	530	400	\$1,300,000	200	115	150
Category 5	70	25	\$200,000	30	15	50

**Priority Category 1: Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities**

- Total Customers Served under an IPE: 5,600
- New IPEs: 2,000
- Total Priority Category 1 Case Service Costs: \$14,300,000
- IPE Cases Closed: 2,500
- Rehabilitated Cases: 1,200
- Total Customers Placed on a Wait List: 0

**Priority Category 2: Individuals with Significant Disabilities**

- Total Customers Served under an IPE: 1,200
- New IPEs: 450
- Total Priority Category 2 Case Service Costs: \$3,100,000
- IPE Cases Closed: 570
- Rehabilitated Cases: 300
- Total Customers Placed on a Wait List: 0

**Priority Category 3: Individuals with Disabilities**

- Total Customers Served under an IPE: 800
- New IPEs: 325
- Total Priority Category 3 Case Service Costs: \$2,100,000
- IPE Cases Closed: 300
- Rehabilitated Cases: 170
- Total Customers Placed on a Wait List: 0

#### **Priority Category 4: Individuals with Disabilities**

- Total Customers Served under an IPE: 530
- New IPEs: 400
- Total Priority Category 3 Case Service Costs: \$1,300,000
- IPE Cases Closed: 200
- Rehabilitated Cases: 115
- Total Customers Placed on a Wait List: 150

#### **Priority Category 5: Individuals with Disabilities**

- Total Customers Served under an IPE: 70
- New IPEs: 25
- Total Priority Category 3 Case Service Costs: \$200,000
- IPE Cases Closed: 30
- Rehabilitated Cases: 15
- Total Customers Placed on a Wait List: 50

<b>FFY 2024</b>	<b>Total IPEs</b>	<b>New IPEs</b>	<b>Total Case Service Costs</b>	<b>IPE Cases Closed</b>	<b>Rehabilitated Cases</b>	<b>Wait List</b>
Category 1	5,600	2,000	\$14,300,000	2,500	1,200	0
Category 2	1,200	450	\$3,100,000	570	300	0
Category 3	800	325	\$2,100,000	300	170	0
Category 4	530	400	\$1,300,000	200	115	150
Category 5	70	25	\$200,000	30	15	50

#### **Priority Category 1: Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities**

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- Total Priority Category 1 Case Service Costs: \$14,300,000
- IPE Cases Closed: 2,500

- Rehabilitated Cases: 1,200
- Total Customers Placed on a Wait List: 0

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***D. The time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.***

DSHS/DVR expects to initiate services for those newly placed onto an Order of Selection wait list category within the following timelines:

- Category 1 & Category 2 – these customers should continue to be served immediately upon eligibility determination.
- Category 3 – DSHS/DVR expects to release the remaining customers on the waiting list and open this category by July 2022.
- Category 4 – DSHS/DVR expects to begin serving customers in this category in PY 2022 and to open the category before the end of the program year.
- Category 5 – DSHS/DVR expects to begin releases from this category in PY 2023.

***E. How individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities; and***

Please see section VI.M.1.A.

***2. If the designated State unit has elected to serve eligible individuals, regardless of any established order of selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment.***

In consultation with the Washington State Rehabilitation Council and the Client Assistance Program, DSHS/DVR has elected to serve eligible individuals who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment, regardless of an established order of selection. These services may be provided, without requiring the customer to wait for services per order of selection, if:

- The individual is at immediate risk of losing their job in a competitive integrated setting for reasons related to the individual's disability.

## **N. Goals and Plans for Distribution of title VI Funds.**

***1. Specify the State's goals and priorities for funds received under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services.***

### **Supported Employment Goals & Title VI Funds**

For Program Years 2020-2023, DSHS/DVR estimates about 800 customers will receive supported employment services annually through Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs), resulting in 400-500 supported employment outcomes per year. At these levels, DSHS/DVR estimates serving approximately 3,200 supported employment IPEs and producing 1,800 supported employment outcomes during the four-year period of this plan. DSHS/DVR does not use any Title VI funds for administrative costs. 50% of Title VI funds will be appropriated to youth.

**2. Describe the activities to be conducted, with funds reserved pursuant to section 603(d), for youth with the most significant disabilities, including:**

**A. The provision of extended services for a period not to exceed 4 years; and**

The Rehabilitation Act, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, allows designated state units to determine the length of time for which youth with the most significant disabilities can receive extended services up to 48 months. DSHS/DVR will fund extended services for youth with most significant disabilities on a case-by-case basis.

**B. How the State will leverage other public and private funds to increase resources for extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities.**

**Supported Employment Services**

DSHS/DVR provides supported employment services primarily to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. DSHS/DVR and its partners continue to pursue innovative strategies to expand these services to other populations, as resources are often scarce in comparison to needs.

The State of Washington was approved in 2017 for the Medicaid Transformation Demonstration Foundational Community Supports Supported Employment benefits. The Medicaid Transformation Demonstration has been extended for one year, January 1 – December 2022. FCS Supported Employment is funded as a Medicaid service, expanding the availability of extended services to individuals who experience a wide array of significant disabilities.

DSHS/DVR will collaborate with ALTSA to explore the development of a cooperative agreement for individuals with significant disabilities and long-term care needs receiving ALTSA's FCS Supported Employment Program and DSHS/DVR's Supported Employment Program to leverage resources and provide quality, coordinated services.

Through continued collaboration, innovative approaches, and the use of natural supports, DSHS/DVR and its partners will be able to expand the availability, quality, and scope of extended services for all individuals who require supported employment.

## O. State's Strategies

Describe the required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the VR and the Supported Employment programs (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act and section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)):

### ***1. The methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.***

#### **Introduction**

DSHS/DVR has established four goals to assure that high-quality services are provided to both job seekers with disabilities and to Washington's businesses. The methods by which these services will be provided, and maximized within available resources, are described in this section.

These strategies reflect in-depth analyses of DSHS/DVR customer service data, statewide demographic data, Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) findings, research conducted by the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB), and the ongoing input and recommendations from the Washington State Rehabilitation Council (WSRC).

Duplication of activities, strategies, and methods in the sections which follow is intentional; the coordinated efforts of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) core programs to improve services to job seekers with disabilities and Washington's business community are not mutually exclusive. As an active core partner, DSHS/DVR will fully leverage all available resources to maximize the labor market engagement, self-sufficiency, and independence of all Washingtonians with disabilities.

#### **Strategies to Achieve Goals & Priorities**

##### **Goal One: Customer Services and Outcomes are our Highest Priority**

**Goal One, Priority One:** Customers experience timely, continuous progress throughout the VR process.

##### ***Goal One, Priority One: Strategies***

- Identify and address barriers to timely services and continuous progress for customers throughout the VR process. (This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 22)
- Establish an approach for reducing the impact to customers' case progress when staff transitions and vacancies occur. (This strategy will begin in PY 21 and continue through PY 22)
- Integrate customer contact and response standards as performance measures for VR counseling staff. (This strategy will begin and end in PY 23)

**Goal One, Priority Two: DVR Customers achieve employment in living wage jobs with benefits**

***Goal One, Priority Two: Strategies***

- Increase rate of customers with IPEs that include job goals leading to self-sufficiency/financial security (at least 200% of the federal poverty level or greater, based on job type, wages, hours worked per week). (This strategy will begin in PY 21 and continue through PY 22)
- Identify career pathways and increase the rate of customers with IPEs that include post-secondary training resulting in employment in their field of study. (This strategy will begin in PY 22 and continue through PY 23)
- Develop effective job search and job placement assistance and/or services that are readily available to all customers at the time they are job ready. (This strategy will begin in PY 21 and continue through PY 22)

**Goal One, Priority Three: Students are better prepared to engage in VR services after high school.**

***Goal One, Priority Three: Strategies***

- Pre-ETS are available in all areas based on statewide needs assessment, school demographics, and contract mapping data. (This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 23).
- Lead collaboration with individual school districts to identify gaps in services and CTE opportunities. (This strategy will begin and end in PY 23)

Engage with transition staff, students, and families earlier and work toward alignment of IEP and High School and Beyond Plan goals. (This strategy will begin in PY 22 and continue through PY 23)

**Goal One, Priority Four: Individuals with disabilities have equitable access to DVR services.**

***Goal One, Priority Four: Strategies***

- Improve access to DVR services through the use of technology, mobile service locations, translation and interpreter services, transportation services, or other accommodations. (This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 23)
- Develop a DVR outreach plan targeting under-represented populations in local communities that may be unaware of DVR services. (This strategy will begin in PY 21 and continue through PY 22)
- Strengthen information and referral for those who need basic services and support to engage effectively with DVR and to facilitate access to workforce development programs. (This strategy will begin in PY 22 and continue through PY 23)



## **Goal Two: Motivate and Inspire High Performing Staff**

### **Goal Two, Priority One: DVR staff achieve mastery in their work.**

#### ***Goal Two, Priority One: Strategies***

- Deliver foundational and practical training for field staff through VR Institute and internal trainers. (This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 23)
- Expand new VRC program to all regions to reinforce VR counseling principles and practices among newer counseling staff. (This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 23)
- Strengthen DVR knowledge and application of transition planning and practices that support positive outcomes. (This strategy will begin in PY 22 and continue through PY 23)

### **Goal Two, Priority Two: DVR excels in key performance indicators.**

#### ***Goal Two, Priority Two: Strategies***

- Establish, track and monitor key performance measures for all levels of the agency using reports/dashboards easily accessible to staff at all levels. (This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 21)
- Evaluate, monitor, and coach staff using performance reports. (This strategy will begin and end in PY 23)
- Build capacity and skills throughout DVR for continuous improvement and innovation. (This strategy will begin and end in PY 22)

### **Goal Two, Priority Three: DVR is an employer of choice.**

#### ***Goal Two, Priority Three: Strategies***

- Develop a recruitment and retention plan to address staff patterns, turnover, and recruitment of under-represented groups among staff. Plan will acquaint managers with targeted recruitment strategies, reasonable accommodations, training and cultural competencies that foster a diverse and inclusive work environment. (This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 21)
- Increase options for telework, flexible work schedules, and part-time. (This strategy will begin and end in PY20)
- Adopt and implement a staff recognition approach. (This strategy will begin in PY 21)

## **Goal Three: DVR Collaborates with Businesses and Partners that Deliver Benefits to Customers**

### **Goal Three, Priority One: Strengthen communication and collaboration with partners that deliver benefits to customers.**

### ***Goal Three, Priority One: Strategies***

- Collaborate with CRPs on contract changes that incent/reward higher quality outcomes based on established outcome measures. (This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 22)
- Increase collaboration with and understanding of services available to DVR-Community Service Office mutual customers. (This strategy will begin and end in PY 22)
- Collaborate with DBHR to fully implement FCS inter-local agreement statewide. (This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 22)
- Collaborate with WorkSource leadership to increase WorkSource staff capacity and effectiveness in assisting people with disabilities with job search activities. (This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 23)

### **Goal Three, Priority Two: Formalize and implement targeted business engagement efforts.**

#### ***Goal Three, Priority Two: Strategies***

- Define business engagement staff roles and responsibilities for education, training and outreach to employers. (This strategy will begin in PY 20 and end in PY 21)
- Develop statewide plan establishing expectations and measure outcomes for the business engagement program. (This strategy will begin in PY 20 and end in PY 21)
- Provide technical assistance to employers on the use of natural supports and disability DEI and etiquette in the workplace. (This strategy will begin and end in PY 23)

### **Goal Four: Improve DSHS/DVR's Systems & Performance**

#### **Goal Four, Priority One: Establish a reporting framework that informs decisions and improvements at all levels.**

##### ***Goal Four, Priority One: Strategies***

- Build reports/dashboards for DVR managers with easy access to performance data at the statewide, regional, unit, and office levels. (This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 21)
- Develop a reporting framework and database for overall agency reporting. (This strategy will begin in PY 21 and continue through PY 22)
- Full implementation of DVR customer satisfaction survey. (This strategy will begin and end in PY 20)

#### **Goal Four, Priority Two: DVR Staff have modern, user friendly tools that streamline their work.**

##### ***Goal Four, Priority Two: Strategies***

- Modernize DVR's electronic case management system. (This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 22)

- Update and enhance the content and usability of the iDVR website to provide staff with easy access to clear, up-to-date program, policy, and administrative reference guides information. (This strategy will begin in PY 21 and continue through PY 22)
- Implement new application to document Pre-ETS participant information and consent to participate in services and allow use of personal data for service delivery and reporting. (This strategy will begin in PY 22 and continue through PY 23)
- Establish a formal IT portfolio management process to include a dashboard that allows staff to see how IT projects are prioritized. (This strategy will begin and end in PY 20)

***2. How a broad range of assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process and on a statewide basis.***

Throughout the rehabilitation process, DSHS/DVR counselors assess whether assistive technology (AT) services or devices are needed to address customers' barriers to employment. DSHS/DVR brochures and Customer Service Handbook provide in-depth information on AT services and devices. Full-time Assistive Technology Assessment Practitioners (ATAPs) provide specialized AT assessment, consult with staff and customers, coordinate with AT vendors, and disseminate information and resources.

DSHS/DVR will monitor AT service delivery in compliance with WIOA requirements. In addition, DSHS/DVR will renew its commitment to being an organizational role model in effective utilization of AT as accommodations for individuals with disabilities including, but not limited to, individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing or with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

***3. The outreach procedures that will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities, as well as those who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.***

DSHS/DVR continues to maintain active organizational relationships with a wide range of agencies and community groups that serve minority populations, and has formal liaison relationships to assure an ongoing referral stream of individuals with disabilities who identify as racial or ethnic minorities. Individuals with disabilities who identify as racial or ethnic minorities are consistently represented within the DSHS/DVR population at rates at or above respective representation within the statewide population of individuals with disabilities. However, disparities have been observed in case progress and outcomes for racial and ethnic minorities. An in-depth analysis of this representation is provided in the Statewide Assessment section of this plan.

***4. The methods to be used to improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life***

***(including the receipt of VR services, postsecondary education, employment, and pre-employment transition services).***

DSHS/DVR has developed a Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with DSB and OSPI to promote the successful implementation and operation of clarifying roles and responsibilities of each partner agency in coordinating activities that promote successful secondary transition services for students with disabilities.

DSHS/DVR VR counselor liaisons who are trained to provide outreach and comprehensive high school transition services are assigned to every public, private, charter and tribal schools, alternative and transition programs, as well as juvenile rehabilitation facilities across the state. As liaisons, they schedule regular check-ins with those partners who jointly serve DSHS/DVR customers including: Developmental Disabilities Administration, County Developmental Disabilities Programs, Behavior Health Agencies, as well as High Schools, Public Institutions of Higher Education, WorkSource Centers, and Juvenile Rehabilitation.

DSHS/DVR Regional Transition Consultants are assigned to each of the 9 Educational Service Districts across the state to provide outreach and collaboration in an effort to identify potentially eligible students who may benefit from Pre-Employment Transition Services. They provide coordinated transition planning and services between local education agencies and DSHS/DVR contracted partners; assist with assessment of service gaps; share training materials and attend transition local activities and events.

Gaps in services are identified through the use of the comprehensive transition assessment, Transition Self-Assessment Tool. Data collection efforts are ongoing in through a partnership with Washington State University.

DSHS/DVR provides Pre-Employment Transition Services to potentially eligible youth directly and through contracts and partnerships with CRPs, educational agencies, community colleges, businesses, and workforce agencies. The services provide a continuum of services between school and adult life, providing students with disabilities the services and experiences necessary to enjoy meaningful employment, independence, and quality of life.

Policy and guidance revisions, as well as new staff training, support these services. An in-depth description of the significant changes to DSHS/DVR's services to students with disabilities is described in the Coordination with Education section of this plan.

***5. If applicable, plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the State.***

DSHS/DVR has sponsored a workgroup of DSHS/DVR staff and Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) representatives to focus on improving service delivery partnerships. Emphasis was placed on strengthening communication and coordination between local DSHS/DVR offices and CRPs and developing strategies to inform CRPs of changes or updates in DSHS/DVR policies and procedures which affect service delivery. DSHS/DVR continues to hold quarterly meetings with CRPs and the WSRC to continue communication and coordination efforts. A full description

of DSHS/DVR's plans to improve its CRP partnerships is included in the Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations section of this plan.

## ***6. Strategies to improve the performance of the State with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.***

DSHS/DVR will employ strategies to improve customers' employment retention, long-term labor market engagement, earned wages, education credential attainment, and vocational skill progress. Additional strategies will target improved services to businesses, as DSHS/DVR implements a dual-customer model, serving Washington's businesses as well as job seekers with disabilities.

### DSHS/DVR will implement the following strategies to improve performance under WIOA Performance Accountability:

- Support customers in developing vocational goals and training objectives which align with labor market demand as well as customers' skills, abilities, interests, and informed choice.
- Leverage the labor market exchange, labor market research tools, and industry sector strategies to ensure that customers' vocational goals are aligned with in-demand occupations to the greatest extent possible.
- Integrate and align DSHS/DVR services and career pathways programs.
- Increase use of Post-Employment Services to support customers in maintaining, regaining, or advancing in employment through better communicating these services and their benefits.
- Provide training and technical assistance to businesses on best practices for recruiting and retaining employees with disabilities.
- Support apprenticeships, paid internships, and on-the-job training opportunities to enhance customers' employability, in partnership with local Workforce Development Councils and the business community.
- Utilize the results of the comprehensive vocational assessment to evaluate customers' skills, abilities, interests, as well as potential barriers to successful participation in, or completion of, training programs.
- Complete required meetings at the end of every post-secondary term to review grades, progress, and support needs of customers participating in associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree programs.

### DSHS/DVR will utilize the following strategies to improve its services to businesses:

- Engage Business Specialists in the development and implementation of local WDC industry sector strategies and cross-program business engagement activities.
- Collaborate with local WDCs/ WorkSource to provide services to federal contractors and subcontractors, linking these contractors to the skilled job seekers with disabilities they seek.

- Provide training for businesses on how to recruit, hire, retrain, and advance skilled workers with disabilities. Additional training includes information on Americans with Disabilities Act, disability awareness/etiquette and reasonable accommodation trainings.
- Increase visibility in Washington's business community through a methodical outreach and marketing plan which includes participation in local chambers of commerce, membership in professional organizations (e.g. the Society for Human Resource Management), representation at career and recruitment fairs
- Provide candidate (VR customer) referrals to employers to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

## ***7. Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce development system in assisting individuals with disabilities.***

DSHS/DVR plays significant roles on the state Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board and local WDCs which contribute to strategies and activities that assist partners in serving individuals with disabilities. To coordinate and align workforce development services at the local level, DSHS/DVR and the Washington Workforce Association (WWA) have created and signed a Shared Vision, Values, & Principles of Collaboration document which outlines how DSHS/DVR and local WDCs will provide integrated services to individuals with disabilities.

## ***8. How the agency's strategies will be used to:***

### ***A. Achieve goals and priorities by the State, consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment;***

The goals, priorities, and strategies outlined in this Combined State Plan align with both the findings of DSHS/DVR's Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) and the strategic vision of Washington's workforce development system. Within the description of each goal, and the priorities and strategies which support it, is a description of supporting CSNA findings.

### ***B. Support innovation and expansion activities; and***

DSHS/DVR will continue to fund the following innovation and expansion activities:

- Washington State Rehabilitation Council (WSRC) and Washington State Independent Living Council (WASILC) operations.
- Continued use of WOIS, a tool used by staff around the state to help customers select suitable vocational goals.

### ***C. Overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State VR Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program.***

Washington DSHS/DVR continues to experience barriers to ensuring equitable access to and participation in VR services, including Supported Employment Services, to those who live in rural and remote areas of the state. DSHS/DVR has physical office locations in all large and most medium-sized communities in the state, and provides scheduled visits to some smaller, more

rural communities. However, it is difficult to offer equitable access to those individuals who live in some of Washington's small, rural communities and more remote areas.

Staff capacity and the small number of eligible individuals in rural and remote areas contribute to the provision of equitable services. Transportation continues to rise to the top of the list as the greatest barrier to access for these individuals. In areas where DSHS/DVR does not have an ongoing presence, community members are often not aware of these services or how to access them.

DSHS/DVR data also identifies a few groups who are represented in DSHS/DVR services at lower levels than these groups are represented in the general population. These groups include women, people who are African American/Black and American Indian. Certain geographic areas of the state are under-represented in DSHS/DVR services as well compared to the estimates of people with disabilities living these areas.

Individuals experiencing extremely difficult life circumstances face the most barriers to participation in DSHS/DVR services. While DSHS/DVR could be an integral step in regaining stability for these individuals, inaccessibility to basic services, such as housing, food, and medical care often prevents them from fully participating and they drop out of DSHS/DVR services to deal with these more urgent needs. DSHS/DVR has difficulty maintaining contact with individuals who regularly move from place to place, who live in unsafe conditions, and who are not connected to community resources and supports, if those supports are available.

Easy access to certified interpreters is emerging as a barrier in all areas of the state, even in our largest and most populous counties. Washington DSHS/DVR has experienced substantial difficulty recruiting and retaining counselors for the deaf, and the availability of contracted sign language interpreters has become challenging. Interpreters need to be arranged well in advance of appointments, which creates access issues when a customer has an immediate or unexpected need to consult with DSHS/DVR. These scheduling limitations create inequitable access for individuals who are deaf.

DSHS/DVR has identified the following strategies and activities under Goal One, Priority Four to specifically target equitable access for unserved and underserved populations.

- Improve access to DSHS/DVR services through the use of technology, mobile service locations, translation and interpreter services, transportation services, or other accommodations.
- Develop a DSHS/DVR outreach plan targeting under-represented populations in local communities who may be unaware of DSHS/DVR services.
- Strengthen information and referral for those who need basic services and support to engage effectively with DSHS/DVR and to facilitate access to workforce development programs.

Additionally, DSHS/DVR will undertake targeted outreach and collaborate with educational, human service, and workforce development agencies to improve access and participation by

students, economically disadvantaged populations, and individuals with supported employment needs.

## **P. Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals**

Describe:

- 1. An evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals described in the approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan for the most recently completed program year were achieved. The evaluation must:***

- A. Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.***

### **Introduction**

This section describes progress made on 2020-2023 State Plan goals and priorities that were scheduled for implementation in PY 2020 and PY 2021 (See Section O). This evaluation includes data analysis, performance and activity summaries, as well as challenges that affected DSHS/DVR progress. Special consideration is given to Supported Employment services. Lastly, a description of funded innovation and expansion activities is included.

### **PY 2020 Evaluation: Goals, Strategies, & Barriers**

Annual applications for services fell to about 40% of previous levels in PY 20, as customers delayed seeking assistance with finding employment during the pandemic. The number of new customers began to increase in the second half of the year and reached 48% of pre-pandemic levels during the second quarter of PY 21. The number of new plans declined during the initial six months of PY 20 but have been climbing for the past year, reaching pre-pandemic levels in the first quarter of PY 21.

Timely completion of customer plans for employment averaged 30-40 days longer than pre-pandemic levels in the first half of PY 20. Factors affecting plan development included transitioning to remote services, job market conditions, reduced vendor capacity, and customer hesitancy to engage in community-based activities. Average days to plan began to decrease at the beginning of PY 21 and approached pre-pandemic levels in the second quarter of PY 21.

The number of customers in plan fluctuated very little during PY 20 and PY 21 to date, compared to previous year levels. This trend can be attributed to a combination of fewer jobs available and customers pausing their job search. DSHS/DVR services helped 986 customers attain employment in PY 2020, about 68% of the number of successful customers in the prior year.

DSHS/DVR continued to release customers from the waiting list at rates of 200-400 per month. Declining applications in PY 20 allowed DSHS/DVR to release more cases. A total of 4,742



customers were moved to active status between July 2020 and October 2021, reducing the waiting list by about 75%. Releases were paused from November 2021-February 2022, to maintain manageable caseloads in offices impacted by releases. Releases will resume in March and continue throughout PY 2022.

### Case Volume Monthly Averages

	Jul 2019-Mar 2020 (pre-COVID)	Apr 2020-Jan 2022 (post-COVID)	Most recent quarter	Total PY 2020
<b>New Applications</b>	530	230	264	2,710
<b>New Eligibility Determinations</b>	535	228	258	2,444
<b>New Plans</b>	246	209	227	2,414
<b>In Plan</b>	5,634	5,536	5,527	8,777
<b>In Plan-Employed</b>	754	672	950	2,889
<b>Closed after Plan</b>	286	213	299	2,408
<b>Closed Employed</b>	151	95	149	986

### Goal One: Customer Service and Outcomes are our Highest Priority

**Goal One, Priority One:** Customers experience timely, continuous progress throughout the VR process.

#### **Goal One, Priority One: Strategies**

**Strategy 1:** Identify and address barriers to timely services and continuous progress for customers throughout the VR process. (This strategy began in PY 20 and will continue through PY 22)

- **Continued to implement recommendations from a PY 19 process improvement project focused on eligibility determination.** With assistance from an Advisory Workgroup, plans to standardize and address bottlenecks in the intake process were developed and staff training needs were defined. Standard intake and records request forms were completed, curriculum for intake training was completed, and curriculum for eligibility determination training is in development.
- **Initiated a problem-solving activity around communication issues with Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs).** To address ongoing concerns about these issues, Field Services surveyed CRPs to more fully understand the extent and types of communication challenges and is reviewing the results. This is the first step in a process that includes group problem-solving around causes and possible solutions, and prioritizing improvements.
- **Provided guidance and training to staff to address customer service barriers and timely services.** Field Services Division leadership has communicated consistent

messaging to reinforce expectations for answering phones, frequency of customer contacts, timeliness of providing service plans to CRPs, and customer notification of change in status. New staff training in core VR competencies and customer service was launched, with a focus on effective, timely, consistent eligibility determination and plan development.

**Strategy 2:** Establish an approach that reduces impact to case progress when there are transitions/vacancies in staffing. (This strategy began in PY 21 and will continue through PY 22)

- **Adopted and began developing protocols for VRC float positions to manage caseloads outside their home office.** Field Service leadership is identifying existing VRC positions to dedicate for this purpose and developing a strategy to recruit staff for these positions.

**Goal One, Priority Two:** DVR Customers achieve employment in living wage jobs with benefits.

***Goal One, Priority Two: Strategies***

**Strategy 1:** Develop effective job search and job placement assistance and/or services that are readily available to all customers at the time they are job ready. (This strategy began in PY 21 and will continue through PY 22)

- **DVR's Business Engagement program expanded resources and targeted employer outreach to connect job-ready customers to employment opportunities.** Business Specialists are hosting virtual job clubs, referring customers to WorkSource workshops when applicable, and utilizing job boards for people with disabilities, including AbilityJobs, Circa, and USAJOBS. Employer outreach efforts are partially determined by customer interests and needs.

**Goal One, Priority Three:** Students are better prepared to engage in VR services after high school.

***Goal One, Priority Three: Strategies***

**Strategy 1:** Pre-ETS are available in all areas based on statewide needs assessment, school demographics, and contract mapping data. (This strategy began in PY 20 and will continue through PY 23)

- **Statewide transition needs assessment is underway.** The assessment identifies: 1) the number of students with disabilities who are in need and not receiving Pre-ETS; 2) the availability of secondary school-based transition services; and 3) the extent to which services are coordinated with VR. The 2022 update will include additional school types, such as tribal and non-traditional schools (e.g., alternative programs, juvenile rehabilitation site), and enable DVR to assess progress in service availability, accessibility, and coordination.
- **School demographic data is being updated to include 2019-20 secondary school enrollment data.** This data provides school-level information on students with

disabilities, including numbers with an Individual Education Plan and 504 accommodations, poverty and drop-out rates.

- **Established contracts with Pre-ETS providers that reach all areas of the state.** Students throughout the State can access Pre-ETS services from at least one provider. DVR maintains an inventory of providers available to each secondary school in the State and recently added data to its tracking logs to show the number of students served at each school site.
- **Increased numbers of students received Pre-ETS services.** The number of students receiving Pre-ETS has increased in each of the last five quarters, by 176% from second quarter PY 20 to first quarter PY 21 and by 58% in the past two quarters.

**Goal One, Priority Four: Individuals with disabilities have equitable access to DVR services.**

***Goal One, Priority Four: Strategies***

**Strategy 1:** Improve access to DVR services through the use of technology, mobile service locations, translation and interpreter services, transportation services, or other accommodations. (This strategy began in PY 20 and will continue through PY 23)

- **Supported customer access to remote services through equipment distribution, technology upgrades, and changes in business practices.** Guidance for issuing equipment was provided to staff, equipment distribution to customers is underway, and an agency workgroup has identified barriers to customers receiving or using equipment. DVR has also modified practice standards and upgraded agency technology to deliver remote services, including acceptance of electronic signatures on official documents.

**Goal Two: Motivate and Inspire High Performing Staff**

**Goal Two, Priority One: DVR staff achieve mastery in their work.**

***Goal Two, Priority One: Strategies***

**Strategy 1:** Deliver foundational and practical training in basic rehabilitation practices for field staff through VR Institute and internal trainers. (This strategy began in PY 20 and will continue through PY 23)

- **Improved oversight and management of training operations.** Established a Training Steering Committee of staff in a variety of roles to provide quality assurance and diverse insights on training needs and design. Reorganized training team under a training manager to improve consistency and effectiveness of training delivery. Identified new methods and tools to adopt, including role-based curricula and multimodal delivery structure for new hires and a multimedia reference library for on-demand job aids
- **Implemented the Vocational Rehabilitation Institute, a series of foundational courses in core VR topics, provided under contract with the Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation at the University of Washington.**

- Foundational VR training was substantially completed (90% or more of staff) in four subject areas: 1. Foundations of Counseling; 2. Case Management; 3. Medical Aspects A; 4. Medical Aspects B
- A majority (50-89%) of staff completed training in four additional subject areas: 1. Medical Aspects C; 2. Vocational Assessment Process in Rehab; 3. Labor Market Information and Job Development; 4. Assistive Technology and Workplace Accommodations.
- **Provided in-service courses through DVR's Training Team and the State's on-demand Learning Center.** Trainers developed and delivered trainings on topics such as youth transition, verbal de-escalation, ethics, and working remotely. These courses are available to all staff.

**Strategy 2:** Expand new VRC cohort program to all regions to reinforce VR counseling principles and practices among newer counseling staff. (This strategy began in PY 20 and will continue through PY 23)

- **Expanded cohort program for new VRCs statewide.** The cohort program provides opportunities for new staff to meet with their peers for facilitated discussions and expert consultation to support their learning and connectedness to their colleagues. Originally established in one of DVR's three service regions, it was adopted statewide in PY 20.

**Goal Two, Priority Two: DVR excels in key performance indicators.**

***Goal Two, Priority Two: Strategies***

**Strategy 1:** Establish, track and monitor key performance measures for all levels of the agency using reports/dashboards easily accessible to staff at all levels. (This strategy began in PY 20 and will continue through PY 21)

- **Established and regularly distributed "Measures that Matter" reports to staff.** These include data on case volume, performance measures, and preliminary analyses of customer demographics, to assess possible disparities in access to services and outcomes.
- **Completed or updated data sharing agreements to obtain performance data.** DVR established data sharing agreements to obtain wage data for customers employed in other states and analyses of household poverty status for employed customers and post-secondary education and employment outcomes for youth.

## **Goal Two, Priority Three: DVR is an employer of choice.**

### ***Goal Two, Priority Three: Strategies***

**Strategy 1:** Develop a recruitment and retention plan to address staff patterns, turnover, and recruitment of under-represented groups among staff. Plan will acquaint managers with targeted recruitment strategies, reasonable accommodations, training and cultural competencies that foster a diverse and inclusive work environment. (This strategy began in PY 20 and will continue through PY 21)

- **Implemented an Equity, Diversity, Access and Inclusion (EDAI) program.** DVR appointed an EDAI Administrator in June 2021 and has established a Community of Practice, made up of staff at all levels. The Community of Practice recommends ways to advance inclusion and belonging for staff. DVR has also facilitated a series of conversations with staff about EDAI issues, to foster cultural awareness and competencies and movement toward a more inclusive work environment.
- **Certified Diversity Executive credentialing is in process for key staff.** Leadership is completing this training program to prepare them to support and promote EDAI objectives in the workplace.

**Strategy 2:** Increase options for telework, flexible work schedules, and part-time. (This strategy began and ended in PY20)

- **Successfully transitioned staff to remote work in early stages of the pandemic.** Pursuant to Gov. Inslee's Stay Home, Stay Healthy order, almost all staff are working remotely and adjustments to work schedules have been made on a case-by-case basis. Although staffing options will be revisited when the order is lifted, telework will continue be an option for staff approved to work remotely. More flexible work schedules and limited part-time options are being considered for some positions.

## **Goal Three: DVR Collaborates with Businesses and Partners that Deliver Benefits to Customers**

### **Goal Three, Priority One: Strengthen communication and collaboration with partners that deliver benefits to customers.**

#### ***Goal Three, Priority One: Strategies***

**Strategy 1:** Collaborate with CRPs on contract changes that incent/reward higher quality outcomes based on established outcome measures. (This strategy began in PY 20 and will continue through PY 22)

- **Convened a workgroup to review the CRP contract and recommend changes.**
  - In a series of monthly meetings, DVR managers and CRP staff discussed the relationship between payment for contracted services and outcomes and general issues related to case service payments. These discussions were the first phase of information gathering for the new contract.

- DVR decided to extend CRP two-year contracts for an additional year, to July 2023, due to impacts of the pandemic, staff transitions, and replacement of the agency's case management information system. The extension also provides additional time to identify areas for further assessment by the CRP Workgroup, define high quality outcomes in relationship to DVR's performance measures, and investigate options for providing incentives.

**Strategy 2:** Collaborate with DBHR to fully implement FCS inter-local agreement statewide. (This strategy began in PY 20 and will continue through PY 21)

- **Established a DVR-DBHR Workgroup to implement a collaborative framework for serving DVR customers eligible for Foundational Community Supports (FCS).** DVR customers with a behavioral health condition may receive services from DBHR's FCS program as well as DVR's supported employment program. The collaborative framework identifies shared eligibility criteria and defines respective roles and responsibilities. The Workgroup, which includes leadership from both agencies, has been meeting quarterly to discuss ongoing coordination and collaboration between the two systems and best practices for joint service delivery.
- **Increased capacity for program implementation and quality assurance.** DVR has developed supported employment training for staff, which includes a basic introductory course for VR counselors and supervisors and in-depth foundational DVR Supported Employment training for VRCs. In PY 20, training content, which includes FCS-related guidance, was revised and designed for online instructor-led webinars. Additionally, DVR's Supported Employment Program Manager participates in FCS fidelity reviews to provide vocational rehabilitation expertise to FCS evaluators and providers.
- **DVR and FCS staff provided supported employment services to joint customers.** In some locations, DVR staff and FCS providers routinely liaison to discuss their respective program practices and work together to braid services for customers. DVR aims to implement this approach statewide. FCS referrals cannot be tracked in DVR's case management system but will be built into the new system and data are expected to be available for PY 22. In the meantime, DVR has advocated for better identification of DVR customers in FCS service data and program evaluation.

**Strategy 3:** Collaborate with WorkSource leadership to increase WorkSource staff capacity and effectiveness in assisting people with disabilities with job search activities. (This strategy began in PY 20 and will continue through PY 23)

- **Established a goal to participate in business engagement meetings in every Workforce Development Area, as part of DVR's three-year Business Engagement Program Strategic Plan.** Some Business Specialists have a very strong presence at their local WorkSource, attending all business engagement meetings and having co-located office space. DVR is working to build those types of connections to workforce partners statewide, to share expertise and coordinate resources and business outreach activities.

**Goal Three, Priority Two: Formalize and implement targeted business engagement efforts.**

### ***Goal Three, Priority Two: Strategies***

**Strategy 1:** Define business engagement staff roles and responsibilities for education, training and outreach to employers. (This strategy began in PY 20 and will end in PY 21)

- **Created a new position description for the Business Specialist role.**

**Strategy 2:** Develop statewide plan establishing expectations and measure outcomes for the business engagement program. (This strategy began in PY 20 and will end in PY 21)

- **Created a three-year Business Engagement Strategic Plan.** DVR convened a team to strategize and provide direction to the Business Engagement Program, with emphasis on integrating services with WorkSource activities, building relationships with businesses, linking customers to in-demand job opportunities, and providing staff training and support.

### **Goal Four: Improve DSHS/DVR's Systems & Performance**

**Goal Four, Priority One: Establish a reporting framework that informs decisions and improvements at all levels.**

#### ***Goal Four, Priority One: Strategies***

**Strategy 1:** Build reports/dashboards for DVR managers with easy access to performance data at the statewide, regional, unit, and office levels. (This strategy began in PY 20 and will continue through PY 21)

- **Created new reports on caseload and performance trends at state and regional levels to support management decision-making.** One report compares pre- and post-pandemic case volumes, performance, and expenditures. Another set of reports shows longer-term trends and provides data to monitor VRC caseloads and assess the impact of waiting list releases on caseloads.
- **Assessed and addressed report priorities for supervisors.** Completed reports to support monitoring of allotments and case service expenditures and to identify customers in need of benefits planning. Maintained the Business Engagement Tracking Tool, which captures data on business contacts, for WIOA reporting and internal program performance monitoring. Further work on management reports has paused until completion of DVR's new case management system.

**Strategy 2:** Full implementation of DVR customer satisfaction survey. (This strategy began and ended in PY 20)

- **Contracted with Social and Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC) at Washington State University to conduct a quarterly DVR customer satisfaction survey.** Washington State Rehabilitation Council, sponsor of the survey, entered into this agreement in PY 20. Survey results were first reported for the period Oct-Dec 2020 and quarterly thereafter. The shift from monthly to quarterly surveys provides for large enough sample sizes to allow reporting at both the state and regional levels. WSRC also has the option to add supplemental survey questions. DVR provides SESRC the customer data

needed to conduct the survey and is addressing this data transfer as part of Waves implementation. DVR has adopted customer satisfaction as a performance measure and uses the survey results for this purpose.

**Goal Four, Priority Two: DVR Staff have modern, user friendly tools that streamline their work.**

***Goal Four, Priority Two: Strategies***

**Strategy 1:** Modernize DVR's electronic case management system. (This strategy began in PY 20 and will continue through PY 22)

- **Selected a vendor to develop a new system to replace STARS, DVR's current electronic case management system.** Design of the new system, Waves, is in the final stages. DVR's goal is to launch the new system on July 1, 2022.

**Strategy 2:** Establish a formal IT portfolio management process to include a dashboard that allows staff to see how IT projects are prioritized. (This strategy began and ended in PY 20)

- **Created an IT portfolio and process for updating the portfolio.** The tool tracks projects that are active and their stage of completion. It also includes a placeholder section, for projects that are pending.

***B. Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.***

**Performance Barriers:**

Two main factors affected performance in PY 2020: the impact of the pandemic and staff vacancies, due to departures and position changes. At the beginning of the pandemic, DVR and its vendors were challenged to acquire and set-up the necessary technology and staff capacity to operate remotely. Similarly, customers faced barriers to accessing and participating in services. Even once remote services were in place, a significant number of customers lacked internet access, equipment, or skills to connect to services; some customers require in-person services. About one-third indicated a need for technology or technology training. DVR is in the process of distributing equipment to customers and addressing barriers to receiving or using equipment. By November 2021, DVR had re-opened offices and was operating on a hybrid basis. Resurgence of COVID, however, led to a temporary pause of in-person services.

In addition to reduced job opportunities, due to business shutdowns and layoffs, several factors affected customer interest and ability to engage in services. The potential danger of working (particularly in customer service occupations), increased family responsibilities, and unavailability of public transportation or support person were the main barriers.

Staff changes at DVR have presented both challenges and opportunities. The number of vacancies, new staff, and position changes have delayed implementation of some program plans, although new staff have also brought new skills and vision to the agency. New initiatives,



such as DVR's robust training program, EDAI initiatives, and development of a new case management system, have required dedication and redirection of staff time and resources but will have profound and long-lasting impacts on service quality.

***2. An evaluation of the extent to which the Supported Employment program goals described in the Supported Employment Supplement for the most recent program year were achieved. The evaluation must:***

***A. Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.***

**Supported Employment Evaluation: Goals, Strategies, & Barriers**

**Priorities & Evaluation**

DSHS/DVR's goal was to serve approximately 1,000 customers in supported employment and to achieve 600-700 successful rehabilitations annually. In PY 2020, 411 customers with supported employment needs had successful outcomes. Though less than predicted, the number is consistent with fewer customers obtaining jobs overall in PY 2020, which was about two-thirds the previous year's number.

**Effective Strategies**

- Implemented a model of service delivery in partnership with county developmental disability programs and community rehabilitation programs
- Actively marketed customers to local businesses
- Revised regional Basics of DVR Supported Employment Trainings to make it an online instructor-led webinar, designed as a basic introductory course and an advanced course for new DSHS/DVR staff and offered multiple times per year.
- Revised the Basics of DVR Supported Employment online course for new DSHS/DVR staff

**Evaluation**

- DSHS/DVR and DSHS/DDA renewed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2021 for jointly serving customers with developmental and intellectual disabilities
- Revised the regional foundational DVR Supported Employment trainings to be online, instructor-led webinars that can be offered multiple times per year for VR counselors and VR supervisors.
- Revised the 2019 online course for VR counselors and VR supervisors that is a prerequisite to attending the new online training on foundational DVR Supported Employment.

***B. Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities***

## Performance Barriers

- DSHS/DVR has not yet implemented the updated Memorandum of Understanding with DSHS/DDA but plan to begin cross-agency training in PY 22.
- DSHS/DVR training staff turnover and other training priorities have delayed implementation of the foundational supported employment trainings noted in Section A.

### ***3. The VR program's performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA.***

#### **DSHS/DVR Performance on WIOA Indicators**

DSHS/DVR has been providing data for WIOA performance measures to RSA through quarterly case service reports since 2017. The table below shows actual performance levels for PY 2019 and PY 2020 and targets established for PYs 2021-2023.

#### *Title IV Performance on WIOA Section 116 Performance Accountability Indicators\**

WIOA Measure	PY 19 Actual	PY 20 Actual	PY 21 Proposed Baseline/Target	PY 22 Proposed Target	PY 23 Proposed Target
Employment Two Quarters after Exit	15.6%	33.6%	45.0%	TBD	TBD
Employment Four Quarters after Exit	12.6%	15.1%	43.0%	TBD	TBD
Median Wage Two Quarters after Exit	\$3,440.39	\$4,177.88	\$4,000	TBD	TBD
Credential Attainment	13.7%	20.1%	25.0%	TBD	TBD
Measurable Skill Gains	40.0%	46.3%	44.0%	TBD	TBD
Business Engagement	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

*\*Combined indicators for DSHS/DVR and DSB.*

### ***How the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized.***

#### **Funded Innovation and Expansion Activities**

During PY 20, DSHS/DVR reserved funds for the Washington State Rehabilitation Council (\$231,075) and Washington State Independent Living Council (\$158,087). Additional innovation and expansion activities in PY 20 included the following:

- Continued support for WOIS (\$27,430) career exploration workshops, tools used by staff to help customers select suitable vocational goals.
- Contracted with the University of Washington (\$47,986) to provide training and technical assistance to field staff in assistive technology (AT) and to lend AT devices to staff and customers.

## Q. Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services.

Include the following:

- 1. The quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.***

Supported employment services are unduplicated services needed to support and maintain eligible customers with the most significant disabilities to retain their competitive employment. Supported employment services consist of:

1. Time-limited "ongoing" support services and other vocational rehabilitation services provided by DVR;
2. Extended services provided by the long-term service provider when the customer's performance is stabilized on the job and the services DVR provides have ended.

Time-limited support services are provided by DSHS/DVR under an IPE to assist customers eligible for supported employment to get a job and achieve stabilization on the job.

Supported employment services are provided according to DSHS/DVR's policies and procedures and in accordance with cooperative agreements developed between DSHS/DVR and State, public, or private organizations that fund and/or provide extended services following the termination of DVR time-limited services. Examples of extended services partners/ providers include, but are not limited to:

- County Developmental Disabilities;
- Mental Health agencies;
- Foundational Community Supports;
- Social Security Work Incentives;
- Trust fund; and
- Family
- Natural supports co-workers, employers

### **Supported Employment Partners & Agreements**

DSHS/DVR primarily provides supported employment services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and individuals with mental health disabilities. Of these two customer groups, individuals with developmental disabilities represent the majority of supported employment outcomes.

DSHS/DVR's success in serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities is based on a long-standing relationship with the DSHS/Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) is committed to funding extended services for all of its clients who achieve a supported employment outcome through DSHS/DVR. DSHS/DVR has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DDA signed in 2018 and renewed in 2021. The agreement describes criteria and process for the DSHS/DVR and DDA to provide seamless and consistent supported employment

services statewide to mutual customers. It formalizes the referral procedures, has assigned liaison counselors in each DSHS/DVR office, and coordinates services that contribute to the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

For individuals with behavioral health conditions served by the Health Care Authority (HCA) Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR), DSHS/DVR's supported employment partner for customers with behavioral health conditions, Foundational Community Supports (FCS) Supported Employment Program is helping to address the employment resource needs of individuals with behavioral health conditions. DSHS/DVR completed an Interlocal Agreement (ILA) with DBHR which provides a collaborative framework for both agencies to provide employment services to individuals with behavioral health conditions. The ILA identifies shared eligibility criteria and defines roles and responsibilities for DSHS/DVR's Supported Employment Program and for DBHR's FCS Supported Employment Program.

### **Supported Employment Goals & Title VI Funds**

DSHS/DVR created a goal to increase competitive integrated employment outcomes and supports for adults and youth with most significant disabilities receiving supported employment including those who are underserved.

DSHS/DVR estimates the Title VI Supported Employment Grant will fund an estimated 800 customers annually who receive supported employment services through Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs), resulting in 400-500 supported employment outcomes per year. At these levels, DSHS/DVR estimates serving approximately 3,200 supported employment IPEs and producing 1,800 supported employment outcomes during the remaining two year of this plan.

### **Supported Employment Services**

DSHS/DVR provides supported employment services primarily to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. DSHS/DVR and its partners continue to pursue innovative strategies to expand these services to other populations, as resources are often comparatively scarce.

The State of Washington Health Care Authority was approved for the Medicaid Transformation Demonstration Foundational Community Supports Supported Employment in 2017. The Medicaid Transformation Demonstration has been extended for another year, until December 31, 2022. FCS funds supported employment as a Medicaid service, expanding the availability of extended services to individuals who experience a wide array of significant disabilities.

Through continued collaboration, innovative approaches, and the use of natural supports, DSHS/DVR and its partners will be able to expand the availability, quality, and scope of extended services for all individuals who require supported employment.

## ***2. The timing of transition to extended services.***

DSHS/DVR customers receiving supported employment services transition from time-limited ongoing support services to extended services when stable, satisfactory job performance is achieved. The timeframe for this transition is within 24 months of customers beginning

employment, unless a longer timeframe has been specified in the IPE. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act amends the Rehabilitation Act to permit DSHS/DVR to fund extended services for youth with the most significant disabilities for a period not to exceed four years or until age 25, whichever happens first. DSHS/DVR will fund extended services for youth with the most significant disabilities on a case-by-case basis.

**DVR Office Map**

This map displays the locations of DVR offices across Washington State, categorized into three regions:

- Region 1 (Red Stars):** Includes offices in Republic, Colville, Newp, Spokane, Wenatchee, Ellensburg, Moses Lake, Yakima, Toppenish, Sunnyside, Kennewick, Walla Walla, Clarkston, Pullman, Colfax, Adams, Lincoln, Ferry, Pend Oreille, Okanogan, and Benton.
- Region 2 (Blue Stars):** Includes offices in Bellingham, Whatcom WS, Mount Vernon, Arlington, Everett, Lynnwood, Seattle North, Seattle Central, Redmond WS, Bellevue, SeaTac, King, Kent, Snohomish, and Chelan.
- Region 3 (Purple Stars):** Includes offices in Port Angeles, Port Townsend, Silverdale, Mason, Shelton, Aberdeen, Tumwater, Thurston, Puyallup, Tacoma, Pierce, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Clallam, South Bend, Centralia, Lewis, Pacific, Wahkiakum, Kelso, Cowlitz, Vancouver, Clark, Skamania, Klickitat, Grant, Douglas, Kittitas, and Yakima.

**Key:** Region 1, Region 2, Region 3

Key: Region 1, Region 2, Region 3

## **WSRC Commonly Used Acronyms**

ACS: American Community Survey (from the Census Bureau)

ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act

AJC: American Job Center

ALTSA: Aging and Long Term Support Administration

ASL: American Sign Language

AT: Assistive Technology

ATAP: Assistive Technology & Assessment Practitioner

BASC: Barriers and Accessibility Solutions Committee

BHA: Behavioral Health Administration

BLS: Bureau of Labor Statistics (Census of Employment and Wages)

BMMP: Business Management Modernization Project

CAP: Client Assistance Program

CARF: Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities

CART: Computer-assisted real-time Translation

CCER: Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation

CFR: Code of Federal Regulations

CIL: Center for Independent Living

CMS: Case Management System

CRP: Community Rehabilitation Provider

CP: Cerebral Palsy

CRC: Certified Rehabilitation Counselor

CSNA: Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment

DD: Developmental Disability

DDA: Developmental Disability Administration

DES: Department of Enterprise Services

DSB: Department of Services for the Blind

DSE or DSU: Designated State Entity or Designated State Unit

DVR: Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

EDI: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

ESD: Educational Service District, also, Employment Security Department

FCS: Functional Community Supports

FFY: Federal Fiscal Year

ID: Intellectual Disability

IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IEP: Individual Education Plan

IL: Independent Living

IRI: Institute on Rehabilitation Issues

JLARC: Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (Report on Employment and Community Inclusion Services for People with Developmental Disabilities)

LRE: Least Restrictive Environment

LTS: Long Term Support

MH: Mental Health

MOU: Memorandum of Understanding

OFM: Office of Financial Management

OJT: On-the-job Training

OSERS: Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services

OOS: Order of Selection

One-Stop: WorkSource Center

OSPI: Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

PAVE: Partnership for Actions Voices for Empowerment (Parent Advocacy)

RCW: Revised Code of Washington

RDA: Research and Data Analysis (research division of DSHS)

Region 10: Federal Region of Washington, per RSA

RFP/RFQ: Request for Proposal/Qualifications

RSA: Rehabilitation Services Administration

SILC: State Independent Living Council

SIPP: Survey of Income and Program Participation (Census Bureau)

SPIL: State Plan for independent living

SME: Subject Matter Expert

SSA: Social Security Administration

SSDI: Social Security Disability Insurance

SSI: Supplemental Security Income

TAP: Talent and Prosperity for All Plan

TBI: Traumatic Brain Injury

TSAT: Transition Self-Assessment Tool

Title 4: of WIOA is the Rehabilitation Act,

Title 1: under Title 4, which authorizes DVR services and funds

Section 105 of Title 1: authorizes State Rehabilitation Councils

UI: Unemployment Insurance

VR: Vocational Rehabilitation

VRC: Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor



WAC – Washington Administrative Code  
WATAP: Washington Technical Assistance Program  
WIOA: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act  
WISE: Washington Initiative for Supported Employment  
WOTC: Work Opportunity Tax Credit  
WTECB: Workforce Training, Education, and Coordination Board  
WSRC: Washington State Rehabilitation Council  
WDC: Workforce Development Council  
WOTC: Work Opportunity Tax Credit

#### **WA DVR**

AFP: Authorization for Purchase  
CBA: Community Based Assessment  
JD: Job Development  
ELT: Executive Leadership Team  
IPE: Individual Plan for Employment  
IRWE: Impairment Related Work Expense  
ITS: Intensive Training Services  
MOU: Memorandum of Understanding  
MSD: Most Significantly Disabled  
NEO: New Employee Orientation  
Pass Plan: Plan to achieve self-support  
Pre-ETS: Pre-Employment Services  
PES: Post-Employment Services  
PHI: Protected Health Information  
RA: Regional Administrator or Re  
RCD – Rehab Counselors for the Deaf  
**Region 1:** East of the Cascades  
**Region 2:** King County north  
**Region 3:** Pierce County south and all of the peninsula  
ROI: Release of Information  
RT: Rehabilitation Tech  
SDOP: Service Delivery Outcome Plan  
SDOR: Service Delivery Outcome Report  
SE: Supported Employment  
SO: State Office – DVR Headquarters  
SOP: Standard Operating Procedure  
STARS: DVRs customer database  
TWE: Trial Work Experience  
YSP: Youth Services Program

121 Program: Tribal Rehabilitation Program (Federal designation)  
701 Program: Tribal Rehabilitation Program (WA State designation)