

Partners in Opportunity



Vermont State Rehabilitation Council
Annual Report 2014

State Rehabilitation Councils (SRCs)

Joelle Brouner, Executive Director of the Washington State Rehabilitation Council; used by permission.

State Rehabilitation Councils were born out of the tradition of effective advocacy by people with disabilities committed to the success of the publicly-funded Vocational Rehabilitation program. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was the first disability civil rights law to be enacted in the United States. The victory was marred when the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) delayed endorsement of the regulations needed to implement the law.

By April of 1977, frustration mounted and disability-rights advocates took direct action by leading sit-ins in Washington, D.C., New York, and San Francisco to pressure HEW to issue the regulations. While the protests in Washington and New York were short-lived, advocates in San Francisco persisted. They occupied

the offices of HEW for four weeks. As a consequence, Joseph Califano, the secretary of HEW, endorsed the regulations. The Rehabilitation Act is the federal law that establishes the publicly-funded Vocational Rehabilitation Program as we know it today.

The advocacy did not end in 1977. Since that time disability-rights advocates have continued work in service of a system that affords opportunities for customers of the Vocational Rehabilitation program to have more choices on their journeys toward employment. During the reauthorization process of the Rehabilitation Act in 1993, advocates built on their tradition of effectiveness by persuading Congress to create State Rehabilitation Councils (under Title I, section 105) as a mechanism to support people with disabilities receiving vocational rehabilitation services to take an active role in shaping the services they receive.

Table of Contents

Letters

4

From the Chair of the Vermont State Rehabilitation Council
From the Director of the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

The Year in Review—Summary SRC Committee Reports

6

Policy and Procedures Committee
Advocacy, Outreach and Education Committee
Performance Review Committee

Vermont State Rehabilitation Council Members, 2014

12

VR's Contribution to Vermonters and Their Communities

14

Creating Opportunity, Creating Jobs
Resources for Growth, for our Future

The Vermont State Rehabilitation Council

Vermont's State Rehabilitation Council advocates for consumer-directed and effective vocational services and for the creation of resources and services that will result in equal opportunities for Vermonters with disabilities.

Under its mandate in the Rehabilitation Act, it "shall review, analyze and advise the designated state unit regarding the performance of the responsibilities of the unit...particularly responsibilities relating to...eligibility (including order of selection); extent, scope and effectiveness

of services provided; and functions performed by state agencies that affect or that potentially affect the ability of individuals with disabilities in achieving rehabilitation goals..."

To meet its mission, the Council meets on a bimonthly basis five times a year. (There are no meetings in July or August.) SRC committees meet between full Council meetings to help conduct Council business.

www.vtsrc.org

From the Chair of the Vermont State Rehabilitation Council



During 2014, the SRC Steering Committee conscientiously accomplished its charged task of considering and deciding upon necessary SRC business between meetings of the full Council. I have been given the honor of being the Chairperson of the SRC and the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee oversees the function of the SRC by setting agendas for the full Council meetings which take place on alternative months – considering topics most pertinent and timely, as well as those necessary.

The Performance Review, Policy and Procedures, and Advocacy, Outreach and Education committees individually create reports describing in detail the efforts and successes each.

- **Policy & Procedures Committee** – Chair – Kerry White
- **Advocacy, Outreach & Education Committee** – Chair – Sarah Launderville
- **Performance Review Committee** – Chair – Adam Leonard

The Steering Committee, with Coordinator Rebekah Stephens taking the initiative, developed and pursued ways to recruit new Council members, taking into account prescribed positions, as well as the skills and diversity to craft the best

possible mix of members. As a result, new members have joined the SRC in recent weeks — Sam Liss and Christopher Loso.

The transition and integration of the Assistive Technology (AT) Council within the general SRC was successfully completed. It has also experienced some growing pains. But it is coming along.

Other highlights from the 2014 year are:

- Needs Assessment was completed in February
- Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council presented for the SRC in April
- Reach Up update in April
- Review of Consumer Satisfaction Survey Focus Groups results in June
- Reviewed and approved State Plan and discussed goals and priorities and planned actions in June
- Benefits Counselors presented to SRC in October
- Said goodbye to Allen (Chip) Evans

The SRC in partnership with DVR has completed a successful year. The 2014 year promises to continue to be filled with many opportunities to continue the trend of innovation and collaboration.

*Michele Hubert, Chair
Vermont State Rehabilitation Council*



From the Director of the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation



VocRehab Vermont assisted 1873 people to go to work during the last federal fiscal year, thanks to our very committed staff and the staff of the Vermont Association of Business, Industry and Rehabilitation.

In 2010, we launched Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS). CWS established Business Account Managers (BAMs) in each of our 12 district locations. The BAMs coordinate employer outreach in their districts and develop and sustain employer relationships to foster job opportunities for VR consumers. These staff use Salesforce, a customer relations management software program, to manage and share employer information and job leads with all employment staff. As CWS enters its fifth year, the employment teams are fully operational and the BAMs have built ongoing relationships with thousands of local employers. Our employment outcomes continue to climb.

After a long journey to find an automated, integrated case management system that meets our needs, we have committed to the purchase and roll out of the AWARE system within 18 months. We have spoken with other state VR agencies that use AWARE and find they are very pleased with the system. We believe this approach to caseload and case management will improve our service delivery system, free up counselor time for direct service work and allow us to do comprehensive data analysis leading to improved outcomes.

As everyone in the rehabilitation world knows, the US Congress reauthorized the Rehabilitation Act within the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) last year. Within the Rehabilitation Act,

Pre-Employment Transition Services for in-school students with IEPs or 504 plans were added as a required VR service. We are mandated to spend 15% of our federal award on these services. We quickly recognized that to provide these services and expend the resources would require major changes in practice.

VR Senior Managers have developed a six point plan, ending some programs and redirecting resources to in-school students. We are in the process of a massive caseload reassignment process to realign counselor capacity to in-school youth, young adults and adults. While change is difficult, we realize that better preparing youth to enter post-secondary education and training or go to work is the right thing to do and will improve the outcomes of those youth over time. We are full speed ahead with our transition. The Vermont Agency of Education and local special educators are very excited about having new resources and committed to partnering with us.

WIOA will require us to join with the Vermont Department of Labor and the Agency of Education to write a Unified Plan. We will be developing “common measures” of program performance. WIOA also requires employer outreach and support and we think our work in CWS has us way ahead in this arena.

We continue our strong alliance with the State Rehabilitation Council. We will look to them for support and guidance as we implement the new provisions in WIOA.

*Diane P. Dalmasse, Director
Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation*

The Year in Review — Summary SRC Committee Reports

Policy and Procedures Committee

Kerry White, Chair

The Policy and Procedures Committee reviews and revises the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) policies on a three-year cycle; this allows work on other tasks including spending guidelines and a periodic review of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) By-Laws.

The Policy and Procedure Committee reviewed the following chapters during 2014:

- Chapter 306 Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Services (*final draft was reviewed and accepted in January 2014*)
- Chapter 307 School to Work Transition
- Chapter 308 Self Employment
- Chapter 309 Services to Family Members
- Chapter 310 Supported Employment
- Chapter 311 Training
- Chapter 104 Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (*new*)
- Chapter 107 Ticket to Work
- Chapter 202 Eligibility
- Chapter 203 Individualized Plan for Employment
- Chapter 401 Authorization and Approval of Expenditures (*new*)
- Chapter 402 Expenditures in Status (*new*)

The Policy and Procedure Committee worked on proposed guidance for Chapter 307, “School to Work Transition”. The Committee decided that new language was not needed at this time. The Committee also discussed proposed guidance for Chapter 311, “Training”. Proposed guidance was suggested for an outline of what DVR will or will not fiscally support. The Committee agreed that this language did not need to be added.

The Policy and Procedure Committee spent a considerable amount of time discussing chapter 307. The Committee discussed whether language should be added to the chapter about paid services for in-school youth specifically, that the search for comparable services and benefits should not slow the process of providing services to the individual. The Committee decided that the comparable services and benefits information is fully explained in chapter 103, therefore the Committee agreed that language could be added to chapter 307 to refer the reader to chapter 103.

During the Committees’ discussion of chapter 308, “Self-Employment”, Committee members suggested that the chapter should be reviewed and compared to the rest of the manual for consistency with the term used to identify the individual who is utilizing DVR services.

Two sections of chapter 308 were removed because they are out of date:

- Language identifying assessment tools
- The business plan guidance

Language was added to chapter 308, “Self-Employment”, that requires the business plan to be reviewed and approved by DVR before there is any commitment of funds to the plan. In addition, the following language was proposed: “bookkeeping is a key element of running a small business and the responsibility of the consumer, including expenses, income, inventory records, taxes and payroll. It is important that the consumer contemplating self-employment have a basic understanding of bookkeeping principles and either the skills to keep necessary records or the resources to hire a bookkeeping service”.



Chapter 104, “Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired” is a newly drafted chapter. DVR believes that individuals receiving services from DVR who are also visually impaired may benefit from working with both DVR and the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI). The Committee engaged in a discussion about whether this could cause confusion for the individual and produce possible conflicts about which agency would be responsible for services needed. It was agreed that language would be added to the policy that the decision to work with both agencies is the choice of the individual receiving services, not a requirement of DVR or DBVI.

Chapter 107, “Ticket to Work” was discussed at length. It is a federally mandated program that names DVR as the Employment Network in Vermont and Tickets are assigned to DVR. The Chapter provides information about the program. DVR will ensure that individuals are provided with sections of this chapter that describes the Ticket to Work Program if they have questions. The contact information for the Client Assistance Program will be added to this section. The sections that will be distributed to individuals receiving services will be checked for language readability.

Chapter 401, “Authorization and Approval of Expenditures”, is a new chapter. DVR has drafted the chapter in response to DVR personnel issues. The Chapter outlines who has the authority to authorize the expenditure of funds. There was not a lot of discussion about the chapter as it was very factual.

Chapter 402, “Expenditures in Status”, is a new chapter. The intention of this chapter is to provide some guidance around how much money should be spent at each stage of case status. There is some concern that the guideline amounts are low. The spirit of the Rehabilitation Act is to provide rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities in a manner that best meets the needs of the individual. Putting a guideline on expenditures could potentially produce a culture of limiting expenditures. DVR disagrees and believes that this guideline only makes the counselors aware of what they are spending and helps train counselors to make good fiscal decisions when working with individuals.

The Policy and Procedure Committee seeks to foster policies and procedures that will provide successful attainment and retention of employment for individuals with disabilities who seek assistance from DVR. The Committee has open candid discussions about the policies and procedures and strives to produce high quality material for use by DVR staff and the individuals seeking their assistance. As Chair of the Policies and Procedures Committee, I would like to thank DVR and the Committee members for their dedication and hard work. It is a pleasure working with each of you.

Advocacy, Outreach and Education Committee

Sarah Launderville, Chair

The Advocacy, Outreach and Education committee met quarterly in FY 2014.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was the biggest change that the AOE committee discussed this past year and the implications of the law as we move forward. There were many concerns from VocRehab regarding the proposed changes including a potential move from the Rehabilitation Services Administration to the federal Department of Labor. AOE members had concerns about potential future impact of such a move. Although not part of the proposal, AOE members voiced concerns that an unintended consequence may be moving

the state VocRehab under the state Department of Labor. VocRehab Vermont showed great support for the move of the Independent Living Centers and State Independent Living Council to the federal Administration on Community Living.

Through outreach work, Representative Ann Pugh of the House Committee of Human Services dedicated a couple of hours in committee on a discussion about employment and people who have psychiatric disabilities. AOE Chair, Sarah Launderville testified on behalf of the committee regarding the importance of employment opportunities, and connection of supportive services as



people with disabilities seek employment. The committee heard from witnesses that ranged from a VR Consumer to the Vermont Department of Mental Health. This was an educational opportunity with hopes that legislators have a stronger understanding of some of the holes in programming and recommendations for better employment outcomes in the future.

The AOE committee had conversations about other issue areas including Medicaid for Working People with Disabilities (MWPD), housing, transportation, corrections and veteran issues and the connection to employment.

In FY 2015 the AOE committee has set goals that include

- ADA education
- Respectful language education
- Continued WIOA discussion
- Continued MWPD work
- Collaborative work between the Governors Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities, Vermont SILC and the Vermont SRC
- Youth transition
- School to prison pipeline, and corrections connection to employment barriers
- State budget

Performance Review Committee

Adam Leonard, Chair

The Vermont State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Performance Review (PR) Committee is responsible for reviewing, analyzing and advising the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) on its performance in fulfilling its mission and responsibilities. To that end the PR Committee focused its efforts this year in three distinct areas: examining the State Needs Assessment, examining DVR's training programs, and exploring how DVR handles cases for individuals with mental health disabilities.

In December of 2013 the Committee met to review the initial outline of the Needs Assessment. Information from the RSA Standards and Indicators, Census data, and the 2013 Consumer Satisfaction Survey were reviewed. The committee asked DVR to examine some specific need areas highlighted in this data. The committee was pleased to see its recommendations reviewed and addressed in the final Needs Assessment, which was brought before both the committee and full SRC in April of 2014 and approved.

The final Needs Assessment highlighted among other things, opportunities to: increase attention to the needs of Vermont's mature workers, improve community rehabilitation programs, and respond to the needs of the increasing number of consumers with substance abuse issues.

The PR Committee also spent substantial time discussing and reviewing DVR's training programs. This included a very robust overview of the programs from Alicia Wein, VR Training and Staff Development Coordinator. The committee was particularly interested in learning about the Motivational Interviewing training that was rolled out to all VR staff. It seems this training has been very beneficial and continues to enhance the VR staff members' ability to build strong connections with their clients. The committee looks forward to an update on the training in early 2015.



Finally a very meaningful panel discussion was held in June 2014 with three VR General Counselors on the topic of consumers with mental health related disabilities. The panel highlighted both successes and challenges they have had in finding employment for these individuals. The committee identified areas for further exploration including expanding wrap around services, the effect of criminal records on securing employment, and potential needs for more consistency around the coding and recording of mental health disabilities within the VR database.

The committee is extremely grateful for all the VR staff members who spent time with us this year and so pleased to learn about the great work being done around training and supporting our consumers with mental health disabilities. I personally would like to thank the members of the PR committee for their invaluable insight and thoughtful dedication to the committee's goals. It has been a true pleasure to serve as chair of the PR Committee this year.

Vermont State Rehabilitation Council Members, 2014

Steering Committee

Michele Hubert, SRC *Chair*

Kerry White, Policy & Procedures
Committee *Chair*

Adam Leonard, Performance Review
Committee *Chair*

Sarah Launderville, Advocacy, Outreach
and Education Committee *Chair*

Diane Dalmasse, Division of Vocational
Rehabilitation *Director*

Policy & Procedures Committee

Kerry White, *Chair*

Michele Hubert

Sam Liss

P. Neil Meier

Leslie Mitchell

Patti Shane

James Smith

April Tuck

Advocacy, Outreach and Education Committee

Sarah Launderville, *Chair*

Diane Dalmasse

Sam Liss

Leslie Mitchell

Whitney Nichols

Patti Shane

Anthony Williams, Jr.

Performance Review Committee

Adam Leonard, *Chair*

Samantha Brennan

Alaina Clements

Christopher Loso

Leslie Mitchell

Whitney Nichols

James Smith

Ellen Vaut

Anthony Williams, Jr.

List In Alphabetical Order

Samantha Brennan

Alaina Clements

Diane Dalmasse

Michele Hubert

Sarah Launderville

Adam Leonard

Sam Liss

Christopher Loso

P. Neil Meier

Leslie Mitchell

Whitney Nichols

Patti Shane

James Smith

April Tuck

Ellen Vaut

Kerry White

Anthony E. Williams, Jr.



VR's Contribution to Vermonters and Their Communities

Creating Opportunity, Creating Jobs

VocRehab Vermont's core mission is to realize human potential by putting meaningful work within reach of Vermonters with significant disabilities.

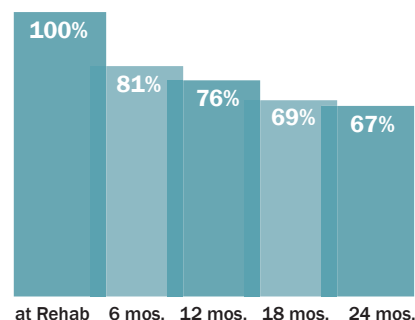
We help VR consumers figure out what work will work for them through careful assessment, counseling and guidance from our expert staff.

We capitalize on our extensive networks in the employer community to create job opportunities

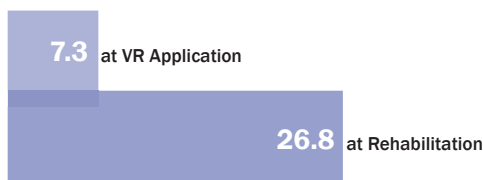
and make good placements that match employer needs with jobseeker skills, and help employers retain staff with disabilities.

We use our financial resources within Vermont communities to support our consumers as they transition to stable employment, and our employers as they try out new workers.

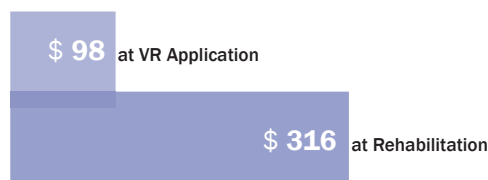
Employment Retention Rate, VR Consumers Closed Successfully FFY 2009-2011



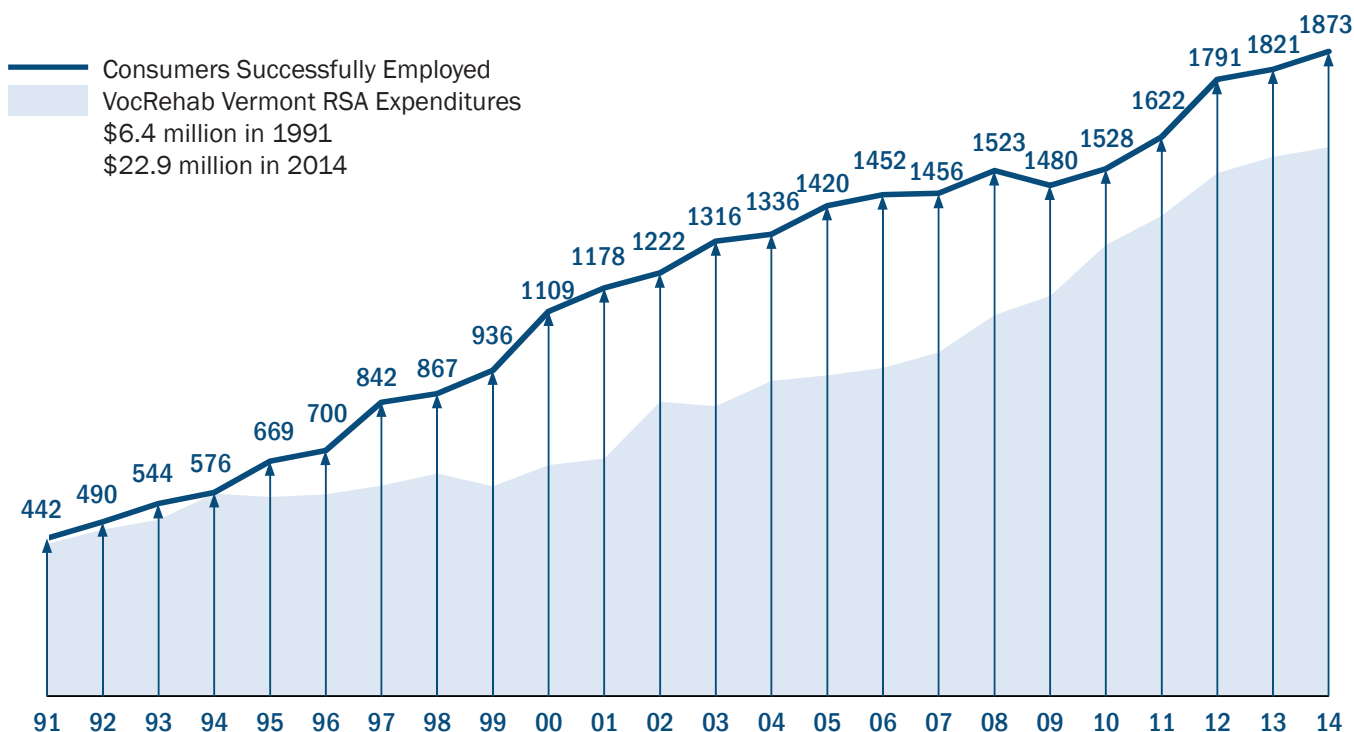
Change in Average Hours Worked Per Week FFY 2014



Change in Average Weekly Earnings FFY 2014



VR Consumers Successfully Employed & VocRehab Vermont RSA Expenditures — FFY 1991-2014



Resources for Growth, for our Future

VocRehab Vermont is funded primarily by the Rehabilitation Services Administration in the U.S. Department of Education. About 80% of our funding is federal money which goes into the local economies of Vermont towns—to local stores to purchase work tools and clothing; to health care providers and medical equipment suppliers; to community colleges and technical training programs; to transportation providers; and to Vermonters in community agencies who provide support services for workers with disabilities.

Vermont's rankings

RSA ranks public VR agencies on their performance each year. Our record:

New VR applicants per million state population—we're doing a great job of reaching out to as many Vermonters as possible.

in New England: 1; in the nation: 1

VR employment outcomes per million state population—we're effective in getting Vermonters in for VR services and on to successful employment.

in New England: 1; in the nation: 1

Average expenditure per employment outcome—we get results without spending more than we need to, leaving resources for others.

in New England: 1; in the nation: 4

Ticket participation rate—we help many SSA beneficiaries return to work and actively claim reimbursement from SSA for these services. As a result, we bring more federal money into the State to serve Vermonters with disabilities.

in New England: 1; in the nation: 1

Motivational Interviewing Initiative

Beginning in January 2014, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) began training all staff in the evidenced based practice of Motivational Interviewing (MI).

Motivational Interviewing is a way of practice that evolved in the substance abuse treatment field and is now growing nationally in the fields of behavioral health and vocational rehabilitation. It is effective in helping people develop their own motivation for making a desired change using a conversational counseling approach based on the principles of partnership, acceptance, compassion and evocation.

These underlying principles are complemented by a set of micro-skills that are used strategically and intentionally to assist people in discovering what they believe and most want to achieve. Direct service staff and supervisors received the most comprehensive training in an effort to improve the customer and staff experience of the vocational rehabilitation process.

Research on Motivational Interviewing shows an audio-recording analysis and sustainability plan are necessary to successfully integrate the approach into an organization. Initial training and audio-recordings have been completed with all targeted staff groups. VR is now moving into the sustainability phase.



The Vermont State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is appointed by the Governor. We seek new members who have a wide range of interests and talents to help improve the services offered by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to the citizens of Vermont with disabilities. If you are interested in applying to become a member of the SRC, please contact Rebekah Stephens, Coordinator.

Rebekah Stephens, Coordinator
Vermont State Rehabilitation Council
20 Dawn Meadow Lane, Pittsford, VT 05763
rebekahstephens@comcast.net
(802) 483-9431

