

Vocational Rehabilitation: The Roadmap to Employment Success

Virginia State Rehabilitation Council
2007 Annual Report

Employment &
Independence
Ahead





Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services

8004 Franklin Farms Drive
Richmond, VA 23229
1-800-552-5019 (voice)
1-800-464-9950 (TTY)
www.vadrs.org

Commissioner

James A. Rothrock

Our Mission

In partnership with people with disabilities and their families, the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services collaborates with the public and private sectors to provide and advocate for the highest quality services that empower individuals with disabilities to maximize their employment, independence and full inclusion into society.

Our Vision

We envision a Virginia where all people with disabilities may reach their goal of independence, employment and full inclusion in society. DRS is committed to dedicating all of its resources to realize this vision for Virginians with disabilities.

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Message from SRC Chair Danny DeBoer



It is my pleasure to share with you the 2007 Annual Report of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)—a council comprised of dedicated Virginians who collaborate with, advise, and advocate for the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS). This report informs Virginia citizens and federal and state officials about the good work and successes of DRS’ Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program.

This year’s report, titled “Vocational Rehabilitation: The Roadmap to Employment Success,” is named after a renewed approach to VR adopted by the agency this year—an approach wholeheartedly embraced and supported by the SRC. The “Roadmap to Success” philosophy reminds VR counselors to develop and follow an individualized, goal-oriented “roadmap” for each client that leads to an employment “destination.” We are pleased to report that in Virginia, a record number of successful employment outcomes were achieved in 2007.

On behalf of the members of the SRC, it is my hope that you are inspired by the successes highlighted in this report and will continue to support Virginia’s VR program, which plays a vital role in helping Virginians with disabilities become employed and live independently in their communities.

Message from DRS Commissioner Jim Rothrock



DRS’ VR program had a banner year in 2007. Over 24,000 clients were served, and at the close of Federal Fiscal Year 2007, 4,278 had achieved an employment outcome—the largest number in the last two decades. The year also ended with the rehabilitation rate at a record high—60.1% of consumers exited the VR with a stable job. Our VR staff is to be commended for these extraordinary accomplishments. On July 1, 2007, Governor Kaine and the Virginia General Assembly supported VR with a \$500,000 appropriation. The Governor’s and legislators’ wisdom in making this investment was underscored by the agency’s historic employment accomplishments.

The year also marked the second annual Disability Employment Champion Awards, co-hosted by DRS and Dominion Resources, Inc. (see page 4). This year’s event not only recognized nine more businesses and organizations who “championed” the employment of people with disabilities, it also served as a venue for the unveiling of Governor Kaine’s Executive Directive 8, which directs all executive branch agencies, including boards and commissions, to expand existing efforts for recruiting, hiring, accommodating and advancing qualified people with disabilities for positions available in state government.

A great deal was accomplished in 2007 and throughout this year, the SRC consistently demonstrated its support of DRS and its VR program. DRS and the council work as partners in strengthening the effectiveness of the agency’s many programs and services. The council members and their leadership are to be commended for their outstanding contributions.

State Rehabilitation Council Members

Chester Avery
Alexandria

Karen Baugh
Maryland

Charles Benagh
Alexandria

Sandra Cook
Petersburg

Daniel DeBoer
Incoming Chair
Richmond

Donna Kay Graff
Shenandoah

William C. Hall
Richmond

Kenneth Holloway
Virginia Beach

Kathleen Maybee
Richmond

Marianne Moore
Richmond

Dana P. Nelson
Mechanicsville

Hiawatha Nicely
Out-Going Chair
Daleville

Michael Organ
Staunton

Jim Rothrock
Commissioner
Richmond

Philip Sieck
Staunton

Samuel Simon
McLean

Cherie Rei Takemoto
Arlington

Roy Ward
Richmond

Florence Watt
Ashland

SRC Responsibilities

The SRC was established in 1992 to provide advice to and work in partnership with DRS to enhance services to the agency's many programs, including VR. The SRC's federally and state mandated responsibilities include:

- Ensuring the effective delivery of services to eligible Virginians with disabilities, and reviewing and analyzing the performance of the VR program.
- Working in partnership with DRS to set goals and priorities, report on program effectiveness, provide advice on policies, measure consumer satisfaction, and assess the needs of Virginians with disabilities.
- Providing an annual report to the Governor and the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration on the status of the VR program.
- Publicizing DRS' policies and programs; advising public officials on the delivery of public services and the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities; advising on fiscal policies, grants, contracts, regulations, budgets, and requests for appropriations.

SRC Membership

SRC members are appointed by the Governor. The membership reflects a representation of individuals with disabilities and disability advocacy groups, current and former VR consumers, people in business and industry, education, and Employment Services Organizations. Members serve on the Virginia Workforce Council, the Statewide Independent Living Council, and the Virginia Assistive Technology System Advisory Council.

In 2007, the SRC met five times with a one-day planning retreat held in November at the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center. Following the March meeting, members of the SRC attended the 2007 Transition Forum to learn more about transition services and interact with transition professionals and students and their family members.



Seated:
Florence Watt,
Sandra Cook,
Charles Benagh,
Dana Nelson;
Second Row:
Roy Ward,
Kathleen Maybee,
Karen Baugh,
Donna Kay Graff,
Cherie Takemoto,
Michael Organ;
Back Row:
Marianne Moore,
Danny DeBoer,
Samuel Simon,
Chester Avery,
Kenneth Holloway,
Philip Sieck;
Not Pictured:
William Hall,
Hiawatha Nicely,
James Rothrock

SRC 2007 Activities

- Successfully advocated with the Governor and the Virginia General Assembly for increased Medicaid waiver slots and additional state funding for the VR program, brain injury services, and Centers for Independent Living.
- Adopted bylaws to guide the operations of the SRC.
- Created an annual SRC Chairperson Award to recognize members of the SRC for their distinguished service to the SRC and/or their leadership activities at the national, state or local level that enhance the independence and employment of individuals with disabilities (see below).
- Created an Employee Leadership Recognition Award to recognize selected VR staff for their exceptional performance and their leadership in activities in the community. This annual award is named after Roy J. Ward, a long time leader in the disability community, who served as the former Chair of the DRS Board and is a current member of the SRC.
- Provided recommendations and input into the State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment.
- Participated in the State Plan public hearings that were co-sponsored by DRS and the Fairfax Disability Services Board, the Virginia Brain Injury Council, the Virginia Interagency Transition Council and the Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities.
- Participated in the evaluation and reappointment of three hearing officers for the VR consumer appeals process.
- Attended the spring conference of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, held in Bethesda, Maryland.
- Reviewed the results of the 2006 VR consumer satisfaction survey.
- Reviewed the results of the triennial needs assessment of Virginians with disabilities.



State Rehabilitation Council Chairperson Award Recipients —
Front Row: Dana Nelson; Back Row: Roy Ward, Chester Avery, Sam Simon

2007 Champions of Disability Employment Awards

In commemoration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, DRS and Dominion Resources, Inc., co-hosted the agency's second annual *Disability Employment Champions Awards* on October 23rd. The statewide event was the culmination of a series of nearly two dozen local DRS events held throughout the Commonwealth during October to honor individuals and organizations in public, private, and non-profit sectors that have helped further DRS's mission to empower individuals with disabilities to maximize their employment, independence and full inclusion into society.

The event also served as a venue for the unveiling of Governor Tim Kaine's Executive Directive 8, which directs all executive branch agencies, including boards and commissions, to expand existing efforts to increase employment of people with disabilities in state government. Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Resources Gail Jaspén delivered the Executive Directive to an audience of about 150, which consisted of leaders in business and non-profit, state agency heads, members of the State Rehabilitation Council, and key DRS employees who have worked closely with the award winners.

The following nine Virginia organizations were recognized for "championing" the employment of Virginians with disabilities:

- **Omni Richmond Hotel**
- **Food Lion**
- **Booz Allen Hamilton**
- **City of Waynesboro**
- **Goodwill of Central Virginia**
- **Thomas Bogart of Bogart Custom Carpets**
- **Virginia Departments of Social Services, Health & Game and Inland Fisheries**



2007 Champion Awardees: (left to right) Pete Sams, Omni Richmond Hotel; Greg Coleman, Food Lion; Thomas Bogart, Bogart Custom Carpets; Christina Delzingaro, Goodwill; Janet Rainey, Virginia Department of Health; Derek Rogers, Goodwill; Anthony Conyers, Virginia Department of Social Services; Jim Fitzgerald, City of Waynesboro; and Jim Rothrock, DRS (front); Not pictured: Bob Rudney, Booz Allen Hamilton, and Ray Davis, Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

Bill Hall, Dominion Resources, Inc.'s Vice President of External Affairs and Corporate Communications and former State Rehabilitation Council member, made remarks; Bernie Henderson, Senior Deputy Secretary for the Commonwealth delivered a moving invocation; and Jim Rothrock, DRS Commissioner, gave a compelling address and presented the awards. The event's Master of Ceremonies was Garth Larcen, owner of Richmond's nationally recognized Positive Vibe Café, a non-profit organization that trains and employs people with disabilities in food service. For entertainment, Positive Vibe Café employee Solomon Miles joined local recording artist Susan Greenbaum to sing "Walk in These Shoes," which Greenbaum wrote and dedicated to people with disabilities looking for employment.

Nearly everyone who spoke, including the awardees, emphasized the message that hiring qualified people with disabilities makes good business sense, and is a win-win situation for everyone.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program: 2007 Outcomes

Federal Fiscal Year 2007 Highlights

- 24,504 consumers with disabilities were served, a 3.3% increase over last year.
- 11,151 new referrals were received and 10,909 new applications were taken.
- 7,254 consumers developed Individualized Plans for Employment, a 1.3% increase over last year.
- 4,278 consumers were successfully employed after receiving VR services, a 9.6% increase over last year.
- 99% of these consumers became employed in a competitive job.
- The average hourly wage for those successfully employed at case closure and earning at least \$5.15 an hour was \$9.94.
- The rehabilitation rate increased from 56.7% to 60.1%. Employment is a key outcome and can be measured by the rehabilitation rate. This rate is defined as the number of clients who left the VR program with an employment outcome during the fiscal year compared to the total number of clients who received services and left the program during the same fiscal year.

The achievements occurred even though DRS was in Order of Selection, meaning that new applicants without significant disabilities were placed on a waiting list for services. As of September 28, 2007, 512 consumers were on the waiting list.

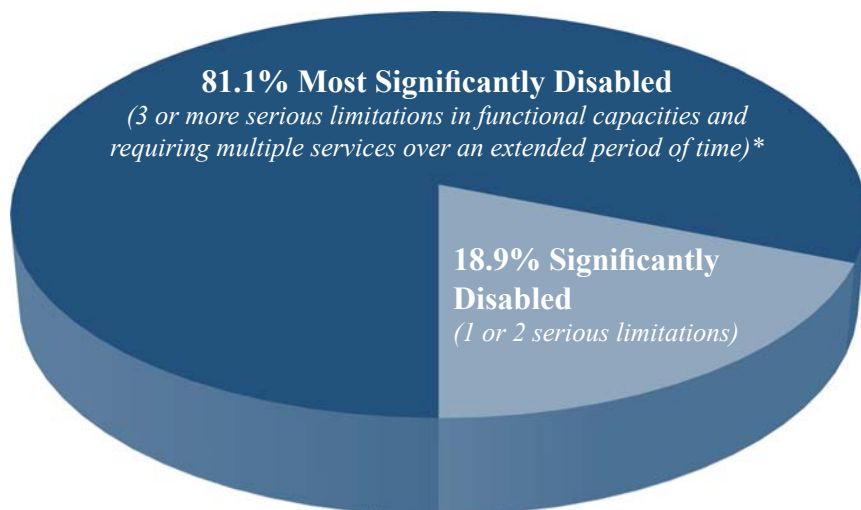
Who We Served in Federal Fiscal Year 2007

Gender:

- **54.1% male**
- **45.9% female**

Race:

- **58.7% Caucasian**
- **37.0% African American**
- **2.1% Hispanic**
- **1.5% Asian**
- **0.7% Other**



*Functional capacities include mobility, self-direction, self-care, interpersonal skills, communication, work tolerance, and work skills.

Disability Groups Served

Primary Impairment	Percent
Cognitive or other mental impairment	48.5%
Psychosocial impairment	27.4%
Orthopedic impairment	11.9%
Respiratory or physical debilitation or other physical impairment	6.8%
Deafness/hearing impairment	4.4%
Communication expressive/receptive impairment	0.6%
Blindness/other visual impairment	0.5%

Services Purchased

Services	Dollars	Percent
Supported Employment	\$9,066,872.84	50.3%
Other Services	\$1,872,291.17	10.4%
Academic Training	\$1,753,694.13	9.7%
Work Adjustment	\$1,071,146.39	5.9%
Diagnostics	\$1,070,950.39	5.9%
Adaptive Technology	\$939,961.29	5.2%
Other Training	\$939,610.76	5.2%
Transportation	\$703,754.23	3.9%
Physical Restoration/Medicine	\$613,759.57	3.4%
Total	\$18,032,040.77	100%

VR Program: Partnerships for Success

Serious Mental Illness

Since 1986, DRS has received state funds to complement the Commonwealth's Community Service Board (CSB) network's delivery of services to individuals with mental health disabilities. There are 23 VR counselors embedded in 20 CSBs, helping this population become gainfully employed. With Virginia's emphasis on transforming the mental health service system and recovery model, there is increased recognition that VR is a key element in the recovery process. During FFY 2007, over 1,000 consumers with serious mental illness were served by the VR program, with 437 becoming successfully employed.

Transition Services

The VR program provides transition support to thousands of Virginia students with disabilities. To facilitate effective transition services, DRS has formal cooperative agreements with each of the local education agencies to promote coordination between the local school divisions and any specified adult service agencies. In FFY 2007, 9,999 current and post-high school students with disabilities received transition services and 1,369 became gainfully employed.

For more than 20 years, DRS and other state agencies and organizations have collaborated to host an annual Transition Forum to bring together VR counselors, school personnel, consumers, family members and community partners to explore best practices related to serving transitioning students. This year's Forum, aptly themed "Working Together to Achieve Results," attracted 1,100 attendees and featured students from all over the state who have successfully navigated the transition process.

Substance Abuse Services

The DRS Substance Abuse Service Program, which partners with the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services and local CSBs, provides VR services for individuals who are actively involved in alcohol or substance abuse treatment or who have completed treatment. During FFY 2007, 982 VR consumers served had a primary substance abuse disability and 448 became employed.

Alexander



At the age of two, Alexander Jacobs was diagnosed as profoundly deaf, a condition which has affected his ability to articulate and hear conversational speech. Despite these barriers, Alexander earned his bachelor's degree in political science and obtained a master's degree in security policy studies. DRS helped him complete his second year in graduate school, providing financial assistance, speech therapy, and assistive devices to help enhance his communication in different environments.

Upon graduation, Alexander attempted to seek employment on his own. Armed with a stellar academic record and solid internships, he expected to receive calls for interviews. But when the job search didn't fall into place as he had hoped, he turned to DRS for advice – he suspected his disability was hindering his chances to interview.

DRS Counselor Pearl Johnson and Business Development Manager Evelyn Kaiser worked with Alexander to revise his cover letter to emphasize his abilities and downplay his disability. He soon became more competitive, assertive, and confident in his job search and interview skills.

Ultimately, it was Alexander's hard work, combined with Ms. Kaiser's long-time partnership with the Department of Homeland Security's Selective Placement Program Coordinator that secured Alexander an interview. Today, Alexander works full-time as an Intelligence Research Specialist in the Department of Homeland Security's Fraud Detection and National Security division.

"DRS provided invaluable assistance that allowed me to find a rewarding and exciting career," says Alexander.

Amanda



With motivation and determination, Amanda Key has overcome numerous disability-related barriers to find employment success. Among other disabilities, Amanda was diagnosed with vasculitis, a rare but serious form of rheumatoid arthritis that causes painful inflammation of the joints and blood vessels. The manifestations of this disease involve many of the body's organs, including the skin, and can cause symptoms such as joint swelling, fatigue, numbness, and headaches.

Amanda believed, however, that her future did not have to be compromised by her disabilities. Through DRS financial assistance and vocational counseling, Amanda enrolled in college and worked to obtain a bachelor's degree in social work from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU).

DRS coordinated with VCU's academic, financial aid, and disability-services departments to arrange housing, parking, transportation, and computer accommodations. This coordination of services played a critical role in ensuring Amanda's ability to meet the physical and mental demands of college life.

Shortly after graduating in May 2006, Amanda found full-time employment as a Community Service Specialist at WorkSource Enterprises, Inc., in Charlottesville, where she assists the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) population. Flexible scheduling was provided for Amanda to keep her medical appointments. Amanda also works part-time as a Relief Support Facilitator at Region Ten Community Services Board. In January 2008, she will be starting her graduate studies at Liberty University.

When asked what has been the key to her success, Amanda simply states, "Knowledge is power."

Chris



When Chris Musarra applied for DRS services, he was living with the effects of agoraphobia, a type of anxiety disorder characterized by fear of public and unfamiliar places or situations. Consequently, Chris was often reluctant to leave home. For income, he would take an occasional house-sitting job, but he never worked in the traditional sense. Full-time work was almost impossible.

Despite his disability, Chris pushed himself to make changes in his life and sought assistance from DRS. He enrolled in Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center's Accounting Program. After graduation and further counseling, Chris felt he was ready to seek employment.

DRS Counselor Cindy Roberts arranged for Chris to try a part-time, unpaid work experience with the City of Waynesboro. This created an ideal situation for Chris, as the job was within walking distance from home. If he became overwhelmed, Chris was allowed to leave. Human Resource Manager Jim Fitzgerald was a true mentor to Chris and worked with him to build his confidence and workplace skills.

After several months, Chris grew personally and professionally and he began to apply for jobs within the City of Waynesboro. With guidance from Mr. Fitzgerald, Chris was ultimately hired in the Commissioner of Revenue's office as a Deputy II, where he processes individual income tax returns, issues local business licenses, and assesses personal property.

"This job has changed my life," says Chris. "It has given me more confidence in knowing that I can deal with whatever life presents me."

Kareem



Kareem Callands sustained a brain injury as a youth when he was struck by a car while riding his bicycle. As a result, Kareem's memory, problem-solving, and judgment were significantly altered. These barriers followed him into his adult years, impacting his ability to maintain employment. He held a string of unsuccessful jobs and faced homelessness twice.

Despite his hardships, Kareem endured and succeeded through a collaborative system of support. Assistance from DRS enabled Kareem to receive counseling, independent living skills training, occupational therapy, and supported employment services. Collaborative efforts with the Brain Injury Services of South West Virginia also helped Kareem secure affordable housing that was on the bus route. With on-going assistance from both organizations and support from close friends, Kareem found himself happy and healthy in a safe, comfortable environment for the first time in many years.

Moreover, Kareem entered a training program at Roanoke's Valley View Wal-Mart. He was ultimately hired as a Courtesy Associate and today, with follow-along support, he is able to work part-time while retaining his Supplemental Security Disability Income benefits. He is considered a model employee by his employer.

In October 2007, Kareem was presented with a Champions of Disability Employment Award for his accomplishments. Upon receiving the award, Kareem stated that he didn't realize how far he had come, nor did he realize that so many others had noticed as well.

Consumer Satisfaction Results

VR consumers who received services and exited the program with an employment outcome (Status 26) or without an employment outcome (Status 28) are randomly selected and invited to participate in the consumer satisfaction survey. The survey results are reported on a Federal Fiscal Year (October 1- September 30) and annually shared with the State Rehabilitation Council members. During FFY 2006, VR consumers continued to express strong satisfaction with the VR program.

Federal Fiscal Year 2006 Highlights

- The overall response rate was 40% (n=619).
- Vocationally rehabilitated consumers had a higher response rate (50%) than non-rehabilitated consumers (31%).

Overall Results*

- 82% of the respondents were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with their VR services.
- Both rehabilitated responders (87%) and those who were not successfully rehabilitated (73%) provided positive ratings of overall VR services.
- 85% of responders agreed that they would tell a friend to go to DRS.

Positive Job Satisfaction

- Approximately 80% of vocationally rehabilitated consumers who said that they were earning wages reported being satisfied with their current job.
- 68% of these consumers expect to be in the same job next year.

Counselor/Consumer Relationship

Consumer satisfaction with their VR counselor remains above 86% on several ratings. One consumer wrote being most satisfied with *“the patience and understanding my DRS counselor exhibited with me regarding my disabilities and what my needs were.”* Another consumer wrote, *“My counselor was truly caring and understanding. I never felt like I was being judged for the problems I have had dealing with chronic pain & depression.”*

*These results are for consumer self-respondents (n=511).

Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center

Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) is the first state-owned and operated comprehensive rehabilitation center in the country. WWRC provides medical, assistive technology, and vocational rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities to help them gain increased independence and employment.

On November 8, 2007, WWRC celebrated its 60th year of serving people with disabilities. The occasion was marked with a public ceremony. State Delegate R. Stephen Landes and Holly Herman, Aide to State Senator Emmett Hanger, presented Commissioner Rothrock and WWRC Director Rick Sizemore with proclamations from the General Assembly recognizing WWRC for its 60-year service to Virginians with disabilities. The convocation keynote address was delivered by Juliette Rizzo, Ms. Wheelchair America 2005.



WWRC Centers of Excellence

WWRC has developed four clearly defined Centers of Excellence: Assistive Technology, Comprehensive Assessment and Evaluation, Youth in Transition, and Neuro-Rehabilitation. These centers articulate niche markets in which WWRC has distinguished itself as a leader in the Mid-Atlantic Region and beyond. Each Center of Excellence is accountable for staying abreast of emerging issues and trends in its own niche market and reaching out to its stakeholders to achieve WWRC's vision as a premier rehabilitation community serving people with disabilities.

Life Skills Transition Program (LSTP)

During 2007, WWRC continued to enhance its Life Skills Transition Program (LSTP), which takes a comprehensive approach to teaching individuals with disabilities skills for daily life and living and working with others. LSTP began as a pilot initiative in October 2005. During this past fiscal year, 174 clients were served. The average wait list is about 50 clients per month. LSTP outcomes for SFY 2007 reveal that 75% (27) of the course graduates that replied to a follow-up survey were actively employed or enrolled in a training program six months after completing the program. Additionally, 58% (21) of the respondents reported they were able to live more independently as a result of the LSTP and 83% (40) reported that the LSTP helped them achieve their personal goals. Of the 56 LSTP participants to date that are also VR closures, 36 or 64.3% have been employed at least 90 days.

Post-Secondary Education Rehabilitation (PERT) Program

PERT offers youth with disabilities the opportunity to learn their individual strengths and abilities and plan for transition from school to work. PERT served 451 students in SFY 2007 with about 94% of the school districts participating. The average rehabilitation rate for VR clients exposed to PERT services over the past five years is 9.4% higher than the same rehabilitation rate for school-aged youth that were not exposed to PERT services and 7.9% higher than the overall 2007 performance.

Roadmaps to Success

As an important partner with DRS' VR program, WWRC has embraced the "Roadmaps to Success" philosophy for each client at the Center. This requires shared service planning, coordination, and delivery between the VR counselors and WWRC staff. WWRC's Operations Committee, composed of the leadership of WWRC and the VR Field Program, meets quarterly to discuss the collaborative relationship between WWRC and the field program. The focus is on reviewing WWRC's efforts to enhance services to VR consumers and providing guidance in development of new service delivery programs and means to inform VR counselors of the availability of these programs.

2007 Data

- 2452 Total Admissions
- 1051 Medical Rehabilitation Clients Served
- 73.4% of referrals came from DRS counselors
- 71.4% of WWRC graduates were employed at one-year post-exit from WWRC training programs

WWRC Consumer Satisfaction Results

In SFY 2007 (July 1, 2006 - June 30, 2007), 303 students completed the consumer satisfaction exit survey. The demographic composition of the SFY 2007 survey respondents was similar to the overall demographics of all consumers receiving services at WWRC.

The results of the consumer satisfaction survey for SFY 2007 show a high level of satisfaction. The range of satisfaction for the eight (8) questions on the consumer satisfaction survey was between 83.5% and 92.4%. Overall, 89% of consumers agree that they achieved their stated purpose of coming to WWRC.



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