Getting to know our LABOR MARKET

Virginia State Rehabilitation Council

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# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

On behalf of the State Rehabilitation Council, I am honored to share with you the 2015 SRC Annual Report. As I end my second and final year as chairperson, I can now reflect on how fulfilling and educational the time has been for me. With last year’s passing of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, we are in the middle of both exciting and indeterminate times in our vocational rehabilitation programs.

In April, I attended the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation spring conference. While there, I attended my first meeting as the SRC representative on the advisory council for Virginia’s “return on investment,” or ROI, project. This project to assess the effectiveness of VR programs for people with disabilities is funded by a $2.5 million federal grant to the University of Richmond and its partners, which include Virginia’s Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services and the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, the University of Virginia’s Department of Economics, as well as VR programs from several other states. The intent is to develop a web-based “ROI Estimator” to allow state agencies to simulate the impact of different VR services on the employment outcomes of clients and to develop ROI estimates for entire state programs.

Once again, in June I was privileged to present the SRC Employee Leadership Roy J. Ward Award to two amazing DARS employees. (Read about the honorees on page 13.) At the awards ceremony, there was special recognition given to our beloved SRC member Toney Lineberry, who passed away in May. Toney, who became a paraplegic as a teenager, turned his story of a tragic automobile accident into a message that resonated with young people for more than 30 years. Toney was one of the most uplifting people I have ever met and I am honored to have called him my friend.

I thank my fellow SRC members for the opportunity to serve as their chairperson for these past two years. In addition, I offer special thanks to DARS Commissioner Jim Rothrock and to all the wonderful DARS support staff who help us fulfill our board obligations every year. It has been a pleasure working with all of you.

— Ellen McIlhenny, SRC Chairperson

# MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

During the past year, the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services discovered new opportunities that expand employment options for those we serve and that are more effective in meeting our Commonwealth’s workforce demands.

A year ago, Gov. Terry McAuliffe signed Executive Order 23, encouraging state agencies to be even more focused on helping Virginians acquire workforce credentials. There is a resurgence of manufacturing jobs in the Commonwealth requiring skilled workers, and the individuals on the front end of the hiring process will be those with recognized credentials offering clear evidence of their abilities.

This resurgence represents a new wave in job growth in Virginia. I remember growing up in a manufacturing center – Martinsville, once known as the “Sweatshirt Capitol of the World” and a leading manufacturing center for furniture – that had tons of manufacturing jobs. It was then the goal of most parents to be sure their children were able to “better” themselves by not having to work in the plants. Times have changed.

Today there is a real need for skilled workers to work in many of the same type of jobs, which are now performed in a vastly different manner. The hammer and wrench routinely relied on by the worker are now replaced by their even handier computer tablet. The cleanliness of the factory, once defined by dust and dirt, is now replaced by pristine working conditions. The minimum pay jobs are now replaced by salaries that often are three times greater. Parents can now be proud, perhaps envious, of their children who enter the workforce with these new jobs.

Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center in particular has ramped up its focus on credentialing our students. Over the last year or so, credentials in demand by Virginia employers have been awarded to hundreds of our graduates, clearly underscoring their workforce readiness. Moreover, companies come to us for new employees who have completed a workforce-driven curricula, ensuring that the skills they need are found in our clients.

In our “new Virginia economy,” DARS will be an even more valued entity in meeting the workforce needs of our new business partners.

— Jim Rothrock, Commissioner, Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services

# 2014-2015 SRC MEMBERS

Dack Axselle — Henrico  
Suzanne Bowers — Bealeton  
Kate Broderick — Norfolk  
Pam Cobler — Martinsville  
Tonya Fowler — Danville  
Linda Garris-Bright — Virginia Beach  
Shannon Haworth — Richmond  
Samantha M. Hollins — Richmond  
Deloris Johnson — Harrisonburg  
Richard Keene, ex officio — Abingdon  
Toney Lineberry — Manakin-Sabot  
Ellen A. McIlhenny — Montpelier  
Bruce Phipps — Roanoke  
Jim Rothrock, ex-officio — Richmond  
Lauren Snyder Roche — Poquoson  
Sally J. Thompson — Hampton  
Julie Triplett — Richmond

# MESSAGE FROM THE DRS DEPUTY DIRECTOR

DARS’ New Workforce Development Unit

Throughout the year, DARS has been very successful in working with businesses, meeting their hiring needs and working with our job candidates seeking employment-completing career assessments and individual job placement activities. Yet we know we can improve how we do business to help our customers achieve their employment dreams and assist the Commonwealth to fill jobs in the labor market.

Last year, Division of Rehabilitative Services Director Kathy Hayfield and her management team evaluated how we assess the skills and abilities of our clients and how that correlates with Virginia’s labor market needs. It became clear to the management team that our agency could be much more strategic about tying these two worlds together to enhance employment outcomes for the consumers we serve.

The team also knew there is a new focus at the state and national level to assure that job seekers are equipped with the skills they need to help them advance and that businesses are enabled to hire more skilled workers.

As a result of this program evaluation, the DRS director established a new management level position — deputy director for workforce development — within DRS to oversee these important aspects of our service delivery system. I was selected for the new position and have statewide responsibility for leadership, strategic planning and oversight of our business development and vocational evaluation services, along with the Self-Employment Enterprise Program, a program which helps DRS candidates seeking assistance to establish and operate their own business.

This new Workforce Development Unit works to integrate current labor market trends with strategic assessment/evaluation services for job candidates with disabilities. It brings together business development managers, vocational evaluators and placement staff. Team members collaborate to assess the skills and abilities of our job candidates; educate businesses on the services DARS offers that can help meet their needs and assist job candidates with their abilities to become entrepreneurs. As job opportunities become available, they identify qualified job candidates to meet businesses’ hiring needs.

The team coordinates and participates in activities to build successful business relationships to fill employer needs. The business development managers coordinate and facilitate the monthly/quarterly Commonwealth Workforce Network meetings. Team members work with Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation’s National Employment Team; Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center as a business training site; partner agencies such as employment services organizations and workforce development board-business services teams; transition teams; and the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs for 503 compliance employment hiring.

Among the new unit’s accomplishments in 2015 were:

* AbilityOne Program hiring, through employment service organization Didlake, of more than 112 job candidates hired in the Hampton Roads area, with salaries of $14-$16 per hour.
* A business partnership with an IT company in Northern Virginia for individuals with autism spectrum disorder. Seven job candidates found employment in IT positions in Capital One, with salaries of $18-$20 per hour.
* A strong federal government hiring initiative throughout the Commonwealth, focused mainly in Northern Virginia, given its labor market. Positions filled range from General Schedule 5-13 levels.

The Workforce Development Unit will take the lead in a service-delivery model to strengthen our labor market information to staff and our job candidates. The team will work intensely to assess the aptitude and skills of DRS job candidates for the labor market, serve as a point of contact to businesses meeting their business needs, and assist job candidates with their own entrepreneurship.

I am honored and excited to lead this model within DRS and to revamp the way we do business. We are confident that these new efforts will result in better paying jobs for Virginians with disabilities whom we serve as well as assist individuals to secure employment in jobs that best match their skills, interests and abilities.

— Dale Batten, Deputy Director for Workforce Development

# Workforce development

The Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services understands that skilled, dependable and productive employees are vital to business success. As an agency dedicated to increasing employment opportunities for individuals with significant disabilities, DARS serves as a vital link in connecting employers with hiring needs to skilled and talented workers with disabilities who actively seek employment.

In any given year, DARS provides vocational rehabilitation services to 25,000 or more Virginians with disabilities. Services are individualized and based on the agreed upon employment goal of the individual, which reflects that person’s interests, abilities, capabilities and informed choice. Equally important is matching these individuals with jobs in the Commonwealth’s current labor market, focusing on integrated employment with competitive wages, employee benefits and possibly a path to ongoing career advancement. DARS accomplishes this by educating its vocational rehabilitation counselors and consumers on the current and future labor market, the availability of competitively-waged jobs and the skills needed to obtain those jobs. It also requires outreach to employers to assess their hiring needs and provide the training, services and supports required to help our consumers succeed. DARS has had great success with The Hershey Co., Jiffy Lube and other large and small companies doing business in Virginia to address their hiring needs while placing our consumers in competitive jobs.

A third and vital component is the collaboration among DARS, other state agencies, schools, community partners and service providers to create opportunities for deserving Virginians with significant disabilities. With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act ([www.doleta.gov/wioa/](file:///C:\Users\fqr98929\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\PDHKT4KO\www.doleta.gov\wioa\)) in 2014, DARS can collaborate more effectively with partners in strategic planning, leading to enhanced employment outcomes for consumers.

Governor’s Executive Order 46

On July 27, 2015, Gov. Terry McAuliffe signed Executive Order 46, “Supporting Virginians with Disabilities in the New Virginia Economy,” taking significant action to enhance the hiring of Virginians with disabilities in the Commonwealth’s New Economy. DARS will participate in its implementation, working with the Governor’s Chief Workforce Development Advisor, the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, and the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services to enable persons with disabilities to participate fully and equally in the social and economic life of the Commonwealth and to engage in remunerative employment. Find the full text of EO 46 at <http://1.usa.gov/1KDcocJ>.

Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH is a nine-month, community-based employment training program that offers new ways of thinking about collaborative partnerships and effective transition practices for the employment of students with disabilities. Students gain job experience through internships while receiving support from a DARS-funded job coach, workplace mentors, VR counselor and a school-funded teacher. It is a business-led, school-to-work program with participating employers such as Bon Secours Health System, VCU Health, Sentara Healthcare and Carilion Clinic. There are 15 Project SEARCH sites across the Commonwealth and 130 students will enroll in the program for the 2015-16 school year. Since 2010, 475 students have participated in the program. Eighty-two percent of those whose cases closed have become successfully employed youth, with average hourly earnings of $8.74. Twenty percent of the participants have autism.

Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center

On July 1, 2015, the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center’s name changed to the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center. The new name reflects the Center’s mission of providing workforce training readiness and medical interventions for Virginians with disabilities to assist them in becoming employed and to live more independently. Business, industry, community partners and, most importantly, consumers offered a resounding endorsement for the new name. Adding the word “workforce” assists those served to identify with the Center’s mission of helping develop employment readiness. Keeping the word “rehabilitation” in the name ensures that WWRC remains known for the comprehensive medical therapies provided to help individuals with disabilities return to work.

Elizabeth Creamer, advisor for workforce development to Virginia’s Secretary of Commerce and Trade, gave the keynote speech at the July 1 name change ceremony. She described the Center’s legacy of service and acknowledged the exceptional performance and service of WWRC to individuals with disabilities. Among the highlights of her remarks was her emphasis on WWRC’s Career Pathways Award, the outstanding performance of WWRC students in completion of the Career Readiness Certification, and the degree to which the Center has become a leader in offering training that is business-driven.

# Impairments of DRS Clients Served In 2015 (Total 8,926)

Cognitive/Other Mental Impairments – 48 percent

Psychosocial Impairments – 32 percent

Physical Respiratory Fatigue – 9 percent

Orthopedic, Neurological, Mobility/Dexterity – 5 percent

Deaf/Hearing Impairments (Includes Deaf-Blind) – 4 percent

Blind/Vision Impairments – 1 percent  
Communicative Impairments Expressive/Receptive – 1 percent

Expanded workforce-driven Training Options through WWRC

WWRC continues its evolving partnership with business development managers to “connect classrooms to workplace standards and expectations” and modify curriculum to increase the likelihood of successful placements for training graduates, with long-term retention opportunities. These critical partnerships resulted in the development of several collaborative workforce initiatives with industry and professional organizations and corporate networks directly benefitting VR consumer employment goals.

The DRS business development managers connected CVS Health with WWRC. Now CVS Health has moved forward with an initiative at WWRC by making substantial donations of equipment and products to set up a mock store for training Center students. A customized CVS Health retail sales curriculum has been designed and WWRC will partner with local CVS Health stores to provide internships as part of the WWRC experience. Further plans are in development with CVS Health to develop a pharmacy tech track in addition to retail employment options. WWRC anticipates the first training cohort to start in January 2016. There are more than 300 vacancies on any given day at CVS Health stores located in Virginia.

A similar partnership is in development with the Virginia Manufacturers Association and the Manufacturing Skills Institute to offer relevant education, skills training and workforce credentialing for careers in advanced manufacturing through WWRC’s training programs beginning in 2016. Three WWRC staff have completed MSI classroom training and are pursuing official industry certification to offer the Manufacturing Technician Level 1 credential. The manufacturing program is a nationally certified, skills training program which lays the groundwork for successful employment in a number of fields in the manufacturing sector. WWRC anticipates the first cohort to begin in early summer 2016 as a Manufacturing Academy, targeting 12-15 VR consumers selected through the Postsecondary Education Rehabilitation Transition Program for participation in a one-week career exploration pilot. The focus of the one-week pilot academy will be the fabrication of a water treatment plant and a related bottling operation. It is hoped that this piloted Manufacturing Academy will augment future enrollment needs of WWRC MTI training program by providing a pipeline of potential clients already introduced to many of the basic principles of manufacturing.

Growth of Workforce Credentials through WWRC’s Training Programs

WWRC has continued to expand its emphasis on the attainment of workforce credentials within its training programs, growing in scope as well as numbers of participating Agency consumers.

WWRC began Career Readiness Certificate testing during state fiscal year 2009. A CRC is an assessment-based credential that gives employers and career seekers a uniform measure of key workplace skills. The CRC was developed due to concern about the gap between the skills required in today’s workplace and those exhibited by job seekers. The CRC is a portable skills credential, assuring employers that a job applicant has the skills they seek in today’s complex and competitive work environment. It has become a valuable assessment and training tool for employers throughout Virginia. In SFY 2015, 192 consumers obtained a CRC credential at the Gold (35), Silver (93) or Bronze level (64). This was the highest number of consumers obtaining a CRC since the inception of testing in 2009. The previous high was 140 in SFY14. The pass rate for SFY15 was 91.4 percent.

In addition to the CRC, WWRC currently offers industry-recognized workforce credentials for Certified Customer Service Professional (International Customer Service Association); ServSafe (National Restaurant Association); Certified Nurse Aide (Virginia Board of Nursing); A+ Certification (CompTIA, IT Trade Association); Cosmetology (Virginia Board of Cosmetology); and OSHA 10-Hour as well as Adult/Child/Infant CPR, First Aid, and AED Certification (American Red Cross). See the related table for workforce credentials obtained during SFY 2015 in STEM-H (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math and Health) categories and other industries.

During SFY 2015, 63 VR consumers obtained a learner’s permit and 61 earned a driver’s license, credentials critical to the attainment and maintenance of employment.

Workforce Credentials Obtained: SFY 2015

**STEM-H**

Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) 14

Personal Care Aide (PCA) 14

CPR and First Aid 18

CompTIA A+ 7

OSHA-10 6

*STEM-H SubTotal* ***59***

**Other Industry Recognized**

Career Readiness Certificate 192

ServSafe 59

Customer Service Certificate (CSC) 89

*Other Industry SubTotal* ***340***

# 2015 WWRC data

FFY 2015 WWRC Vocational Training Outcome Data\*

Training; Number of successful vocational closures; Percent of successful vocational closures (rehabilitation rate)\*\*; Average hourly wage

Auto Mechanics: 14; 100.0; $9.63

Building Trades: 12; 75.0; $10.46

External Training Option: 46; 76.67; $10.22

Food Service: 39; 88.6; $8.55

Health Occupations: 17; 85.0; $9.34

Materials Handling: 50; 84.7; $9.09

Business & Information Technology: 16; 61.5; $9.22

Total: 194; 81.2; $9.41

*\*This data is based on DARS consumers graduating from a WWRC training program since 7/1/09 and that were successfully closed by DARS in federal fiscal year 2015.*

*\*\*The rehabilitation rate is defined as the number of successful closures divided by the number of successful and unsuccessful closures.*

Number of DARS Vocational Rehabilitation Consumers  
Served By WWRC Service Area FFY15

Vocational Evaluation (VE) Total – 1,108

VE (Non-PERT) – 612

PERT\* – 468

PERT Transition Academy – 28

Vocational Training - Fully Enrolled – 404

LSTP (9-week program) – 482

Medical Rehab Services – 1,258

Primary Medical Rehab Services – 545

*\*Postsecondary Education Rehabilitation Transition Program*

# Vocational Rehabilitation program highlights

VR Program Outcomes

The vocational rehabilitation program empowers individuals with disabilities by providing information, an array of services and support needed to become employed or retain or advance in employment. VR is a unique employment services model which pairs the VR consumer with a qualified VR counselor to develop an individualized plan leading to employment in a competitive and integrated setting.

This past year, DARS continued under an Order of Selection due to insufficient funds to serve all eligible individuals. However, the agency was able to bring approximately 3,000 individuals with most significant disabilities off the waiting list to receive services. At the end of the federal fiscal year (Sept. 30, 2015), about 2,800 individuals remained on the waiting list.

During FFY 2015, DARS took 9,646 new applications from consumers, a decline of 11 percent from the previous year, and the agency served 336 fewer consumers. Of the 28,953 consumers served, 50 percent were transition age (ages 14-24). Of those served, 88.6 percent were most significantly disabled.

For the second consecutive year, DARS surpassed its goal of assisting 4,000 consumers gain successful employment. During the year, 4,032 consumers became successfully employed, with more than 98 percent employed in a competitive job. The average hourly earnings at consumer case closure were $10.09, an increase from $9.66 in FFY 2014.

The program achieved a success rate of 57.3 percent.

DARS continued to emphasize timeliness of services. Eligibility determinations are required to be made within 60 days of application unless extenuating circumstances justify a delay. In FFY 2015, the average time between application and eligibility was just 25.1 days, down 2.7 days from FFY 2014. The average time between development of the Individualized Plan for Employment and successful case closure was 6.1 months, down from 8.9 months from FFY14.

Other program highlights include:

* The percent of consumers who were determined ineligible for services decreased to 3.3 percent from 4.6 percent in FFY14.
* 5,796 Individualized Plans for Employment were written.
* 48 percent of consumers served had cognitive or other mental impairments as their primary disability.

DARS purchases needed services for consumers to reach their employment goal. Services to be purchased, in addition to the designated service provider, are included in the consumers’ Individualized Plan for Employment. During SFY 2015, DARS spent approximately $22,493,000 for services for VR consumers. Over $14 million (64 percent) was spent through Employment Services Organizations. The next largest category of purchased services was training, including college tuition costs, at $1,690,000 (7.5 percent).

Consumer Satisfaction

In partnership with the SRC, DARS implemented a new consumer satisfaction model in 2014. This model allows DARS to examine consumer perception during service delivery (post Individualized Plan of Employment but prior to employment).

**Survey Category n= Yes (%)**

Counselors kept in contact 397 78

Have agreed with counselors on plans for reaching job goal 389 76

Counselors were doing what they said they would do 391 76

Counselors were helpful in connecting with people and services 389 75

Believed everyone was working together to help 368 73

Counselors were meeting timetables 342 67

Consumers’ feedback regarding counselors meeting timetables suggests they associate this aspect of service with the helpfulness of counselors. For example, counselors were perceived as meeting timetables when they were communicating with consumers, providing assistance, involving consumers in scheduling and keeping appointments.

Helping consumers move forward with their job goal is important. Through the FFY 2014 survey, consumers shared their perspective of what had helped them and what was needed to help them move closer to their goal.

* Job-related activities, school/training and positive efforts of counselors were key things that had helped them.
* Job-related needs and staff/agency support were mentioned as things that would help consumers move closer to their goal.

DARS continued with use of the new model in FFY 2015. As more data is collected, DARS will be able to use the cumulative information to better understand strengths and weaknesses.

# AWARDS & RECOGNITION

SRC Employee Leadership Award Recipients

Each year, the SRC recognizes employees of the vocational rehabilitation program for their outstanding performance and their work in the community to benefit Virginians with disabilities. The recipients for the 2015 Award were Sherrina Sewell, Chesterfield office unit supervisor, and Shawn Zimmerman, vocational evaluator. Both employees were recognized for their excellent work and the positive impact that they have on individuals with disabilities and their service as strong role models for their peers in providing quality services to VR consumers.

# client success stories

Elvis Cheatham  
Elvis was referred to DARS’ Lynchburg office in May 2014 for job development services. In 1985, he received a certificate in drafting and computer-aided design from WWRC and worked 20 years as a CAD operator and electrical designer until he was laid off. After working with DARS staff to update his resume and hone his interviewing and networking skills, he was offered a job as an electrical designer with the Harrell Design Group in North Carolina. Elvis received a starting salary of $69,000 and full benefits starting in December 2014. DARS’ rehabilitation engineers helped Elvis, who has physical disabilities, obtain an ergonomic chair and wrist pad for his office.

Anthony Selby  
Anthony was jobless and living in a shelter on the Eastern Shore when he sought DARS’ services. He had long struggled with depression and anxiety and was diagnosed with intellectual disabilities and a history of seizures, which worsened and cost him several jobs. Anthony worked with DARS staff to develop his resume and interviewing skills and get assistance in applying online for jobs. DARS had partnered with the Virginia Employment Commission office, which was screening applicants for custodial jobs with VersAbility Resources, a federal contractor for NASA’s Wallops Flight Facility near Anthony’s home. He interviewed for a position and won a full-time job with benefits at the NASA facility, making $11.18 per hour. His case was successfully closed in May 2015.

Jesse Berg  
Jesse sought DARS’ services in May 2012 after graduating from George Mason University with a degree in international studies. He was diagnosed with Tourette syndrome and other disabling conditions. Jesse worked with Northern Virginia field office staff to obtain a minimum wage job as a food preparer with Gate Gourmet at Dulles Airport, but he aspired to work for the U.S. State Department. Following a successful unpaid internship with the human resources division at the federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, the agency arranged for Jesse to be hired by a contractor for the same position. The next year, the director of OSMRE’s Office for Equal Opportunity encouraged Jesse to apply for a position in that office. Jesse was hired under Schedule A and started at a GS-7 pay level as an equal employment opportunity assistant.

# State rehabilitation Council

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

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

# Contact Us

Call:  
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Attend a Meeting:  
The State Rehabilitation Council meetings are open to the public. SRC meetings are held in March, May, August and November. The meeting locations, dates and times are posted on the SRC website at [www.va-src.org/bulletin.asp#2](file:///C:\Users\fqr98929\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\PDHKT4KO\www.va-src.org\bulletin.asp%232), on the DARS website at [www.vadars.org/events.aspx](file:///C:\Users\fqr98929\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\PDHKT4KO\www.vadars.org\events.aspx) and on the Commonwealth Calendar at [www.virginia.gov/connect/commonwealth-calendar](file:///C:\Users\fqr98929\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\PDHKT4KO\www.virginia.gov\connect\commonwealth-calendar).

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