

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Division Philosophy

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's (DVR's) mission is to help Vermonters with disabilities prepare for, obtain, and maintain meaningful employment and to help employers recruit, train and retain employees with disabilities. Consumer choice and self-direction are core values that drive DVR's approach to providing services and developing new programs. DVR's ability to help jobseekers succeed also depends on clearly understanding needs of our other customer – employers. To that end, DVR plays an important facilitating role in Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS), an Agency of Human Services (AHS) initiative that builds on DVR's initial employer outreach work.

Division Overview

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation serves people with disabilities in Vermont who face barriers to employment. 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.

Staff and Partners

DVR believes in collaborating with other service providers to reach people facing the greatest challenges to employment. As a result, DVR has created innovative partnerships to serve youth, offenders, veterans, people receiving public benefits, and those who need ongoing support in order to work.

Recent Developments and Accomplishments

Core Teams – One way in which DVR provides effective services statewide is through the Core Transition Teams, which increase capacity at the local level to develop, provide, and manage an effective transition process for students. Recognizing that communities will have their own individual approach, it is important that all high school staff, Agency of Human Services (AHS) staff, and community partners have access to the support of a Local Core Transition Team.

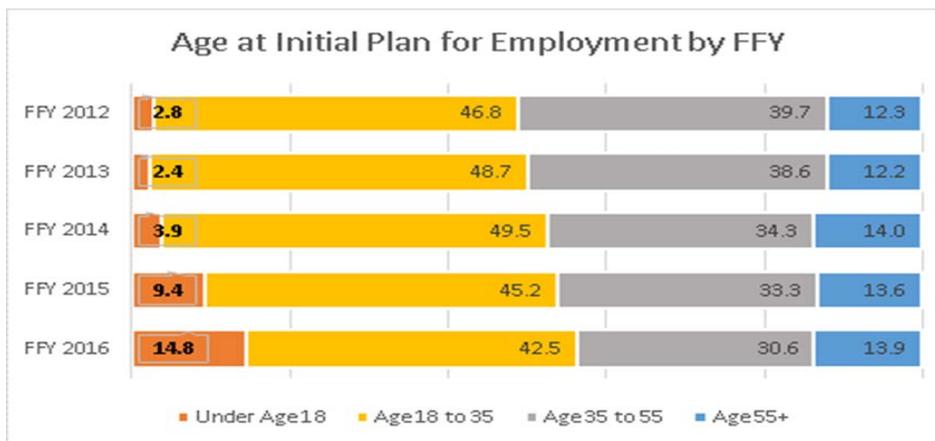
Spirit of the ADA Awards – Each year during National Disability Employment Awareness Month, the Governor's Committee on the Employment of People with

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Disabilities (GCEPD) selects businesses from across the state who exemplify best practices in recruiting, promoting and retaining Vermonters with disabilities. Award winners are recognized in their local communities, and agree to work with the Committee to share their experience and strategies with other businesses. Business Account Managers from Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS) and the Committee work closely to gather nominations from a variety of programs and disability groups, and develop ideal dates, locations, agendas and talking points for the ceremonies.

Assistive Technology (AT) and DVR – The AT program and DVR strengthened their partnership by providing three dedicated AT staff for consultations and training up to 20 hours each per week. These services are available for all VR consumers who are working on goals related to their IPE, which is in addition to the AT Act Core Services (demos, equipment loans, reuse, resource information) available to all Vermonters.

Pre-Employment Transition Services – The implementation of the Pre-Employment Transition Services mandate has had a major impact on the DVR caseload. To illustrate, in FFY 2012, less than 3% of the consumers who signed an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) with DVR were under the age of 17. In FFY 2016, that figure grew to nearly 15% of new plans signed (see chart below). Furthermore, the median age of individuals with an IPE went from 35 in FFY 2012 to 30 in FFY 2016.



Future Directions

Linking Learning to Careers Project (LLC) – In September 2016, DVR was awarded a \$9M, 5-year Federal grant to implement and evaluate an innovative model for the transition of students with disabilities to early career success, including paid, competitive employment, postsecondary school enrollment, and improved confidence to achieve career goals.

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The State as a Model Employer – On March 23, 2016, Governor Shumlin signed an Executive Order establishing a “Disability Employment Working Group” comprised of representatives from DAIL, DHR and members of the Governor’s Workforce Equity and Diversity Committee. They were charged with developing a model to help State agencies recruit, train and retain workers with disabilities to both diversify and meet the needs of Vermont’s “greying” workforce. Beginning in January of 2017, CWS will pilot the model in the Barre-Berlin-Montpelier corridor, with an eye to statewide expansion in the Spring of 2017.

Employee-driven Training – Without an intentional training effort, the valuable expertise of field staff often remains in district offices, unavailable to others. DVR is developing a process wherein staff can share their experience and best practices Statewide by exploring employee-driven trainings. This has an added professional development element, giving staff experience developing and communicating curricula to their peers all while honing presentation and writing skills.

Programs and Services

Assistive Technology Program (VATP)	Progressive Employment Program
Benefits Counseling	Rehabilitation Counseling for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (RCD)
Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS)	Social Security Specialists (SSS)
Developmental Services and Jump on Board for Success (JOBS)	Supported Employment (SE)
Invest EAP – Employee Assistance Program (EAP)	Transition (high-school aged youth and young adults)
Jobs for Independence (JFI)	Vermont AT Reuse Project
Mature Worker Program	Vermont Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)
Office of Child Support Pilot (OCS)	

Vocational Rehabilitation Services – DVR services to jobseekers are tailored to the person and driven by his or her own interests, job goals and needs. Each person meets regularly with his or her VR counselor, who helps to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and manages the services and supports needed to realize the person’s career goals. The core services of vocational assessment, counseling and guidance, job training, and job placement provided by DVR staff and partners are enhanced with a range of purchased services and supports.

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Placement Services – DVR counselors benefit from dedicated Employment Consultants who provide job development, job placement, and workplace supports to help people find and keep jobs. DVR has longstanding partnerships with Designated and Specialized Services Agencies (DAs and SSAs) to provide supported employment services to people with significant disabilities. DVR also has an ongoing partnership with the Vermont Association of Business, Industry, and Rehabilitation (VABIR) to provide employment services to DVR customers.

Results

How many people we serve: 9,254 Individuals served

How well we serve them – Survey Results:

Conducted approximately every two years, 2016 results show that for our customers:

- 97% felt welcomed when they went to DVR for services;
- 95% would tell their friends with disabilities to visit DVR for help with employment;
- 94% indicate it is easy to access vocational rehabilitation services;
- 88% are very satisfied or satisfied with the services provided by DVR;
- 97% indicate that DVR staff treated them with dignity and respect;
- 81% said DVR helped them achieve their job goal.

Nationally, Vermont DVR ranks #1 among general VR agencies in:

- New VR applicants per million state population;
- VR employment outcomes per million state population.

How people are better off:

Chart 1: Change in Average Weekly Earnings of people served by DVR who achieve an employment outcome

Change in Average Weekly Earnings FFY 2016



Chart 2: Change in Average Hours Worked Per Week of people served by DVR who achieve an employment outcome

Change in Average Hours Worked Per Week FFY 2016

