2015

OREGON STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

Annual Report

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Oregon State Rehabilitation Council

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All scenic photography by Ed Ruttledge
Inside front cover: Marion County sunrise
Back cover: Washington County clover

December 2015

Honorable Governor Kate Brown and Janet LaBreck, RSA Commissioner:

It is our pleasure, on behalf of the members of the Oregon State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), to present the 2015 Annual Report. This report documents the status of the Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program and summarizes the activities of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC).

The Oregon SRC worked closely with the VR Executive Team on policy issues including supported employment, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, self-employment and transition services, time to plan, vehicle modification, services to persons who are deaf and hard of hearing and authority to work.

Oregon faced many challenges this year around services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The SRC is pleased to have worked with VR to update and revise Employment First policies designed to ensure individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities receive the right job match, planning and support, and that they are able to obtain paid jobs in their communities and advance their career opportunities.

The SRC continues to participate in and support all activities of the National Coalition of SRCs. This organization is a strong advocate for the public Vocational Rehabilitation program and provides council members from across the country the opportunity to share best practices and participate in trainings that enhance their advocacy roles.

VR celebrated many successes throughout the year. Oregon VR reached a 65.13 percent rehabilitation rate, surpassing the federal standard of 55.8 percent. In July 2015, Trina Lee was hired as the VR administrator. The council looks forward to working with her and building a strong partnership with the public vocational rehabilitation program.

Thank you for your ongoing support of all programs that enhance employment opportunities for Oregonians with disabilities. We appreciate the opportunity to serve, provide leadership to the council and to partner with Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation.

Sincerely,

Laurie Brooks, SRC Co-chair

Tom Giles, SRC Co-chair

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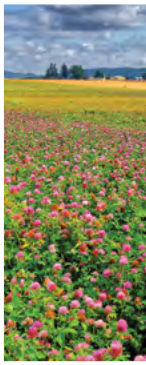
Yamhill County Orchard

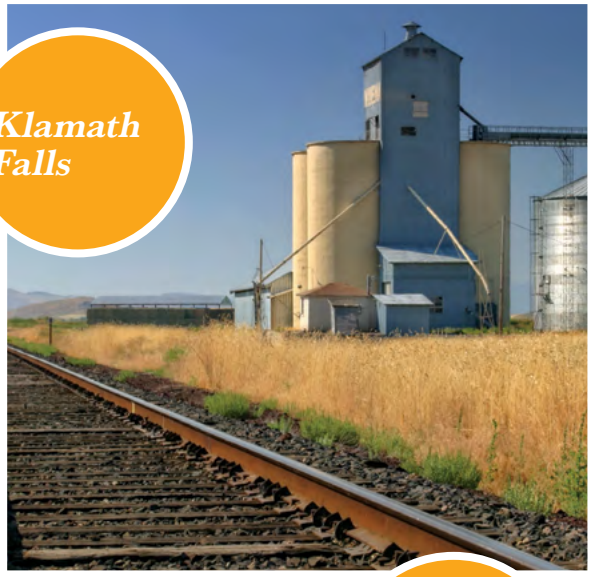
Touring Oregon's VR success stories

As you tour our state's regions in this report, you will meet local people whose lives have transformed. They are independent, working and fulfilled. The men and women profiled here represent a few of the hundreds of success stories Vocational Rehabilitation nurtures each year.

Enjoy the trip.



Central Oregon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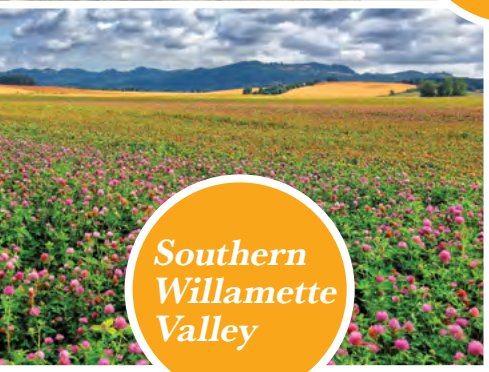
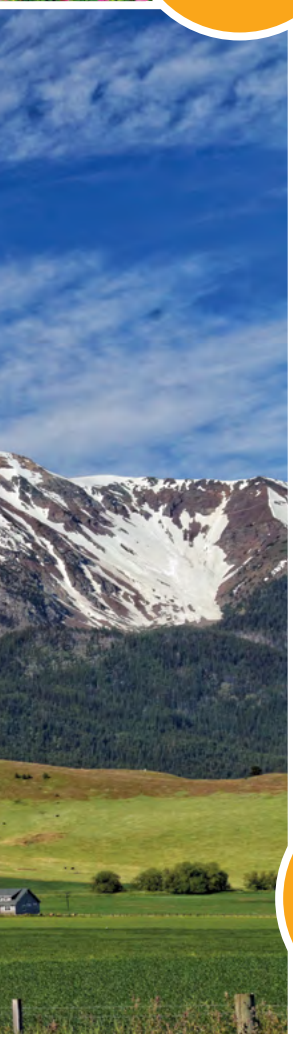

Southern Willamette Valley

Central Willamette Valley



Portland Metro

Oregon Coast

Medford

SUCCESS STORIES
Columbia Gorge

Alonzo builds job success

Hood River

Alonzo Muñoz, 19, achieved the ideal: He graduated from school with full-time, paid employment.

Alonzo was a student at Hood River Valley High School, which participates in the Youth Transition Program (YTP). YTP operates as a partnership between Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), the University of Oregon's College of Education, and local Oregon school districts.

The program prepares youth with disabilities for employment or post-secondary education or training.

Alonzo worked with Transition Specialist Cindy Posey while in school. "As part of our YTP program, students do research on three career goals," she said. "Once we got him working, I realized what a great worker he is."

Cindy said Alonzo struggled with all academic work and is a "really quiet kid." Without career exploration, it would have been hard to know what job might fit Alonzo.

Alonzo (left) with Curtis Homes' owner Cameron Curtis

"It came down to construction," Alonzo said. "I prefer something physical, where I work with my hands. Something with less talking and more activity."

Cindy worked with VR Counselor Andrea Rogers to set up a meeting with Cameron Curtis, owner of successful local home building company Curtis Homes. During the last nine weeks of high school, Alonzo did an internship there.

"What I was excited about was that Alonzo was excited about the job," Cameron said. "A lot of the younger generation doesn't want to work hard and doesn't want to work with their hands."

With Alonzo, Cameron said he got a committed employee.

"He gets along with everyone and he outworks just about everyone," Cameron said.

After a few months on the job after graduating high school, Alonzo was promoted to full-time and now earns $12 an hour.

Alonzo has worked on building more than six custom homes in Hood River. He works on a bit of everything, from framing the house to installing finish work.

Alonzo just saved up enough money to buy a car to drive to work each day.

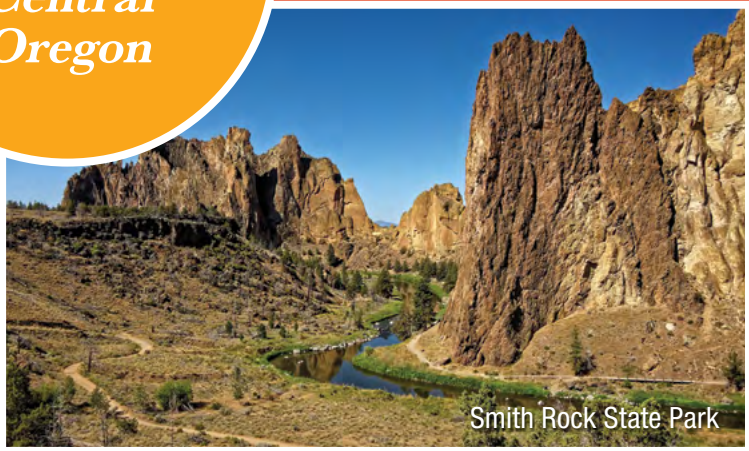
"I would love to have this type of result every day," said VR Counselor Andrea Rogers. "There is as much work as he wants. He is building skills and earning a living. That's really the ideal of what we want to achieve in VR."

— by Angela Yeager, Communications Officer, Employment First

There is as much work as he wants. He is building skills and earning a living. That's really the ideal of what we want to achieve in VR.

SUCCESS STORIES
Central Oregon

Tiffany Hill on top of it all


Smith Rock State Park

Tiffany Hill of Bend uses her black belt training when she scales ladders and works on roofs in her job as a house painter.

"In tae kwon do, I had to learn to balance, be flexible and conquer my fears," she says. "When you're nervous, you stop, breathe, save your energy and stay on a level plane. It comes in handy when I walk around roofs!"

Tiffany, who is deaf, is all about conquering her fears and living life to its fullest. "I enjoy everything I do in my work and with my family and friends," she says.

Tiffany came to the Bend Vocational Rehabilitation Office last winter for help finding a job. Her VR counselor, Renata Beck, referred Tiffany to Abilitree, a local organization that helps people experiencing disabilities grow in independence, productivity and inclusion in community life. Tiffany's job developer, Jodi Burns, worked with her to identify a suitable job goal.

Tiffany decided she wanted to work as a house painter. She had painted her family's home when she was 12 and had always loved art, drawing and detail work.

During the job search, Jodi and Tiffany learned that many local employers were wary of employing her because of safety issues. However, Webfoot Painting Company's co-owner, Travis Ulrich, took the time to meet Tiffany and discuss her interests and the company. "Webfoot is one of those employers who had an open mind from the beginning," says Abilitree's former community employment manager, Amanda Brittner, who supported Jodi and Tiffany.

Travis and one of his crews worked with Tiffany for a day to test her skills and job appropriateness. "I could tell that her dexterity was good and she had a knack for painting," he says. "I didn't know what challenges we would have, but having a hearing impairment doesn't affect painting!" He hired Tiffany in April of this year.

Travis found Tiffany to be a quick study. "She went from masking and taping to learning how to paint within months. Usually that doesn't happen until their second year," he says. "Tiffany had a very intentional approach when she came here. She knew she wanted to learn a trade and has a great work ethic."

Tiffany says that Vocational Rehabilitation helped her find a fun and interesting job. She enjoys its variety – she and her crew have worked on everything from condos to mansions. She conquered her natural fear of ladders and heights early on and likes the solace of painting rooms where she has time to herself.

She also enjoys her time with her crew of five. "It helps me a lot to have the same team to work with every day," she says. "We work together so well – we can almost read each others' minds." Tiffany finds the other members of her crew, who are all men, to be courteous and willing to learn American Sign Language. She says, "At first, they learned to sign the alphabet; now they ask me how to sign new words. They are getting better and better!" Tiffany sometimes hangs out after work with the crew. "I beat them at pool!" she says with a wide grin.

Tiffany Hill and Webfoot Co-owner Travis Ulrich

> ***Tiffany had a very intentional approach when she came here. She knew she wanted to learn a trade and has a great work ethic.***

Amanda says four things contributed to Tiffany's success in finding the right job fit: her positive and eager attitude, Webfoot's openness to giving her a chance, the timing of Abilitree's call when Webfoot was considering hiring, and Jodi's presence as a job developer to make sure things went smoothly in the beginning of Tiffany's job.

"I believe that getting [a person with a disability] in front of any employer who maybe even thinks they might be open to hiring is the key," Amanda says. "It's usually true that, once they meet an individual and see them in action, they realize they really can do the job. Tiffany is a great example of that." ■

SUCCESS STORIES
Central Willamette Valley

Brandy and DHS Payroll join for success

Yamhill County Hillside

Everyone in the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) Payroll Office knows Brandy Garrison. Mostly, they know Brandy for her great work and ever-present smile.

"Brandy always has a positive attitude," says her supervisor, Michelle Barrett. "She fit in really well with our group from the very beginning."

Brandy came to the Payroll Office, located in DHS's Salem headquarters, through DHS's commitment to Employment First. DHS leadership strongly supports hiring persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Ten people currently work at DHS as part of this program.

Brandy enjoys working in an environment where employees support each other. "We all feel that way in Payroll," she says. Brandy suggested the group have a potluck, which was a big success.

Brandy's job demands orderliness and organization – which she says are two of her strongest qualities that she also puts to work at home. "My apartment is cleaner than anyone's in my building," she says with a smile. At work, Brandy remembers when she first started that her cart of files was disorganized and overflowing. Now it's neat and well organized.

Joel Thomas, Brandy's employment specialist, has known her several years. "Brandy's quick," he says.

Joel praises the "great natural support team" Brandy works with at DHS. They take it upon themselves to work with her on day-to-day skills like learning to use the time capture system.

Brandy always has a positive attitude. She fit in really well with our group from the very beginning.

"They helped her, but she figured it out," he says. Part of Joel's job is to coach Brandy in her work tasks. When Joel goes to job sites, he looks for barriers to his clients' success at work. "But when I visit Brandy, she and her coworkers have already figured out how to solve those challenges!" he says.

As a result, Michelle reports that Brandy has greatly decreased their filing backlog.

Brandy has a clear idea of her future. She would like "more and more independence" and her own apartment where she can live without supervision. "I'm learning to cook. I even made enchiladas the other day," she says. "And, some day, I want to learn to drive."

Joel says that if anyone can learn to drive, Brandy can. "She is so excited to work here. It is a career for her — not just a job," he says.

I'm happy at DHS. My work is respected.

At home and in her job, Brandy is learning more and better skills all the time – and it shows in that smile. "I'm happy at DHS," she says. "My work is respected." ■

SUCCESS STORIES

Southern Willamette Valley

Charlie and Ben – a great duo

Valley Clover

Charlie (left) and Ben (right)

Charlie Oakley and Ben Blackburn are in Ben's back yard, showing off Ben's bike. They have spent many hours riding their bikes throughout Eugene. It's one of the many activities the two men do together.

A year-and-a-half after the Quebec House in Eugene opened, life is very different for Ben. Ben, who is deaf, lived most of his 45 years with people he couldn't communicate with and who didn't understand most of what he said. Ben was mostly isolated, easily frustrated and, although he used very basic signing, had only minor involvement with the deaf or the hearing community.

Then, along came the Quebec House and Charlie. The Quebec House is the only Oregon group home for individuals that are deaf and have an intellectual or developmental disability. Charlie was hired before the house opened.

Charlie understands Ben. He, too, is deaf. Through Charlie's experience with Lane County Vocational Rehabilitation, he landed a job at the Quebec House as a personal care aid. Charlie says Vocational Rehabilitation helped him find a job that was the best fit for him and to develop a resume. Charlie spent more than two decades as

a bicycle mechanic in the Midwest before moving to Oregon. He used those skills with Ben when they volunteered repairing bikes at the local Center for Alternative Transportation and at home, working on Ben's bike.

Before the Quebec House opened in April 2014, Ben communicated through simplistic American Sign Language (ASL) pantomime. As a result, he could be frustrated when he couldn't easily communicate. Now Ben uses ASL to talk with Charlie, the rest of the staff and people in the community. "I like signing," Ben says. "I can talk a little bit, but signing is better, especially at social times."

Bill Novorolsky, Quebec House manager, says, "Since moving to Quebec, Ben's and everyone's communication has improved by leaps and bounds. Now, we are all fluent in American Sign Language. It's the natural language in the deaf community."

From his own experience, Charlie knows it's essential for Ben and any deaf person to fully communicate, have a social life and be involved in the community. Most of Charlie's job involves accompanying Ben to places and events where the two of them volunteer and experience regular activities of daily life – activities most of us take for granted but that can be especially tough if you can't understand or be understood. Charlie is helping Ben bridge that gap.

"Charlie is a role model for Ben," says Charlie's Vocational Rehabilitation counselor, Jaime Butcher. Charlie shows Ben how to interact with both the hearing and the deaf communities. "Now Ben has access to the community. He's not isolated," she says.

"Charlie is a role model for Ben. Now Ben has access to the community. He's not isolated."

Charlie and Ben go regularly to events with the deaf community — picnics, coffees and other gatherings — that help Ben communicate and make friends. Charlie says he learns from Ben's activities too — which in turn has helped his relationship with his five-year-old son. A fairly new Lane County resident, Charlie "had no idea what to do or where to take my son in Eugene." Charlie has learned about new family activities from taking Ben places. Recently, Charlie and his son canoed in Alton Baker Park, where Charlie had taken Ben.

Many people with similar disabilities to Ben's live in isolation, according to Bill. "The majority of people with hearing and intellectual/developmental disabilities don't have the possibilities for their lives that Ben and others in this house have," he says.

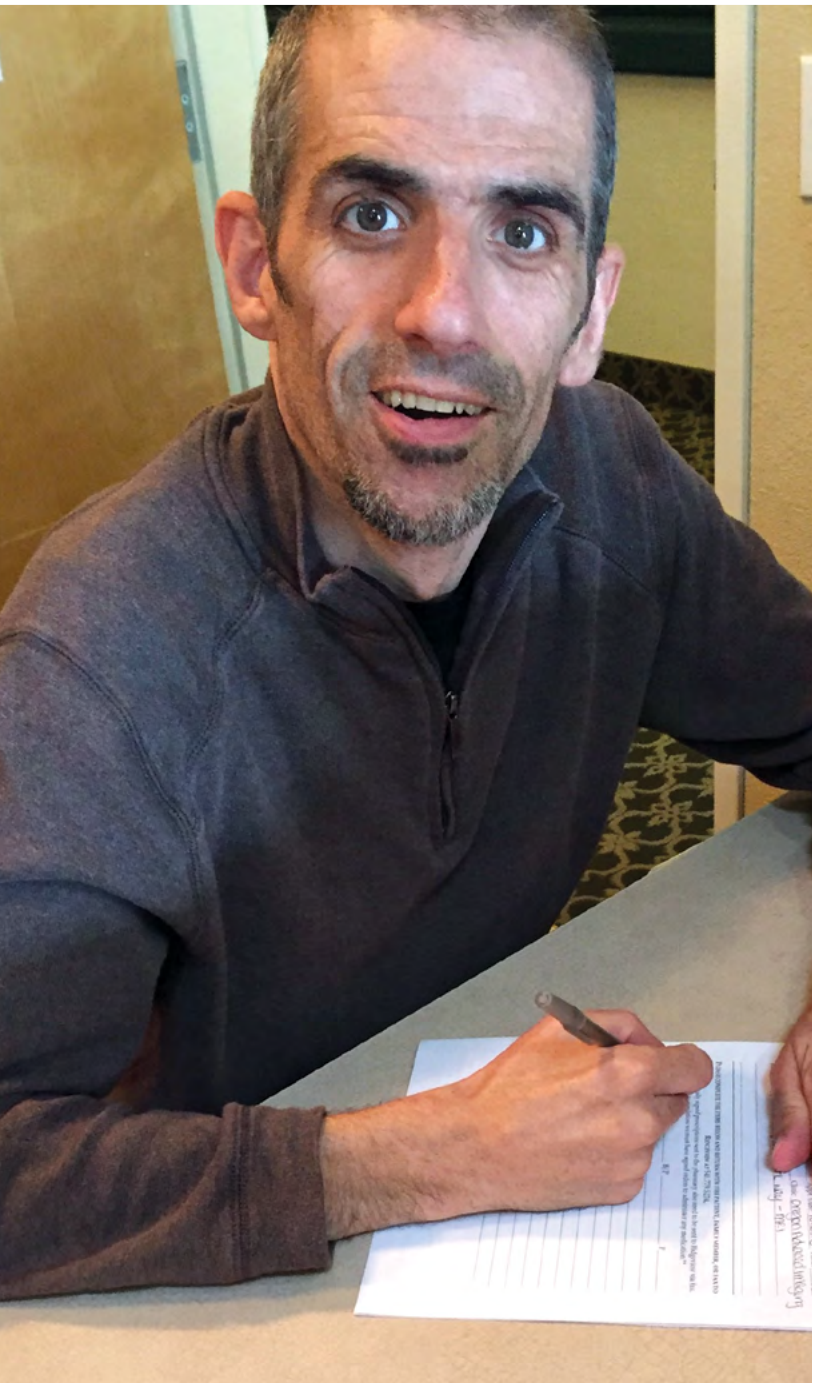
Bill was instrumental in convincing his employer, Independent Environments, Inc., to open a house specifically for people who are deaf and experience an intellectual or developmental disability. He advocates for more residences like the Quebec House and more opportunities for those who experience deafness and other disabilities to live and work in environments where everyone uses ASL and where they can communicate with both hearing and deaf communities.

Meanwhile, in the back yard, Charlie is showing Ben another way to improve his bike. "Ben and Charlie are a pair of lucky ones," Bill says. "Appropriate communication in a language understood by the persons involved is the first step to providing support to the folks we serve." ■

SUCCESS STORIES
Medford

Mark Towery is going places

Indian paintbrush



Mark Towery is a success story because, out of necessity, he made the effort to understand his disability (multiple sclerosis) and the progressive issues that he daily adapts to in order to have a healthier and happier life.

Mark had a previous VR file, opened in 2001 at the Medford VR Office and closed as rehabilitated in 2004. During that time, he had medical issues that required surgery and hospitalization. After his hospitalization, he volunteered at Charter Media doing video editing while he looked for a job with the help of our local work source program.

He landed a clerical position at Ridgeview Assisted Living in Medford working four hours per day five days per week as the front desk person. Mark had lived at Ridgeview for three years until he was independent enough to have his own apartment. "I guess they missed me and wanted me back," he says. His duties include phones, filing, coordinating services such as rides and transportation for residents and scheduling.

Mark was thrilled to get the job and, 11 years later, says, "I am happy to work for a company that has an impact in the community – one that helps people who cannot do for themselves."

> ***I am happy to work for a company that has an impact in the community – one that helps people who cannot do for themselves.***

Mark has many strengths; among them are self-advocacy, self-determination, self-efficacy, critical consciousness as well as a great sense of humor. His family has continually supported Mark.

Recently, Mark's disability issues progressed to the point of needing a motorized instead of a manual wheelchair. His old mini-van was falling apart and could not accommodate his motorized chair because of its height and weight and because he could not easily maneuver the chair within the van.

Mark returned to Voc Rehab in 2014 needing help with vehicle modifications on a new van he wanted to buy. He talked with local vehicle modification vendors, doing a lot of the needed research to find the best fit for what he needed.

Mark purchased his van and VR helped with the modifications. Mark followed VR's vehicle modification checklist and participated in a driver evaluation of his hand/eye coordination and other driving skills.

Since he bought the van, Mark has worked with VR to finish additional needed modifications such as hand controls and a lift so that he can safely drive it.

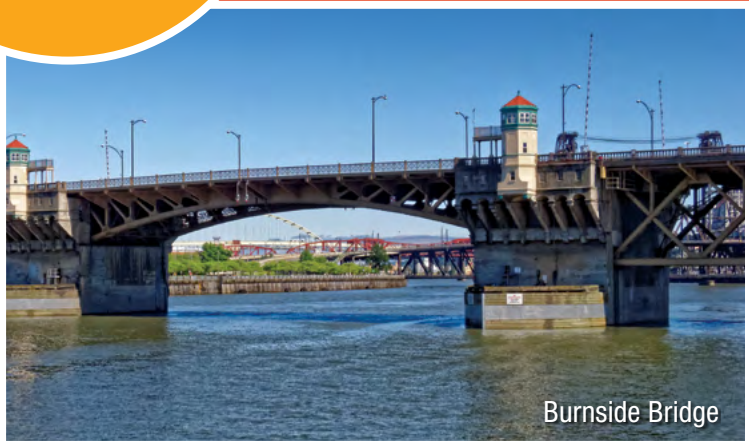
Mark and his family are thrilled with his new van as they have been able, for the first time in a long time, to go places they have not been able to go as a family. The old van had limited space and was not reliable. "Most important, the van has helped me keep my job. I can drive myself to and from work thanks to it and the accommodations," he says.

VR's contributions have helped Mark, enabling him to continue his employment as well as enrich his personal life. ■

— by Judy Rudy, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Medford

SUCCESS STORIES
Portland Metro

Miles syncs with his Greek heritage


Burnside Bridge

Miles McLarney, 23, loves Greek food. He is quick to correct if someone mispronounces the word "gyro," and his dream is to someday be a chef who makes his own dishes.

So his job at the Mad Greek Deli in southwest Portland is not just work for Miles: It's a great job match and a potential place to start his career.

After graduating from the Centennial Transition Center, Miles applied for services at the Washington County Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) office. Miles went to Dirske Counseling & Consulting for a targeted vocational assessment. Miles had never had a paid job. He knew he wanted to work somewhere close to his home in Hillsboro.

"Miles mentioned to me that he loved eating at The Mad Greek Deli, and that he was proud of his Greek heritage," said Allison Faucher, job developer with Dirkse. "He told me he wanted to start off as a dishwasher and learn that job."

Allison met with Pantelis "Pondo" Kosmas, the owner of both Portland Mad Greek Deli locations. Though he did not have a position open for a dishwasher, Pondo said he was open to doing an assessment. After three-weeks, Pondo offered Miles a job as a dishwasher and table busser in September 2014.

"Allison told me it was Miles' dream to work here at the Mad Greek," Pondo said. "I wanted him to have his own job, to be able to do things on his own, get more confidence, and grow in his life."

Pondo has a family member who experiences a developmental disability. Pondo bonded quickly with Miles, who worked to earn the trust that his employer had placed in him.

Miles works between one and three days a week, and he loves everything about his job. "I'm Greek by adoption and I love my heritage. I love the Greek food."

Miles said he was hired as a dishwasher and buses tables, but as he becomes more comfortable with his job, Pondo has been open to letting Miles take on more duties. Miles recently got his food handler's license and now makes the restaurant's popular "Greek fries."

"My goal is to learn to make more Greek dishes," Miles said. "I love food and I would love to learn more about making this kind of food."

Pondo said he couldn't be happier with Miles as an employee.

Miles McLarney and Mad Greek Deli Owner Pantelis "Pondo" Kosmas

"For me, Miles was the perfect match," he said. "He was a great fit for our restaurant and for our culture."

Pondo said Miles' ability to keep his entire team at ease has benefited the business. "He doesn't get as stressed like some of the others when we're busy. With his personality, he helps keep everyone relaxed during stressful times."

Miles wants to continue on his current path. He has found a welcoming work environment and feels like a part of the "Mad Greek" family.

"I like all the people I work with, which isn't the case everywhere you know," he said. "I like it here and as I get more experience, I am looking forward to learning to do more." ■

— by Angela Yeager, Communications Officer, Employment First

It was Miles' dream to work here at the Mad Greek. I wanted him to have his own job, to be able to do things on his own, get more confidence, and grow in his life.

SUCCESS STORIES
Eastern Oregon

Levi's success welded together by collaboration

Wallowa Valley

In his junior year at Ontario High School, Levi Elizondo began participating in the Youth in Transition Program (YTP). Together, Levi and his transition specialist explored his interests through skills assessments and work opportunities.

In his third year of welding, it was clear Levi had a passion for this vocation. His welding instructor encouraged him to gain more experience.

Levi's YTP specialist, Debbie Durham, set up a work opportunity at Art's Body Shop in Ontario. Throughout this work experience Levi, who experiences symptoms of autism spectrum disorder, struggled with communication and had some difficulty interacting with his co-workers. However, he asked for help and wanted to change.

Levi met regularly with his YTP specialist, VR counselor and his parents to look at options to help him meet his goal of becoming a welder. The team considered short- and long-term services and decided to access the County Developmental Disability Program (CDDP). Eastern Oregon Support Services Brokerage (EOSSB) came on board to help.

While the team developed his individual employment plan, Levi's welding skills continued to grow. Toward the end of his senior year, he used a laser technique to create a branding iron for his dad and a belt buckle for himself with the "O" for Oregon Ducks.

Levi graduated from Ontario High School with a regular diploma and completed a welding certificate program from Treasure Valley Community College. He was one of six students with disabilities to successfully complete the program. Levi was then referred to Western Idaho Training Company, Inc. (WITCO) and started working with his job developer and job coach, Shawn Reynolds. Levi met regularly with VR, WITCO, EOSSB, YTP and his parents to plan a smooth transition between short- and long-term services.

WITCO identified a job at Joe Kinney, Inc., where Levi was hired full-time as a welder. Shawn met with Levi before and after work to help him anticipate and problem-solve social situations he met with his co-workers. There were many days when Levi struggled to get along with the other men on the crew. Consistent daily feedback from Shawn helped Levi recognize social cues more readily and respond more appropriately. Levi worked for Joe Kinney, Inc., for four months when he agreed that his VR file was ready to close as a successful rehabilitation. Brokerage services, WITCO and follow-along services through YTP remained available as long-term supports if he needed them. Levi remained in contact with Shawn who helped him cope with his struggles and encouraged him to persevere.

Levi has gained so much self-confidence. He found this job on his own and saved enough in six months to buy his own vehicle.

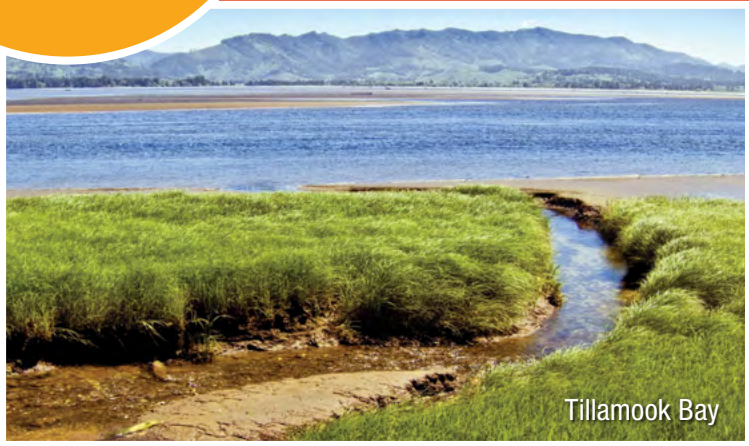
Levi stayed for another two months until a different welding job opened up at a farm equipment manufacturing company, Parma Company, in Parma, Idaho. Levi quickly applied for the job and was hired. His attention to detail led him to a position of inspecting parts for 'mis-welds' before they are sent to the painting department.

"Levi has gained so much self-confidence," says his VR Counselor, Dee Dee Satran. "He found this job on his own and saved enough in six months to buy his own vehicle." ■

— by Dee Dee Satran, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Eastern Oregon

SUCCESS STORIES
Oregon Coast

Hard work and community fuel Miguel's success


Tillamook Bay

Miguel Mendoza is a man of few words who knows how to focus. His job at the Pelican Pub in Tillamook demands that trait. Miguel constructs most of the boxes for the well-known Pelican Brewing Company beers.

"Miguel has been super," says his boss, Brewing Manager Marty Bills. "He is very focused on his job, which is fairly complex. And he never complains and always shows up." Miguel has not taken a single sick day since he started working at the pub in early 2015.

A collaboration between five Tillamook County organizations and businesses contributed to Miguel's and other VR clients' success in local jobs. Marie Mills Center, which contracts with VR to train and support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, worked with Pelican to, first of all, interview and hire Gary Mah to work at the Tillamook Pelican Pub.

Marie Mills and VR work together as part of Employment First, a philosophy and state policy that presumes working-age adults and youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities can work in community jobs where they can have meaningful interaction with co-workers who do not have disabilities as well as customers or the general public.

VR and Marie Mills again collaborated with Pelican Pub to find the right job match for Miguel. Another business, Tillamook Coliseum Theatre, was also part of the joint effort. Miguel's first job was cleaning up and learning to sell concessions at the theatre. After high school, he juggled part-time jobs there and at the pub. Miguel did such a good job at Pelican that he was offered a full-time job. That opened up a vacancy at the theatre, which filled the position with another VR client.

"Two employers in a relatively short period of time have been responsible for hiring a total of six individuals with disabilities," says VR Counselor Kathie Van Loh. "Those individuals (including others not mentioned in this story) were hired because they have proven they can do the job and do it well in a competitive work environment. This is an example of the partnerships that are being developed in Tillamook County among agencies and businesses, opening doors that had been previously closed," she says.

Marty says he was initially apprehensive about hiring Miguel and Gary because of safety issues. "But neither has any issues at all," he says. "They are both great employees."

Marie Mills Vocational Program Manager Cindy Green says Miguel's and Gary's success "is the product of a great collaboration with the community. It is great to know that, when someone has a dream, we can all work together to make it happen," she says.

> ***It is great to know that, when someone has a dream, we can all work together to make it happen.***

Sporting his trademark smile, Miguel is quick to report that "making money" is his favorite thing about his job. He also praises the pub as a very friendly place. "People who work here make the job easier," he says.

Miguel is bilingual – speaking English on the job and switching almost entirely to Spanish at home with his family.

Kathie Van Loh sums up why Miguel is so valuable to Pelican Pubs and to everyone he meets: "You can trust Miguel. You know he will do what he says he will," she says. "He's a man of few words, but gets along with everyone." ■

SUCCESS STORIES
Klamath Falls

Ed Voskanian thanks VR for helping build a new life

Merril Elevator

Ed Voskanian of Klamath Falls had been in construction his whole working life — 40 years — when he injured his knee, which led to a knee replacement that was supposed to return it to full use. Instead, his movement was severely limited.

One year later, Ed tore his other knee's ACL and could no longer work in construction. He was struggling to keep his family afloat and fighting to get unemployment. Doctors told him to retire early and take disability payments. "But that just isn't me," he said. Then someone told him about Vocational Rehabilitation.

"That's when everything turned around," Ed says. "Everyone at the Klamath Falls VR Office was so nice to me. They were there to help me." Ed said his Voc Rehab counselor, Tricia Balkwill, responded to any obstacle with, "Yeah, we can do that." She arranged transportation and a special chair and supported him through every part of the training and job-finding journey.

A staff member at an outside agency, contracted to help Ed discover a job path, asked, "What have you always wanted to do that you were not able to do?" He knew the answer without giving it a second thought: to work with patients. Ed had once dreamed of being a doctor but, being a practical person, realized that, since he was now in his 50s, training would take too long. Ed decided to become a phlebotomist. With the help of VR, he attended Klamath Falls Community College and then went on to specialized training in Medford. He ended up with an in-demand career that allowed him to work wherever he chose, and he chose to stay in Klamath Falls. Ed now works at Sky Lakes Medical Center.

[Ed's] Vocational Rehab counselor, Tricia Balkwill, responded to any obstacle with, "Yeah, we can do that."

"Ed's job is a perfect fit for him," says Tricia. "He is very outgoing and friendly and has a calming demeanor. He is good at working with people in crisis or who are not feeling well."

"I do go out of my way a little when elderly people come to have their blood drawn," Ed says. "I try to be a little bit more bright and shiny for them."

Ed says the team at the Klamath Falls VR Office continually supported him throughout the VR process. "They would say, 'Come on Ed, you're gonna do this!'"

Without [VR] behind me and everyone else they have helped, we would have been lost. We would've been one of the statistics, and nobody would've even heard about us or cared.

"I can't say enough about how great they have been," he says. "Without [VR] behind me and everyone else they have helped, we would have been lost. We would've been one of the statistics, and nobody would've even heard about us or cared." ■

Latourell Falls

The establishment of state rehabilitation councils

The 1992 amendments to the federal Rehabilitation Act required the formation of state rehabilitation advisory councils (SRACs) and identified their functions. Oregon's Governor Barbara Roberts appointed the Oregon SRAC on Sept. 1, 1993.

The 1998 amendments to the federal Rehabilitation Act removed "advisory" from the name and empowered the council to be active policy partners with state VR programs. The council's name officially changed in 1998 to the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC).

History

People with disabilities who were committed to the publicly funded Vocational Rehabilitation program's success formed the original state rehabilitation councils (SRCs). Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was the first disability civil rights law enacted in the United States. During the reauthorization process of the Rehabilitation Act of 1993, disability advocates persuaded Congress to create state rehabilitation councils (under Title 1, Section 105) to help people with disabilities who receive vocational rehabilitation services take an active role in shaping those services. The majority of council members must be persons with disabilities, thus providing a powerful venue for the consumer voice in the public Vocational Rehabilitation program.

SRCs' mission was originally to advise designated state agencies about providing vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities. The passage of the 1998 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act shifted the focus from a State Rehabilitation Advisory Council to its current role of policy partner. This significantly changed the role of the State Rehabilitation Council, giving the council independence, autonomy and a stronger advocacy role. SRCs now work in partnership with the public vocational rehabilitation program on the effectiveness of its policies, programs and services in meeting the needs of persons with disabilities.

"As my tenure comes to an end, it has been an honor to serve on the SRC. The entire council, VR counselors and staff are making a difference in people's lives. At many of our meetings, during both public input and local office reports, we heard how working with VR had changed someone's life. We live in a time where people will ask what your job is, "What do you do?" before they ask your name. People are often defined by their job. To be able to work, regardless of your abilities, is very important to one's self identity and confidence. To know that we have helped in any way is important to all of us. We are making a difference.

–Sherry Stock, SRC Legislative Advocacy Committee Chair

Oregon State Rehabilitation Council

Council purpose

Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, establishes the Oregon State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). The SRC gives advice to and works in partnership with the Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. The council provides VR an external consumer-oriented perspective when discussing program and policy.

The council also provides rehabilitation services' consumers a formal mechanism to influence the direction of rehabilitation programs in Oregon at the systemic and policy levels.

Council authority and initiative

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, authorizes the State Rehabilitation Council. This federal legislation identifies the council's required functions, which include:

- Work in partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation regarding essential planning and service delivery intended to result in meeting the employment potential of Oregonians with disabilities.
- Review and analyze program effectiveness, create and analyze consumer satisfaction materials, render concerns and recommendations to VR derived from performance standards and measurements of rehabilitation services.
- Advise the Governor and state agencies on the performance of vocational rehabilitation in Oregon regarding eligibility, program effectiveness and effect on individuals with disabilities. This includes preparation and distribution of this annual report.
- Coordinate the work of the State Rehabilitation Council with the activities of other disability-related councils in the state. This includes establishing and maintaining a positive working relationship with the State Independent Living Council (SILC).

Council structure

The full council meets four times per year. These sessions occur throughout the state in order to:

- Listen to and hear from consumers and others;
- Learn about programs, activities and needs specific to each region of the state;
- Build/support collaborations with public and private partners involved in rehabilitation and employment in Oregon; and
- Conduct the business of the council in a public setting.

State Rehabilitation Council members

NAME	TERM	REPRESENTATION/COMMUNITY
David Abramowitz	02/12–11/15	Advocate/Developmental Disabilities/Eugene
Jeanne Barter	10/13–09/16	Advocate/Consumer/Eugene
Renata Beck	05/10–11/15	Voc Rehab Counselor/Statewide (non-voting)
Laurie Brooks	03/11–11/16	Business/Salem
Anne Burns	05/10–11/15	Youth Transition/West Linn
Susie Calhoun	08/15–11/16	121 Representative/Statewide
Gary Chiaravalli	12/14–11/17	Community Rehab Provider
Jeri Cohen	01/13–01/16	Advocate/Brain Injury Association/Creswell
Heidi Dirkse-Graw	10/13–09/16	Business/Lake Oswego
Roberta Dunn	01/13–11/16	Parent and Training Information Center/Statewide
Mark Foster	07/12–11/17	Voc Rehab Counselor/Former Consumer/Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Portland (non-voting)
Tom Giles	06/11–11/17	Business/Corvallis
Ryan Green	06/13–06/16	Advocate/Consumer/Wilsonville
Tammy Guest	12/14–11/17	Advocate/Mental Health Employment/Stayton
Trina Lee		VR Administrator/Statewide (non-voting)
Chungfan Ni	07/12–11/17	Advocate/Family Member/Salem
Clayton Rees	12/13–11/16	Advocate/Cloverdale
Leslie Riggs	02/12–05/15	121 Representative/Statewide
Sally Simich	01/13–01/15	Education/Statewide
Sherry Stock	10/10–11/15	SILC/Business/Molalla
Greg Sublett	12/15–11/18	SILC/Bend
Norm Underwood	12/13–11/16	Business/Medford
Ted Wenk	07/06–11/15	Client Assistance Program/Statewide

SRC committee structure and reports

Business/ Employment

Chair: Heidi Dirkse-Graw. Members: Laurie Brooks, Gary Chiaravalli, Mark Foster, Tammy Guest, Greg Sublett, Norm Underwood (VR: Dan Haun, Joe Miller, Judy Barker) (Ad-hoc: Morgan Olivera-Rincon, Lynn Wiles, Scott Hatley).

The mission of the Business/Employment Committee focuses on "promoting change within business culture to include disability and diversity employment." The SRC Business/Employment Committee is an active committee comprised of several SRC members, VR partners and strategic ad-hoc members. Through our work in 2015, the committee has identified three key strategies guiding our work: employer recognition, employer partnership and employer education.

Every quarter, the SRC Business/Employment Committee solicits nominations for employer awards from the local VR branch in the geographic region of the SRC Quarterly Meeting. These awards have been an important addition to the meetings and promote recognition for local employers who have been substantially involved in hiring VR consumers. Also, in August 2015, as part of our recognition efforts, the SRC and VR awarded seven Oregon employers the 2015 Diamond Award for Diversity and Inclusion at VR's Annual In-service. We hope this award will be an annual tradition. It is an excellent example of the results of Oregon's vibrant VR program.

The Business/Employment Committee works with VR to ensure that the business and employer community is informed and more fully engaged with the disability community and its consumers.

Committee responsibilities:

In collaboration with VR, the SRC Business/ Employment Committee seeks to engage employers/businesses in activities designed to promote inclusion of Oregonians with disabilities in the workforce. This is achieved through gaining understanding of employer needs, providing consultation and education, and by recognizing outstanding employer achievements in the area of diversity and inclusion.

Executive

Co-chairs: Laurie Brooks and Tom Giles. Vice-chair: Heidi Dirkse-Graw. Members: Renata Beck, Jeri Cohen, Sherry Stock, Ted Wenk, Rhoda Hunter, Jeanne Barter, Ryan Green (VR: Trina Lee, director).

The Executive Committee met monthly throughout the year, with the VR director providing monthly updates on the status of the VR program. The ongoing dialogue between the VR director and the SRC kept us informed of agency activities and challenges that VR faces. It was a busy year learning about the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA), conducting both employee and job developer surveys, providing input on the job development model, working with VR to develop and revise policies and developing agendas

for quarterly meetings. A new VR director was hired in July 2015 and the council is working closely with her to build a positive working relationship between VR and the SRC.

The Executive Committee works to oversee council activities in response to the mandated function. It manages all council operations and ensures council decisions and recommendations are implemented. The committee serves as the primary point of contact for the council.

Committee responsibilities:

- **Develop State Plan** (also under Program Strategies and Budget Committee).
- **Implement order of selection** (with input from all committees).

  Under federal law, if Oregon does not have enough money to provide vocational rehabilitation services to all eligible persons, VR must set priorities to serve those with the most significant disabilities.
- **Develop SRC bylaws (with Executive Committee).**

  Draft and develop SRC bylaws, monitor effectiveness and recommend any necessary revisions each year.
- **Write SRC Annual Report** (with input from all committees).

  The Rehab Act requires the SRC to prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor and the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Commissioner on the status of vocational rehabilitation programs operated within the state. The public must have access to the reports. Report is due by Dec. 31 each year.
- **Partner with other councils within the state.**

  To avoid duplication of efforts and enhance the number of individuals served, coordinate activities with the activities of other councils including the Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB), State Independent Living Council (SILC), Client Assistance Program (CAP), advisory panel of IDEA, Oregon Disabilities Commission (ODC) and Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities (OCDD).
- **Support the National Coalition of SRCs (NCSRC).**

  The council strongly supports the NCSRC and the opportunity to share in a strong national advocacy voice and benefit from sharing of best practices. We will continue to advocate for our staff's participation on the NCSRC Board of Directors.
- **Support the RSA 107 monitoring reviews.**

  The Rehab Act requires the RSA commissioner to conduct annual reviews and periodic onsite monitoring of programs authorized under Title 1 of the Act. The purpose is to determine whether a state VR agency is complying substantially with the provisions of its State Plan under Section 101 of the Act and with the evaluation standards and performance indicators established under Section 106.

Legislative Advocacy

Chair: Sherry Stock. Members: Ryan Green, Tammy Guest (VR vacant).

This committee educates, informs and influences the state and federal legislative agenda related to the public vocational rehabilitation program and disability employment policies.

Committee responsibilities:

- **Visit Oregon legislators and U.S. congressional delegation.**

  Meet with state and federal legislators to advocate for the public VR program. Respond to state and federal legislation. Draft response to legislation that affects the public vocational rehabilitation program.
- **Review and provide input on public policy (state, federal) as it affects employment of people with disabilities.**
- **Draft SRC position papers related to public policy.**
- **Help VR develop policy packages** (work with Policy Committee when needed).
- **Provide training for VR consumers to testify before the Oregon Legislature.**

  Meet with consumers who have signed up to testify to encourage them and share tips on testifying before the Ways and Means Committee. SRC provides travel reimbursement for those needing assistance.
- **Advocate for improved work incentives and reduced disincentives for employers who hire persons with disabilities.**
- **Create template [guidelines] for legislative response.**
- **Advocate for the state to be a model employer for hiring persons with disabilities** (Employer Awards Program with the Business/Employment Committee).

"In the past 35 years, I have been blessed to serve on many councils, boards and committees in Tillamook County. I have also been blessed to work with people of all ages who have been challenged by their limitations. Prior to retiring from active employment with the Oregon Department of Human Services Vocational Rehabilitation, it was suggested that I might consider applying for a position on the State Rehabilitation Council. I did and was accepted. That decision is the pinnacle of my career – to be invited to serve with people who are dedicated to serving people with disabilities. This council is comprised of people, like myself, who have devoted much of their active lives serving people with disabilities and continue to show their compassion and dedication by serving behind the scenes. I am grateful to be able use my experience in the rehabilitation profession and serve with the SRC professionals whom I hold in high esteem for who they are and what they represent.

–Clayton Rees, SRC Member

Membership

Chair: Jeri Cohen. Members: Tammy Guest (Rhoda Hunter).

Three new members were appointed to the council in 2015: Susie Calhoun (121 Program), Gary Chiaravalli (Community Rehab Provider) and Greg Sublett (State Independent Living Council). Anne Burns and Sherry Stock completed two terms of service and were recognized for their contributions to the council at the August and November quarterly meetings. Leslie Riggs resigned due to a change in his employment responsibilities. The Membership Committee recruitment process ensures that the council meets the federally mandated membership requirements.

The Membership Committee recruits, screens and recommends new applicants to fill vacancies on the council.

Committee responsibilities:

- **Recruit, train and mentor members.**

  Monitor council membership to ensure all positions mandated in the Rehab Act are filled. Recruit new members, secure reappointment of existing members where eligible, assist in orientation of new members and identify SRC members' training needs.

Policy

Chair: Renata Beck. Members: David Abramowitz, Jeanne Barter, Gary Chiaravalli, Heidi Dirkse-Graw, Roberta Dunn, Tom Giles, Clayton Rees, Ted Wenk, Rhoda Hunter (VR: Robin Brandt, Ann Balzell, Robert Costello).

The Policy Committee meets monthly throughout the year on the second Monday at 2 p.m. Some members choose to meet in person in Salem and others attend via conference call. The meetings are open format and anyone interested is welcome.

The Policy Committee has been actively addressing many areas of service including, but not limited to, the following:

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act reauthorization (WIOA);
- Review of updated Oregon Administrative Rules;
- Time to "plan";
- Self-employment;
- Supported employment;
- Vehicle modification;
- Services to persons who are deaf and hard of hearing;
- Authority to work;
- Transition.

The U.S. Senate and House of Representatives passed WIOA and President Obama signed it in 2014. It is a very large bill and does many things including reauthorizing the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in 1998. Below is a summary of the significant changes for our program and policies:

- New performance standards;
- 90 days to plan;
- Extension of provision of supported employment from 18 to 24 months;
- Requirement that assessments be done in integrated settings;
- Clarification of what counts for a self-employment closure;
- Inclusion of customized employment;
- Numerous significant changes related to transition;
- A 15 percent set-aside for transition services that provides definitions for youth and students with disabilities;
- Definition and required provision of pre-employment transition services;

- Various requirements on the use of sheltered settings;
- Development of a unified State Plan;
- No additional funding;
- Additional memoranda of understanding;
- Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS);
- Changes to the workforce boards;
- Omission of requirement for regional technical assistance and continuing education centers (TACEs);
- Omission of requirement for state training grants;
- Lessening of the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development standard;
- Imposition of additional reporting requirements;
- Limit on contributions to one-stop centers;
- Two-year phase-in period.

The Policy Committee also reviewed and adopted multiple rules, policies and procedures.

Public hearings were held for the changes in the Oregon Administrative Rules and each policy.

Adopted rules:

- Oregon Administrative Rule 582-001-0010 Definitions for Chapter 582 - Effective 1/1/2015
- Oregon Administrative Rule 582-050-0000 Referrals and Applications - Effective 1/1/2015

Adopted policies:

- VR Policy: 3.1 Time to Plan (1-1-2015)
- VR Policy: 3.13 Self-Employment (1-1-2015) and (by end of year – second update)
- VR Policy: 3.14 Supported Employment policy (April 2015)
- VR Policy: 5.8 Vehicle Modification (in development)
- VR Policy: 6.4 Services to Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing (in development)
- VR Policy: 2.3 Authority to Work (9/1/2015)
- VR Policy: Transition Policy (9/1/2015)

In addition to the OAR and policies that have been updated and adopted, information memoranda were shared. The SRC reviewed VR-IM-15-5 before it went public. The SRC did not review VR-IM-15-6 because it was an agreement with the Information Security and Privacy Office (ISO).

Vocational Rehabilitation information memoranda:

- VR-IM-15-6 Confirm Information for Client (7/9/2015);
- VR-IM-15-5 No assistance for Vocational Rehabilitation participants in employment related to production, sale or distribution of marijuana (6/29/2015).

Review and implementation of changes associated with Vocational Rehabilitation policy is an ongoing process with attention needed as our governing guidelines and mandates evolve. The Policy Committee chair would like to thank the members of the State Rehabilitation Council for their dedication and commitment to serve. With our collective efforts we can enhance the employment opportunities for all Oregonians who experience disabilities.

This committee works closely with VR to develop and/or revise policies that affect the operation of the agency, the delivery of services, and/or impact the quality of services to the consumer.

Committee responsibilities:

- **Work with the VR to review Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS).**

  Review Oregon Revised Statutes relating to VR, to bring the language into compliance with the Rehabilitation Act.

- **Review and comment on VR policy issues, such as** personnel, client travel, client vendors, Pell Grant, vehicle modification, vehicle insurance, qualified personnel, closure as other than rehabilitated, written hearing notices, analysis of application process, certification of rehabilitation providers. (Committee has input from the Program Effectiveness and other committees as appropriate.)

- **Monitor VR IPE standard**

  Policy requires VR write a plan within 180 days of finding the consumer eligible or provide documentation for an extension. Even though the standard for Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) is currently 180 days, VR agreed to work in partnership with the SRC to establish an incremental timeline to achieve an internal agency standard of 90 days as an indicator of effective practice.

- **Provide input on proposed changes to administrative rules.**

- **Advocate for confidentiality issues.**

  Certified rehabilitation counselors must practice confidentiality or risk losing their national certification. The SRC has a history of advocating for confidential office space for counselors during DHS reorganization.

- **Review VR application process.**

  Review with VR its current application process/forms.

- **Work with VR on policy option packages (POPS).**

Program Effectiveness

Chair: Ted Wenk. Members: David Abramowitz, Jeanne Barter, Renata Beck, Susie Calhoun, Mark Foster, Chungfan Ni, Sally Simich, Greg Sublett (VR: Ron Barcikowski, Dan Haun).

In 2015, the Program Effectiveness Committee designed and distributed two short surveys: one for VR staff and another for VR Job Development vendors. The surveys' purpose was to capture a current snapshot of successes and problems administering VR services in Oregon. The SRC determined this is particularly important at a time of major program changes mandated by state and federal law and policy on supported employment. The committee identified a major need for greater clarity, consistency and training in policies and procedures. Additional issues discussed were difficulties with ORCA, the electronic record keeping system, and with some VR offices not having sufficient confidential meeting space for VR customers. The VR administration has favorably responded to these concerns at SRC meetings and has followed through with several remedial action steps.

This committee partners with VR to ensure that program strategies produce the highest quality results for/with consumers.

Committee responsibilities:

- Conduct comprehensive needs assessment (ad-hoc committee).

  The Rehab Act mandates the SRC to partner with VR on statewide needs assessment every three years to assess the rehabilitation needs of Oregonians with disabilities. The assessment provides information relevant to improving VR processes and practices, understanding the training needs of staff, and identifying methods for ongoing communication and continuous improvement.

- Review VR case file findings.
- Provide input on proposed financial needs test.
- Participate on selection committee for new independent hearing officers (IHO).
- Review the appeals process and independent hearing officers' decisions with VR.
- Conduct SRC field visits. Meet with each VR office for field staff to share their successes, issues or concerns with the council. Get feedback from VR staff to partner with VR to improve services and outcomes for VR consumers.
- Conduct consumer satisfaction survey (ad-hoc committee).

  The Rehab Act mandates the SRC perform a consumer satisfaction survey. The SRC is responsible for monitoring VR performance and policies. VR consumers are surveyed about their experiences with VR and the SRC uses the survey information to develop the state plan with VR. The Governor and RSA receive information about consumers' satisfaction with VR services. Efforts need to be consumer focused and get input from consumers and former consumers.

Outgoing SRC Member Award: Anne Burns with Joe Miller (VR Field Services Manager)

- Conduct VR staff survey.

  Get feedback from VR field staff to partner with VR Administration to improve services and outcomes for VR consumers.
- Review Client Assistance Program (CAP).

  Receive regular updates from the Client Assistance Program and discuss any issues/challenges with VR Administration.
- Foster partnerships with tribal VR (121 programs) and SILC.
- Review secretary of state audits and other internal audits.
- Review VR case files and findings.

Program Strategies and Budget

Chair: Laurie Brooks. Members: Jeanne Barter, Clayton Rees, Sherry Stock (VR: Joe Miller, Judy Barker; State Plan Development: Dan Haun).

This committee partners with VR to ensure alignment between program delivery strategies and the resources necessary to implement those strategies.

Committee responsibilities:

- **Monitor the VR budget.**

  Get regular updates from VR Administration on the VR budget's status and how the budget affects consumers.
- **Develop the State Plan (work with Executive Committee).**

  The Rehab Act mandates the SRC work in partnership with VR to develop the State Plan. The SRC is responsible for submitting input in Section 4.2(c) of the State Plan.
- **Monitor allocation of both actual funds and policy within the department.**

2015 State Rehabilitation Council activities

- Reviewed the Vocational Rehabilitation budget and received regular updates from VR.
- Participated in Portland's Business Leadership Network employer education event, February 2015.
- Worked with VR to develop and revise policies. Some of the issues the council worked on with VR included Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act reauthorization, review of updated Oregon Administrative Rules, time to plan, self-employment, vehicle modification, services to persons who are deaf and hard of hearing, authority to work and transition.
- Presented Employment First Initiative to employers, February 2015.
- Participated in the NW Regional Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Advisory Committee meetings.
- Participated in bimonthly conference calls of the National Coalition of SRCs. SRC staff participated on the NCSRC Board of Directors meetings.
- Presented at Meet at the Mountain Conference, Bend, Oregon, 2015.
- Represented the SRC at the Spring NCSRC Training in Bethesda, Maryland, and Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation Conference, April 18–22, 2015.
- Met with members of Oregon's congressional delegation regarding the public vocational rehabilitation program.
- Represented the SRC at Incight's Hall of Fame Breakfast, August 2015.
- Represented the SRC at the 2015 Pacific Northwest Brain Injury Conference.
- Represented the SRC at the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) Conference, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 2015.
- Represented the SRC on VR monthly stakeholder conference calls.
- Conducted two separate surveys, one for VR staff and the other for job developers.
- Represented the SRC at the DHS ADA 25th anniversary celebration in Salem, as well as the Benton County ADA 25th anniversary celebration.
- The following council members attended the OVRS In-service Conference, Aug. 12–13, 2015: David Abramowitz, Renata Beck, Laurie Brooks, Mark Foster, Tom Giles, Heidi Dirkse-Graw, Tammy Guest, Sally Simich and Ted Wenk.
- Attended the Regional TACE-VR meeting in Vancouver, Washington, September 2015.
- Represented the SRC at the VR quarterly business review meetings.
- Participated on the Benton County Employment Task Force.
- Represented the SRC at the Individual Placement and Support Supported Employment Conference, September 2015.

- Represented the SRC at the Educator Institute on Networking and Transition, June 2015.
- Partnered with the State Independent Living Council, Client Assistance Program, Workforce Investment Board, Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Oregon Disabilities Commission.
- Represented the SRC at the fall NCSRC Training in Seattle, Washington, and CSAVR Conference, Oct. 31–Nov. 4, 2015.
- Presented at the TASH Conference, November 2015.
- Participated on the Department of Human Services Vocational Rehabilitation interview panels for VR director.
- Partnered with VR and Oregon Commission for the Blind in statewide employer trainings.
- Quarterly meetings held in Salem, Portland, Medford and Newport:

  February meeting, in Salem, included these topics: VR director's report, VR budget report, Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act, public input, employer/partner recognition, local office update, Policy Committee update.

  May meeting, in Portland, included these topics: VR director's report, draft job development model, employer-partner recognition, public input, job developer survey results, VR budget report, Workforce Investment & Opportunity Act, council committee updates.

  August meeting, in Medford, included these topics: ODDS update, Transitional Technical Assistance Network, VR budget report, proposed future of Oregon VR strategy and structure, employer-partner recognition, public input, local office update, VR staff survey report, Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act, VR policy update, council committee updates, recognition of outgoing member.

  November meeting, in Newport, included these topics: VR strategies and objectives, VR budget report, state plan update, employer-partner recognition, public input, local office update, job placement contract, Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act, Business/Employment Committee and Policy Committee reports and recognition of outgoing members.

"It has been an honor and privilege to serve my second term on the State Rehabilitation Council as the council works in partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation to promote independence among Oregonians who have disabilities. As an educator for rehabilitation counselors in training, it is also beneficial to share in the classroom about the SRC's and VR's work in advocacy and empowerment of people who have disabilities. I truly appreciate the valuable experience of working with a group of rehabilitation experts to promote program effectiveness and consumer satisfaction while witnessing the positive changes that occur in agencies and the field.

Chungfan Ni, SRC Member

Quarterly meeting employer/ partner awards

At each quarterly SRC meeting, the SRC and local VR branches recognize employers and community employment partners that have made significant contributions to employing Oregonians in their geographic region. Branch managers work closely with their staff to identify one or two worthy recipients in each category. The award is presented by the SRC Business/Employment Committee chair and the local VR branch manager. This has become a much anticipated event at SRC quarterly meetings.

February 2015 award recipients

Kate Tartar, *Where you Want To Be;* Ricardo Alvarez, *Easter Seals Latino Connection;* Becky Emmert and Julie Reis, *Lane Independent Living Alliance/Living Independently for Empowerment;* Stacey Jewell, *Lowe's;* Ryan Kackley, *Oregon Marketing Group;* Judi James, *My Dog's Gym;* Marshall Curry, *Marion Polk Food Share;* Mary Lucas, *Source for Work;* Claudia Foster and Jan Brazeau, *TJ Maxx.*

Kate Tartar, job developer from *Where You Want to Be,* with Sheila Blain, VR counselor

Marshall Curry, *Marion Polk Food Share,* with Kathy Eckert-Mason, VR counselor

Julie Reis, Karli Mitchell, Becky Emmert, Missy Elder from *Living Independently for Empowerment* with Kathy Eckert-Mason, VR counselor

Mary Lucas, *Source for Work,* with Alice Pangburn, VR counselor

May 2015 award recipients

Susan Mahony, job developer; Amy Malony, *DoubleTree Hotel Laundry Service;* JaNae Hagle and Lynn Wiles, *Exceed;* Brian White, *YMCA of Columbia-Willamette, Portland.*

August 2015 award recipients

Tina Kelly, food service supervisor, *Asante Rogue Regional Medical Center;* Katie Merola, *Southern Oregon Goodwill Industries;* Greg Holt, *Pickers Paradise;* Becky Simpson, *Pathway Enterprises, Inc.;* Brent Kell, *Valley Immediate Care;* Gwyn Lema, *Creating Community Impact.*

Claudia Foster, Jan Brazeau, *TJ Maxx,* with Alice Pangburn, VR counselor

Gary Chiaravalli, *SRC;* Gwyn Lema, *Creating Community Impact;* Pete Karpa, Southern Oregon branch manager; Brent Kell, *Valley immediate Care*

Gary Chiaravalli, *SRC;* Linda Knight, Ali Brown, *Pathway Enterprises, Inc.* (accepting award for Becky Simpson); Pete Karpa, Southern Oregon branch manager

November 2015 award recipients

Roberto Ponce and Carmen Palinkas, *Dial a Bus;* Anne Haddock, *Timberview Care Center;* MaryDale Salston, Sheri Boyd and Jessyca Delepine, *Linn County Mental Health;* Robin de La Mora and Stacey Galvan, *Collaborative Employment Innovations.*

Dana Morris, VR; Roberto Ponce and Carmen Palinkas, *Dial A Bus;* Heidi Dirkse-Graw, SRC

Bryan Campbell and Dana Morris, VR; Robin de La Mora and Stacey Galvan, *Collaborative Employment Innovations*

Jessyca Delepine, Sheri Boyd and MaryDale Salston, *Linn County Mental Health IPS Supported Employment;* Heidi Dirkse-Graw and Tammy Guest, SRC

Vocational Rehabilitation In-service awards

2015 Diamond Award for Diversity and Inclusion

This award, given by Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation and the State Rehabilitation Council, is presented at the annual VR In-service. It recognizes employers from around Oregon that have gone above and beyond to expand employment opportunities and increase diversity and inclusion for Oregonians with disabilities through their work with VR. Nominations are solicited from vocational rehabilitation counselors and job placement partners. The strongest nominations have support from both a vocational rehabilitation counselor and a job developer. Criteria include, but are not limited to:

- Hired multiple VR consumers in the last year;
- Went the extra mile to carve a customized job for someone with a significant disability;
- Demonstrated commitment to diversity and inclusion through a number of activities with VR and its consumers such as providing job shadows, work assessments, and hiring and significantly accommodating individuals with disabilities so they can perform their jobs.

The outstanding employers and businesses that received this award included:

Jonathan Fahey, *Create a Memory;* Kelsi Weeks and Merry Lynn Rose, *Glockenspiel Restaurant;* Derick Ellingson and Tracy Nuttall, *Home Depot Oregon City;* Cris Chapman and Jack Inglis, *Floyd's Coffee Shop;* Denise Castillo, Vinnie Loren and Gary Wolf, *Huntleigh, USA;* Brian Kennedy, *Portland Timbers;* Andrew Bellamy, *Service Master of Grants Pass.*

Home Depot of Oregon City: Derick Ellingson, Tracy Nuttall

Huntleigh, USA at the Portland Airport: Denise Castillo, Vinnie Loren

Create A Memory in Salem: Jonathan Fahey

Floyd's Coffee Shop in Portland: Cris Chapman, Jack Inglis

Portland Timbers: Brian Kennedy

Glockenspiel Restaurant: Merry Lynn Rose, Kelsi Weeks

VR Innovation and Service Equity Award

This year the SRC and VR proudly recognized an internal Department of Human Services program that has promoted equity in employment and innovation in its practices, leading to improved employment outcomes for VR consumers: *DHS Imaging and Records Management Services* (not pictured)

Member partner reports

Parent Training and Information Center (PTI)

As the state's federally designated parent training and information center (PTI) on issues related to special education, Family and Community Together (FACT) Oregon serves families and professionals throughout the state. The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) awarded this designation for a second time in July 2015, allowing us the great privilege of working with even more families with children experiencing disability.

We have been working with parents and partners such as Oregon Developmental Disabilities Services, Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and Oregon Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) to increase their employment and independence expectations for youth experiencing disability. For example, the Employment First Seamless Transition pilots continue to facilitate our collaboration with school districts, community developmental disability programs, support service brokerages, mental health providers and families to move people experiencing disability out of segregated work settings and into the community. For the second year in a row, FACT worked in partnership with ODE to educate teachers at its Educator Institute on Networking and Transition, which highlights the Governor's Executive Order 13-04, the Employment First initiative, and related-employment services for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

With the authorization of the Workforce Incentive and Opportunities Act and its increased efforts to help youth experiencing disability and their transition into employment, FACT is part of many discussions on how best to serve and support families with transition-age youth. We anticipate increased collaboration with VR throughout the next year. Lastly, we continue to provide parent representatives to a number of groups, including the Governor's Employment Policy Group, ODE's Office of Student Learning and Partnerships Transition Advisory Council, Oregon's Employment First Initiative, and the State Rehabilitation Council.

Feedback from families and professionals guide our practice. Parents using person-centered principles provide training and information. This approach has struck a chord with Oregon families experiencing disability. Indeed, our most recent satisfaction surveys found that:

- Ninety-eight percent of parents and caregivers found FACT trainings and information useful.
- Ninety percent of families put their new knowledge to use.
- Ninety-eight percent of professionals found connecting with FACT made them better able to support families.
- Eighty-seven percent shared their new knowledge gained from FACT with other professionals.
- Ninety-nine percent of families stated that FACT trainings and information made them more knowledgeable in working with their child's school.

FACT continues to reach more families, especially those who speak English as a second language. Interpretation is available upon request at all FACT trainings. On average, we hold five trainings per month. We conduct more than 90 percent of the trainings in collaboration with some of our 88 community partners across the state. As of August 2015, FACT had 11,785 contacts in its database.

– Roberta Dunn, FACT

State Independent Living Council

The relationship between Oregon's VR Program, the State Rehabilitation Council and the SILC continues to be positive and supportive. The Rehabilitation Act's Title I program provides funds to support the operation of the State Independent Living Council (SILC) as an innovation and expansion activity. A written agreement between VR and the SILC establishes the nature of this support, which includes both funding for the SILC's Resource Plan and in-kind support such as shared office space and various business services.

Oregon's VR program functions as the designated state unit for the Title VII, Independent Living (IL) program. VR receives, disburses and accounts for these program funds, as directed by the State Plan for Independent Living. The VR director serves Oregon State Rehabilitation Council as a co-signatory on the plan along with the SILC chairperson and Oregon Commission for the Blind executive director.

The state plan guides Independent Living program funding; this includes grants to Oregon's network of Centers for Independent Living (CILs), which deliver Oregon's Independent Living program services to consumers. Independent Living program staff, under the authority of the VR director, administer these Title VII grants.

Oregon's CILs often serve as VR vendors, providing employment-related IL services to VR program consumers. In addition, VR counselors often refer consumers to the IL program for employment-connected IL services. In this case, the IL program funds the services.

The SILC is directed to work with other programs and councils serving people with disabilities (including the SRC). The SILC's role is to coordinate services that support the independence of people with disabilities, reduce service duplication and fill service gaps.

To carry out this function, the SILC monitors working relationships between CILs and VR program offices. Maintaining a seat on the SRC informs the SILC about VR program service policies and facilitates the flow of information to both councils. When needed, the SILC works with the SRC to address policies to improve coordination of IL and VR services into a seamless partnership.

— Sherry Stock, SILC

Oregon Department of Education

Oregon Department of Education (ODE) understands that the transition process is designed to help students with disabilities progress smoothly from school to adult life. Transitioning to adulthood is unique to each youth's abilities, so individualized transition planning is key to success in post-secondary outcomes for young people with disabilities. Our goal is to help students and families understand the transition process and work collaboratively with adult agencies and other community partners to design effective and appropriate transition plans. Without an effective transition plan, students could potentially leave school without realistic goals for their future and without the skills needed to pursue further education or employment, access community services or live independently.

For more information on secondary transition for students with disabilities, go to www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=266.

Transition Technical Assistance Network

The overall vision of the Transition Technical Assistance Network is to support alliances that will shift perception of society and raise expectations for individuals who experience disabilities so they can live full lives integrated in Oregon communities based on choice.

The network is in its second year and running full steam ahead. The Transition Technical Assistance Network includes ODE's secondary transition liaison, eight full-time transition network facilitators, and one regional employment coordinator and trainer. The Oregon Department of Education and the Vocational Rehabilitation Program are jointly funding these positions.

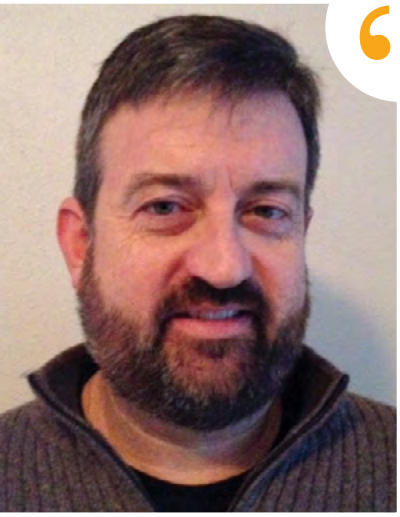
The Transition Technical Assistance Network is a team working to support the Governor's Executive Order (No.15-01) to further improve Oregon's systems of designing and delivering employment services for students with disabilities. The transition network facilitators will work to support the collaborative efforts of Vocational Rehabilitation and local education agencies in Oregon by implementing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and providing Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS).

To learn more about the Transition Technical Assistance Network, review the Governor's Executive Order or get more information about Employment First transition-related information, go to www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=4250.

The Educator Institute on Networking and Transition Training, rounds I and II

The Educator Institute on Networking and Transition was a series of full-day trainings designed specifically for middle and high school special education teachers to learn more about adult service agencies and effective strategies to assist students with disabilities in the transition process. Topic sessions of this training included an introduction to Vocational Rehabilitation and Developmental Disability services and benefits planning. It also included person-centered planning of one-page profiles, sample curricula, local Employment First and family advocacy and training groups. This was an exciting opportunity for networking with agencies within regions.

For links to presentations from the Educator Institute on Networking and Transition, go to www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?=4194.



"I have worked with Vocational Rehabilitation in several other states but serving on Oregon's State Rehab Council provides an unparalleled opportunity to help craft and implement systems that will lead to successful employment outcomes. The members of the SRC bring a wide variety and wealth of background and perspective to the VR planning process, which is embraced by our VR administrators, leading to vigorous dialogue and true sense of collaboration. All parties engaged in the process, including several other state agencies, are truly committed to this work and share a passion for ensuring that students and adults with disabilities have access to the services and supports that will help them achieve their employment goals.

–Gary Chiaravalli, SRC Member

Post-school outcomes

Oregon requires all districts to collect post-school outcome data between June and September each year. Starting in 2016 the follow-up surveys will change from a sample to census collection. This will require school districts to contact all students who left high school with an Individual Education Plan (IEP). The goal is to collect data on which students are enrolled in higher education, other postsecondary school, competitive employment or other employment one year after leaving high school.

Oregon's State Plan reported a response rate to the survey of more than 70 percent for each of the last three years. Oregon's overall engagement rate has met the state target in each of these years. The outcome data shows that approximately 70 percent of students that leave on an IEP are successfully employed or attending school one year after leaving school or a transition program.

More information is at www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=2078.

–Sally Simich, Oregon Department of Education

Client Assistance Program (CAP)

Oregon's Client Assistance Program (CAP) enthusiastically continues to serve the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). Oregon CAP additionally works as a policy partner with Oregon's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. In the summer of 2015 CAP had a productive meeting with top VR administrative staff, including new VR Director Trina Lee. Alternative dispute resolution was the focus of this meeting. We agreed on many issues surrounding best practice toward effective dispute resolution. VR Dispute Resolution Coordinator Mark Masthoff gave an update on the selection of impartial hearing officers as well as on dispute resolution annual statistics.

Ted Wenk, the CAP representative to SRC, also chairs the SRC Program Effectiveness Committee (PEC). The SRC PEC this past year developed, conducted and compiled the results of a survey of VR staff and job developer vendors. The results of this survey, while not scientific, helped CAP make recommendations on issues such as training, confidential office space for client meetings and the VR job development vendor contract. Anne Marie King continues her work as the initial intake contact for CAP callers, as well as being the primary representative for most individual CAP clients. She also reviewed and made recommendations on VR policy and administrative rule proposals and worked with Ted Wenk to review redacted impartial hearing decisions.

Oregon CAP continually assimilates the possibilities presented by the mandates of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), signed into law by President Obama on July 22, 2014. In particular, the United States Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration on April 16, 2015 issued proposed federal regulations pursuant to WIOA. The SRC, CAP and VR (and other partners) will continue coordinating and cooperating whenever possible to address Oregon's challenges and opportunities. Toward this end, CAP provided comment to VR regarding clarifications of dispute resolution requirements under 29 U.S.C. § 722(c). CAP, under the new law, has also been delegated new responsibilities on client advocacy toward supported employment and student transition. The upcoming year will no doubt bring exciting new developments, along with existing activities.

–Ted Wenk (CAP)

121 Program

The role of the 121 representative is vital to the council and to Oregon's five tribes with Vocational Rehabilitation programs. At any given time the other four federally recognized Oregon tribes could decide to apply for funding. Several groups are at work lobbying congress to provide more and stable funding to tribal VRs to create VR programs for the other four tribes. Tribal VR programs are essential to providing culturally relevant services to the several Oregon tribal members with disabilities. As domestic sovereigns and the original dwellers of Oregon, tribal members have a distinct culture that, to the uninitiated, can be hard to grasp. As enrolled tribal members and U.S. citizens, we can participate in the government of both entities. I saw part of my role on the council to update the members about what was happening in Indian country. I did so by communicating with the other TVR (Tribal Voc Rehab) directors to make sure their voices were heard. I also invited them to the open meetings where they usually were allowed to speak. The SRC was open to the ideas expressed and did their best to incorporate them in the drafting of the Oregon State VR Plan.

In February 2015, I began my new position as Education Division manager for the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. It was with careful consideration that I wrote my letter of resignation to the SRC. I had every intention of staying with the council, but the demands of my new position and appointments to new advisory councils made it difficult for me to provide the level of service with which I am comfortable. I did not think it fair to the council to have them carry my weight.

During my last term as the 121 representative on the SRC, I was able to work on a survey of VR staff and job developers. Unfortunately, due to my change of employment with the Tribe, I was not able to complete work on the survey.

The time I spent on the SRC will hold a special place in my heart. The people I collaborated with were amazing. The work they do is so important to Oregonians living with disabilities, both tribal and not, and I wish them continued success for the future.

–hayu masi (many thanks), Leslie Riggs

"As a member of the SRC since November 2013, I am privileged to work as an active policy partner with VR. My involvement has provided me with greater appreciation for the VR program's mission and challenges in light of a changing legislative landscape. With the passing of WIOA, the program is experiencing exciting and dramatic change that requires a shift in timeliness of services; focus on youth; collaboration with partners; and engagement with a new customer, the employer – all without an increase in funding to the program. The relationship between the SRC and VR is crucial as the VR progressively works toward this implementation. I look forward to helping in these efforts as chair of the Business/Employment Committee and as newly elected council vice-chair.

–Heidi Dirkse-Graw, SRC Vice-chair

VR counselor

I have the privilege of representing my VR counselor peers on the State Rehabilitation Council. The expectations of our practices are shaped by the SRC that advises us on programs, policies and services that affect Oregonians with disabilities. I was initially appointed by Governor Kulongoski in 2010 and appointed again by Governor Kitzhaber in 2012. My combined terms of service will conclude Nov. 30, 2015.

It has been interesting and educational to participate on the Program Effectiveness Committee and to chair the Policy Committee. VR has experienced many changes over the years on both the federal and state levels. We have incorporated those changes into our daily work. While the processes may change, our goal to serve and support Oregonians with employment-related challenges remains unchanged. VR continually strives to provide excellent customer service with responsible financial stewardship. In a spirit of compassion, partnership and collaboration, we focus on achieving successful outcomes for those we serve.

–Renata Beck

Renata Beck, Policy Committee Chair

Community rehabilitation provider

It is a pleasure to contribute to the 2015 SRC Annual Report. Over the course of the last year, the state has enacted a number of changes to service delivery systems to improve employment outcomes for Oregonians with disabilities. Agencies were able to anticipate many of these changes by virtue of Executive Order 13-04. They were able to partner with the state to transform their current organizational and program models from the delivery of facility-based employment and other day services (e.g., sheltered workshops, employment path/pre-vocational, day support activities/ATE) for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) to community-based, integrated employment services. The new VR contract is further evidence of the improving climate for job seekers experiencing intellectual or developmental disabilities. We look forward to its implementation and to the positive employment outcomes that will be achieved.

It has been challenging for MENTOR, Oregon, to keep pace with the rate of change, but participation on the SRC has certainly helped. Working with the SRC provided tremendous visibility and the ability to comment on proposed changes to the VR contract and to state policy and to observe the partnership and collaboration that exists among stakeholders to create efficient, outcome-driven systems.

–Gary Chiaravalli, MENTOR, Oregon

National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils

The National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) continues to grow with a focus on the education of SRCs about their role, responsibilities and how to be an effective partner with their VR agency. In addition, SRCs are provided with the opportunity to be a strong national advocate for the public Vocational Rehabilitation Program. There are now 51 coalition members. Coalition members benefit by participating in bimonthly SRC-themed conference calls that include Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) staff, access to member-only information on the coalition website, and attendance at the spring and fall NCSRC training sessions held just before the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation conferences.

The NCSRC is currently in the process of applying for 501c3 status. The Steering Committee has been renamed the Board of Directors. The Oregon SRC continues to strongly support the national organization by Board of Directors participation. Board members manage the coalition's operations, which include creating agendas and workshops for the two training conferences; finances; the bimonthly SRC topic national teleconference; and serving as a resource to individual SRC members.

NCSRC
National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils

www.ncsrc.net

The board can consist of no more than 18 individuals and must represent the diversity of the states and territories. The intention is for the majority of board members to be SRC members, with a minority representing SRC staff, Vocational Rehabilitation staff and others who work on behalf of their SRC. NCSRC's current officers include the following: Marlene Malloy, president (Michigan SRC blind and general staff); and Sherry Taylor, vice-president and treasurer (West Virginia general staff). The secretary position is currently vacant.

At-large members include Joan Holleran (New Hampshire general VR staff); Rhoda Hunter (Oregon general SRC staff); Claire Reeve (Minnesota general SRC); Keisha Ramtahal (U.S. Virgin Island combined SRC staff); Graham Sisson (Alabama VR); Teesha Kirschbaum (Washington general staff); Karen Stanfill (Texas SRC); Kara Tucker (Florida general SRC); and Linda Vegoe (Wisconsin general chair) .

NCSRC mission

On behalf of people with disabilities, our national membership coalition advocates for and works in partnership with the national public vocational rehabilitation system's continual quest for excellence.

NCSRC vision

NCSRC will be the premiere national organization of the consumer voice to enhance the employment opportunities of persons with disabilities through the public vocational rehabilitation system.

NCSRC core values

Integrity — We are honest and straightforward in all that we do. We treat everyone with dignity and respect. We act responsibly with resources entrusted to us. We are accountable and act in accordance with these values.

Commitment — We support the full implementation and enforcement of disability non-discrimination laws, particularly the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Excellence — We trust that customers of public vocational rehabilitation will be empowered to make choices that lead to ultimate independence.

Advocacy — We will work to educate and inform the public and government policy makers regarding issues affecting people with disabilities.

Diversity — We will uphold a broad definition of diversity that honors and appreciates disability alongside race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation and religion as an integral part of the human experience.

Leadership — We will foster leadership among people with disabilities that upholds excellence, quality and inclusive opportunities.

Partnership — We will promote a positive collaboration with state and non-governmental agencies to enhance meaningful and sustainable employment for people with disabilities.

Teamwork — We are committed to a partnership based on a spirit of trust and cooperation with Vocational Rehabilitation administrators and staff so that collaborative efforts will benefit from the NCSRC customer voice.

Culture — We support a public vocational rehabilitation service system that is structured in a manner that reflects the social, political, historic and economic experience of disability.

Communication — We value effective communication through appropriate formats.

Monkey Face, Smith Rock State Park

Vocational Rehabilitation

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DHS | Oregon Department of Human Services
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Introduction and overview

Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) experienced a productive and rewarding year in 2015. VR is Oregon's general vocational rehabilitation program for people with disabilities. VR served 15,635 people in federal year 2015. The program substantially exceeded most of the current federal standards.

A major VR activity has been implementing the Governor's Executive Order 15-01 and Employment First policy. Employment First is the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) policy to increase competitive integrated employment of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). With the implementation of Employment First, VR and allied Oregon high schools and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) programs have jointly planned and built capacity; revised rules, policies and procedures; and increased staff. VR and other OHS and ODE programs have also extensively trained staff, external providers and vendors. This effort will continue. Now that the DD lawsuit has been settled, VR is moving forward to implement terms of the settlement agreement.

In 2015, efforts began to pull together all the entities designated by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) and reinforce and expand the collaborative efforts between VR and other agencies in the implementation phase of the act. WIOA helps job seekers, including those with disabilities, access employment, education, training and support services to succeed in the labor market. It is an opportunity to enhance, integrate and positively affect the services for all Oregonians using workforce programs.

WIOA presents many opportunities and challenges for VR and the other state and local programs that comprise Oregon's workforce system. A more complete description of WIOA and its effects on VR can be found in the "Agency plan and goals" section of this report.

Washington County Oak Tree

A message from the VR director

Greetings Everyone,

As the new director of Vocational Rehabilitation, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and share our vision and a few accomplishments. I joined the VR Program as interim director in December 2014 and was hired permanently in July 2015. Prior to VR, I had almost 25 years' experience with the Department of Human Services. This includes more than 20 years with Aging and People with Disabilities and Self Sufficiency. I have a business degree with an emphasis in management and am a previous business owner.

The last year has been filled with monumental influences. After my arrival, the Legislature began its session. We were funded at levels close to our requests. In order to be to be focused, the VR Program Leadership Team took the time to do visioning and determined the following objectives for the 2015–17 biennium:

- Support and accelerate customer experience to be empowering, effective and efficient.
- Rethink and implement inclusive, dynamic statewide youth programs.
- Create and implement an employer engagement model.
- Create shared commitment and ownership among all staff to maximize program goals.
- Respond proactively to federal and state requirements and initiatives by creating an agile and sustainable program.
- Increase program policy alignment and consistent application.
- Formalize and continue to update our business practices.
- Create and implement a formal approach to managing our changes.

The reauthorization of the Rehab Act, Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA), placed VR in a unique position — working with additional partners in the state planning efforts, collaboration with the Oregon Workforce Investment Board and creating local plans. WIOA requires an increased focus on youth by mandating that 15 percent of VR client service dollars be spent for Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) for students. To achieve these parameters, additional Youth Transition Programs (YTP) were added that raise participation to two-thirds of the the school districts, with emphasis on summer youth programs and other projects.

2015 saw a new executive order (15-01) for the Employment First initiative that establishes benchmarks for employment and services. These expectations will require collaboration between two Department of Human Services program — Vocational Rehabilitation and Developmental Disability Services — and the Oregon Department of Education. In August of 2015, the Annual In-service provided training and conversation to VR staff and partners in both the Employment First and YTP areas. In the fall of 2015, a new job development contract was established after nearly a yearlong effort to redesign. VR is now looking at the organizational structure to ensure that we will be equipped to handle the changes, increasing demand and needs of Oregonians with disabilities and employers.

In light of the large changes surrounding us, I am pleased to report the tireless efforts of our staff. The professionalism and commitment to the mission and services of VR is unquestionable. It is my responsibility to assist our staff by creating a vision, understanding their needs and helping to obtain the resources needed to achieve that mission. I'm looking forward to the next year as we continue our journey.

Thank you,

Trina M. Lee
Director, Vocational Rehabilitation

Agency plan and goals

This last year, VR has been evaluating ways that we can improve our program. The VR executive team used input from staff, job developers and the SRC to help establish a series of actions and steps to continue to ensure that our services meet the needs of our clients and communities. The action steps support the following goals:

Goal I. Support and accelerate customer experience to be empowering, effective and efficient by October 2016.

Goal II. Rethink and implement inclusive, dynamic statewide youth programs by June 2016.

Goal III. Create and implement an employer engagement model by July 2016.

Goal IV. Create shared commitment and ownership among staff to maximize program goals by June 2016.

Goal V. Respond proactively to federal and state requirements and initiatives by creating an agile and sustainable program by July 2017.

Goal VI. Increase program policy alignment and consistent application by June 2016.

Goal VII. Formalize and continue to update our business practices by June 2016.

Goal VIII. Create and implement a formal approach to managing our changes.

With the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act's passage, VR is now working with other state agencies and programs to write a Combined State Plan in 2016. The SRC will play a large role in designing VR's portion of this Combined Plan.

WIOA makes far-reaching changes to state workforce programs. Many of WIOA's provisions for the VR program took effect July 1, 2015; many others will take effect in 2016, two years after passage of the new law. Notice of proposed rulemaking was published in late spring. VR and the SRC both provided feedback to these proposed rules. Final rules are scheduled for publication Jan. 21, 2016. WIOA provides no additional funds for VR services.

Subject to the terms of the new law, the most significant WIOA changes for VR include:

- A new and standardized set of performance measures will apply to all workforce programs. The measures will focus on the skills gained by program participants and their long-term employment success.
- VR participants will need to enter into individualized plans for employment within 90 days of being determined eligible for VR services.
- VR is taking a much larger role in aiding youth with disabilities' transition from school to work. VR must spend at least 15 percent of its federal funding on specific transition services.

- The use of subminimum wages will be limited, and new requirements regarding informed choice will take effect.
- Agreements will be required between state VR systems and state Medicaid systems, as well as VR systems and state developmental disability programs, to better facilitate and deliver vocational services.
- Specific definitions for different kinds of employment services and supports for individuals with disabilities are expected to result in competitive integrated employment.
- Roles and responsibilities will be enhanced for the general workforce system and one-stop centers to meet persons with disabilities' needs.

VR and other agencies and programs affected by WIOA are continuing to review the new law, which is long and complex. It will take some time to fully understand and apply WIOA. Oregon's workforce partners, including VR and the SRC, are developing a combined plan for delivery of services and activities under the new law. Vocational Rehabilitation coordinates with state and local education officials to help students with disabilities pursue employment. VR aids students in their transition from school to employment, higher education or vocational training. At a local level, VR works to establish and maintain relationships with school officials. This promotes eligible students' referral to VR. In turn, VR delivers and coordinates delivery of vocational rehabilitation services. VR also operates several programs and carries out numerous activities to help youth with disabilities successfully transition from school to work.

Cascade Head View

Transition activities

Youth Transition Program

In 2014 YTP was included in the Essl Foundation's "Zero Project Report." This study compared the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in more than 50 countries around the world. With a specific focus on disabilities and employment, the report also includes international examples of both "innovative practice" and "innovative policy." YTP was featured in the section on "innovative practice."

YTP is present in 115 school districts across Oregon. VR, Oregon Department of Education (ODE), the University of Oregon (UO) and local school districts jointly implement it. YTP has two objectives:

- The first is to improve post-school transition outcomes for youth with disabilities. This prepares them for competitive community employment or career-related postsecondary education or training. School transition specialists and VR counselors provide YTP services to help youth obtain and maintain successful post-school outcomes. Services include career exploration, transition planning, job placement and follow-up.
- The second objective is to increase Oregon schools' capacity to provide transition services and supports. This includes helping schools refine and expand these services and supports. VR contracts with a University of Oregon technical assistance team to provide training and expert advice to school transition specialists and VR counseling staff.

Over federal year 2014, YTP served 1,430 students with disabilities in more than 150 urban and rural high schools. Of these students:

- 623 developed individualized plans for employment.
- 77 percent of those exiting school were either employed and/or enrolled in a postsecondary school.
- 63 percent of those who exited the program were employed upon exit. They were working an average of 28 hours per week at an average wage of $9.20 per hour.
- 65 percent were employed 12 months after completing YTP. They were working an average of 29 hours per week at an average wage of $10 per hour.
- 13 percent were in postsecondary training or education. They were enrolled an average of 19 hours per week 12 months after leaving YTP.

Transition is a major focus of WIOA. One way that Oregon VR is meeting the expectations of the act is to grow YTP. YTP added 20 new districts to the program including the state's largest school district, Portland Public Schools. In addition to YTP's growth, Oregon VR is making other investments in pre-employment transition services statewide through the following partnerships:

- Silver Falls Summer Leadership Academy – In the month of August 2015 more than 45 students with disabilities participated in one of four week-long leadership academies at Silver Falls State Park. Each of the academies focused on five key pre-employment transition activities: job exploration, work-based learning experiences, counseling on postsecondary education, workplace readiness training and instruction in self-advocacy.

- Transition network facilitators (TNF) — Oregon VR and the Oregon Department of Education have developed a cooperative agreement to blend funding and hire eight regional TNFs that will provide instruction to vocational rehabilitation counselors, school transition personnel and other community partners supporting students with disabilities through their transition years.
- Motivational Enhancement Group Intervention (MEGI) interviewing is a pilot that increases students' self-advocacy skills. Motivational interviewing is a collaborative, goal-oriented style of communication that attends to the student's language of change, strengthens the student's intrinsic motivation for and commitment to change, and elicits and explores the student's own reasons for change within an atmosphere of acceptance and compassion.
- Benefits planning – School districts are encouraged to refer YTP students to VR's Work Incentives Network (WIN). WIN is a benefits counseling program. It helps people with disabilities plan and use their public benefits to obtain and maintain employment, and to make informed financial decisions.

Project ACCESS

In 2007, five Lane County high schools, the University of Oregon and VR began to implement Project ACCESS. ACCESS tested two premises. First, ACCESS tested the premise that students with disabilities benefit from starting transition activities earlier than usual. Second, ACCESS tested the premise that vocational counselors in schools and classrooms will:

- Strengthen the partnerships between school special education staff and VR counselors;
- Enhance the counselors' contact with students; and
- Lead to better outcomes.

Through the implementation of these activities Oregon VR, the University of Oregon and local educators developed a comprehensive transition curriculum for students with disabilities. In the past year Oregon VR has created a crosswalk that identifies each lesson in the ACCESS curriculum that meets the five required pre-employment transition services detailed in WIOA. Additionally, Oregon VR has continued to develop the PASSAGES curriculum that is the culturally responsive version of ACCESS for Native American students.

During the summer of 2015 VR participated in eight Educator Institutes across the state convened by the Oregon Department of Education. Oregon VR trained school transition staff on ways to use the Project ACCESS curriculum and the PASSAGES curriculum in their classroom and school. Oregon VR also distributed more than 300 printed and electronic copies of the Project ACCESS and PASSAGES curricula at these trainings.

Other youth transition activities

Outreach to deaf and hard-of-hearing youth

VR and Oregon's School for the Deaf are jointly sponsoring regional outreach activities to connect with special education teachers in public schools across the state. The mission is to identify and engage deaf and hard-of-hearing students in transition activities at a younger age.

Early Assessment and Support Alliance (EASA)

Oregon is one of the first states to implement a statewide effort to provide systematic early psychosis intervention for adolescents and young adults. Services provided through teams at local mental health centers include psychiatry, counseling, occupational therapy, supported

employment and education, and peer support. VR partnered with the state's Addictions and Mental Health Program as co-founders of an Early Assessment and Support Alliance (EASA) Technical Assistance Center, located at Portland State University, which is now in its second year.

VR has funded four county pilot sites to identify a best practice model that engages youth experiencing their first psychotic episode in accessing VR and local workforce programs. A statewide needs assessment survey tool (which included youth focus groups) generated information from both youth and service providers about their experiences using school and work resources.

Through collaborative efforts between the EASA Technical Assistance Center, AMH, VR and the Oregon Legislature, a dramatic expansion in the number of counties with EASA programs has been achieved. VR continues to remain engaged in the development of necessary wraparound services for this population, and has seen the program develop from serving a single county in 2001 to 23 counties in 2015.

Benefits counseling

The Work Incentives Network (WIN) is a work incentives and benefits planning program. VR funded WIN until June 30, 2015. The Oregon Department of Human Services now funds WIN. The 2015 Legislature passed a policy option package that provides general funds for WIN. This change in funding enables WIN to serve any person with a disability receiving public benefits who is employed or who is seeking employment or an increase in employment.

Through WIN, individuals get information and help using work incentives to obtain, maintain or increase employment. The fear of losing needed benefits and services is a significant barrier to employment for people with disabilities.

The Department of Human Services contracts with six Centers for Independent Living for 11 work incentives counselors (WICs) to provide benefits counseling to eligible individuals throughout Oregon. WIN Central is a small administrative and technical assistance unit that is housed with VR administration and certifies and supports the WICs.

Over the year, WIN:

- Delivered benefits counseling services to more than 2,000 persons with disabilities;
- Held five, one-day Understanding SSA Benefits and Employment trainings attended by more than 145 VR partners and providers;
- Partnered with the Oregon Employment Learning Network (OELN) and provided two, two-day training sessions to approximately 95 developmental disability service providers and other community partners. They are scheduled to provide three additional sessions beginning December 2015.
- Presented at the Fourth Annual Conference for Service Coordinators and Personal Agents. WIN made two presentations at the two-day conference to disability service providers about benefits planning and work incentives.
- Presented at the annual OSECE Conference for Employment Specialists and other mental health providers. WIN made two presentations at the two-day conference.
- Developed a WIN Help Desk to help meet the high demand for WIN services by providing community partners and participants basic information about WIN-related services. The Help Desk also provides general guidance about how employment interacts with public benefit programs.
- The WIN benefit counselors provided additional presentations and outreach activities with local community partners about WIN services and general information about working while receiving public benefits.

Adult initiatives

Latino Project

VR and Easter Seals sponsor the Latino Project. The program seeks to overcome employment barriers in a culturally sensitive manner. It provides VR participants with adult education on culture and English as a second language, skills training, peer-to-peer mentoring, job preparation and placement.

The Latino Project has expanded from Multnomah County. It now encompasses the Gresham, Beaverton, Clackamas, Salem and Woodburn areas.

Evidence-based Supported Employment

VR continued to partner with the Oregon Supported Employment Center for Excellence (OSECE) and Oregon Health Authority Addictions and Mental Health to provide the Individual Placement and Supports (IPS) Program. This is an evidence-based supported employment program for individuals with serious and persistent mental illness. The program has expanded its presence to 32 of Oregon's 36 counties. As a part of health care transformation, Oregon's coordinated care organizations recognize the benefits of working as a means to recovery for individuals with mental illness.

Tribal programs

VR has partnerships and cooperative agreements with all five Oregon tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs:

- Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde;
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs;
- Confederated Tribes of the Siletz;
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; and
- The Klamath Tribes.

This past year, the Oregon tribes hosted a national conference to enhance tribal/state service delivery to federally recognized Native Americans with disabilities who face barriers to employment. VR also continued to provide technical assistance and staff training to the tribal programs. Numerous tribal VR staff attended VR's Counselor Training Program and VR's 2015 In-service Training Conference.

Employment First

Disability Rights Oregon (DRO) is Oregon's rights protection and advocacy system for people with disabilities. In January 2012, DRO and other law firms filed suit in United States District Court against the state. Plaintiffs alleged that the state violated the ADA rights of a group of individuals working in sheltered workshops by not giving them access to supported employment services. The Department of Justice joined the lawsuit against the state. Now that the lawsuit is settled, we will be working with all parties to implement the settlement agreement.

Executive Order 15-01, released Feb 2, 2015, updated E0 13-04, further supports the DHS Employment First policy, which was issued in 2008. That policy commits the department and its programs to making employment the first and preferred option in serving persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Employment First partners include:

- The Oregon Department of Education;
- The Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities;
- The ODDS Employment First;
- The DHS Developmental Disabilities Program; and
- Vocational Rehabilitation.

In 2015, the partners continued implementing the Employment First policy and Executive Order 15-01. Noteworthy accomplishments and activities include:

- A major increase in the number of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities seeking employment between July 1, 2013, and June 30, 2014. During this period:
  - 2,238 individuals with I/DD used VR services, a 17 percent increase over the preceding 12 months.
  - 11,373 individuals with I/DD used ODDS employment services, a 24.6 percent increase over the preceding period.
- Development and adoption of policy and procedures to facilitate implementation of Executive Order 15-01. This included a new supported employment policy for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Increased capacity to deliver supported employment services to persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities through:
  - Hiring eight vocational rehabilitation counselors to exclusively serve this population and give technical assistance to other VR staff to provide I/DD supported employment. Resources targeted to implement the Employment First policy funded the additional positions. VR is looking to expand its DD/ID counselor resources, in addition to these positions.
  - Providing staff training and support. This included holding eight regional supported employment trainings for VR field staff. More than 175 staff attended the trainings. VR, the Developmental Disabilities Program and Employment First have since developed a second round of training. This training is scheduled for delivery in 2015.

Training

VR maintains a comprehensive system of personnel development and training. The system ensures that VR's staff has the skills, knowledge and abilities to best address Oregonians with disabilities' vocational needs. A variety of staff development and training approaches meet the complex needs of those we serve.

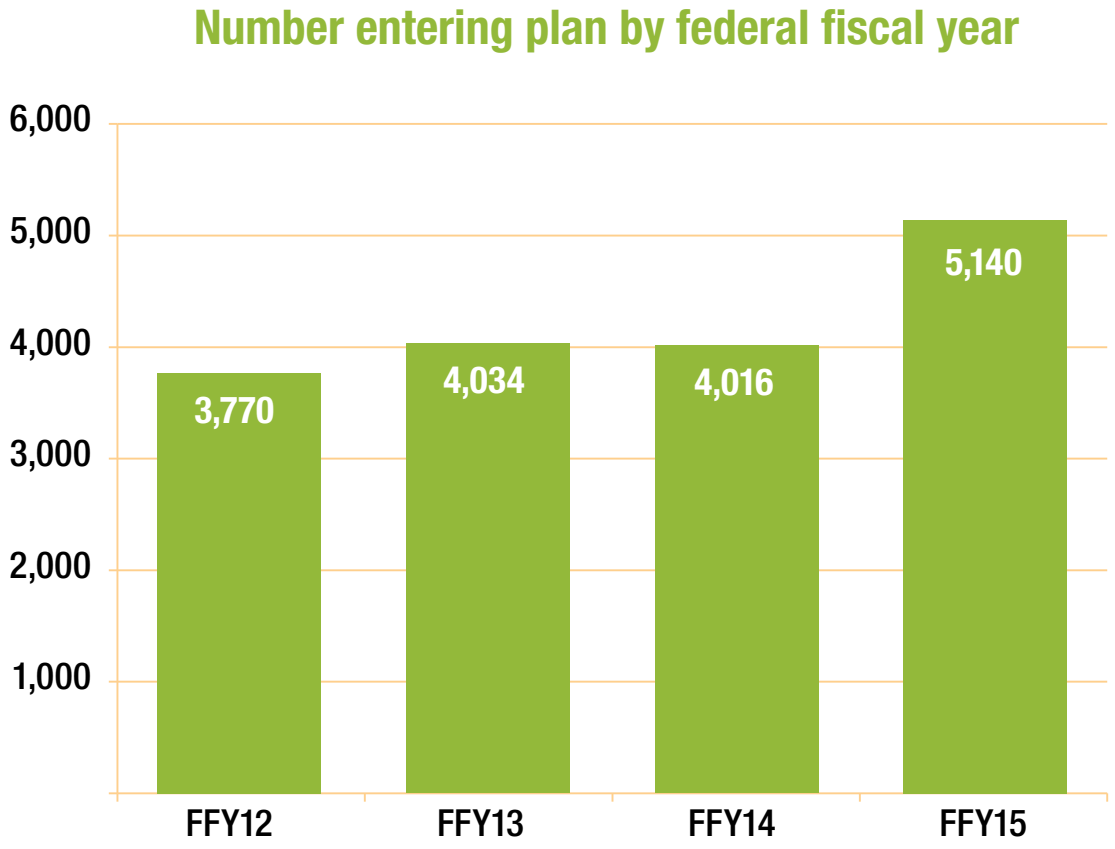
New staff, new responsibilities and implementation of the new state and federal requirements increased both the amount and variety of VR training in 2015. This trend will continue as we move forward in 2016.

Ticket to Work

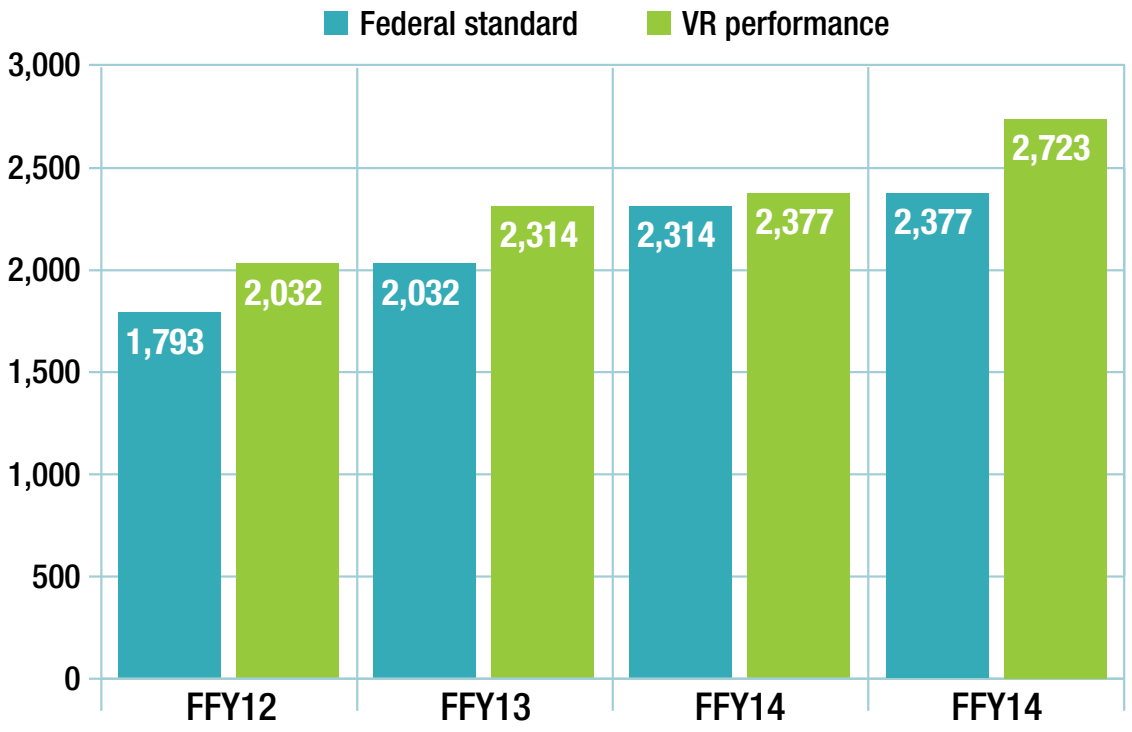
Oregon VR continued to participate in the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work (TTW) and Cost Reimbursement (CR) programs. Both programs reimburse VR and other qualified agencies and organizations for costs in helping Social Security beneficiaries with disabilities get jobs.

VR outcomes, measures and demographic graphs

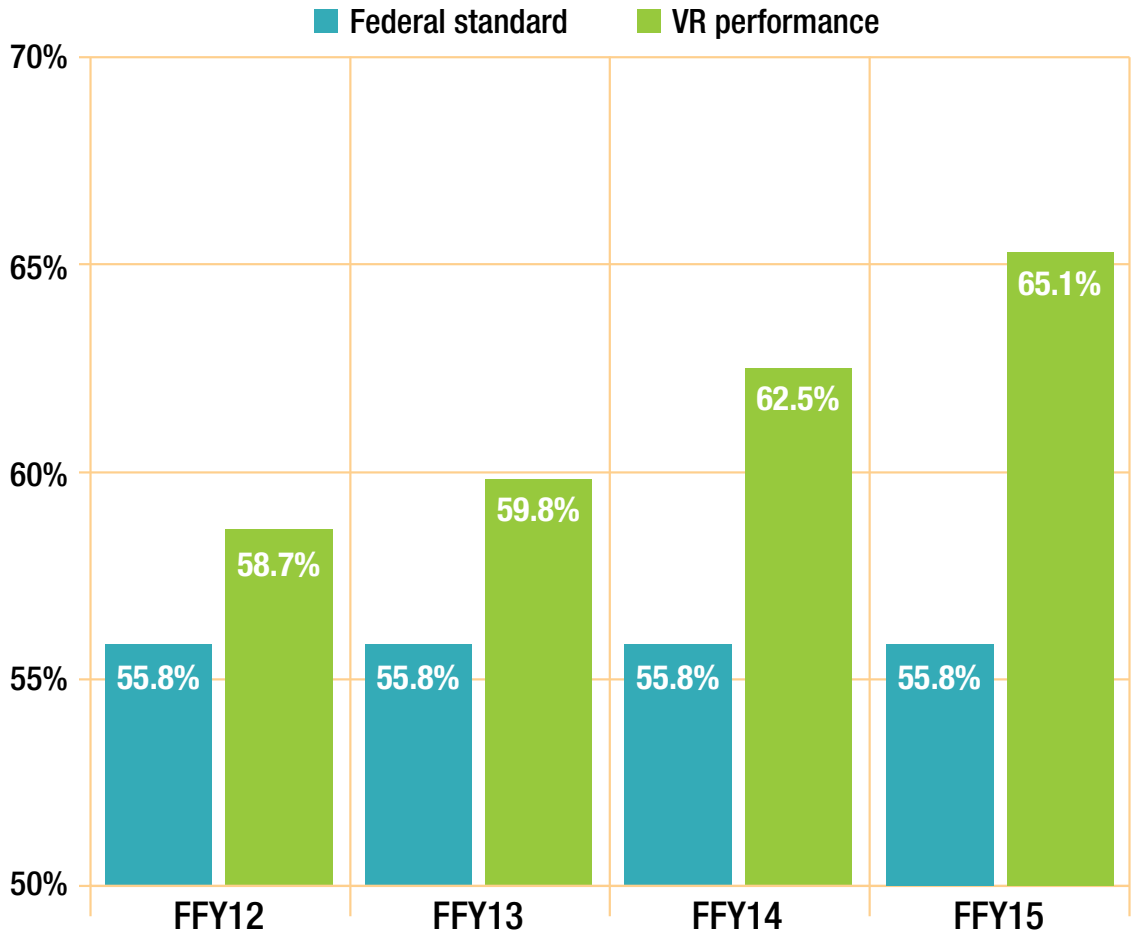
Federal fiscal year performance



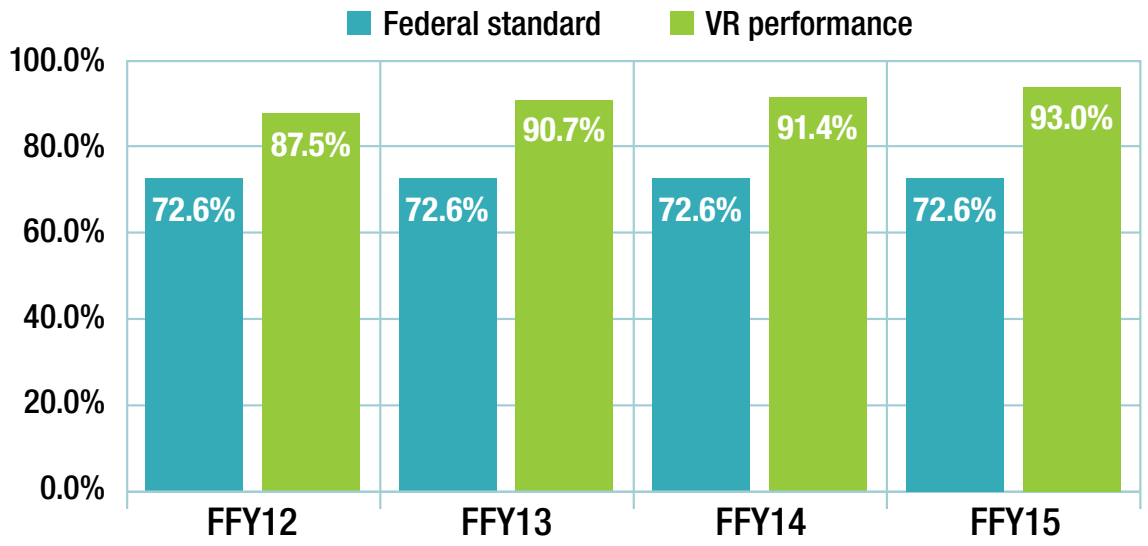
Cases with an employment outcome



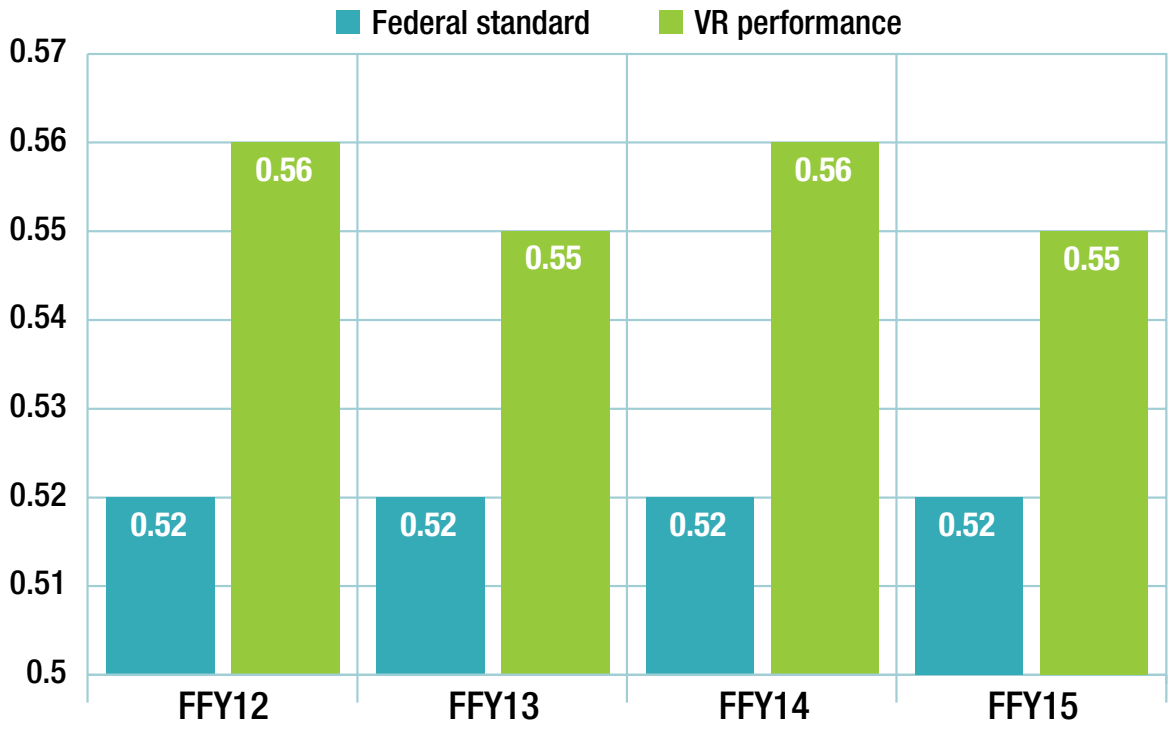
Federal standard: percent of employment outcome



Federal standard: percent with competitive employment

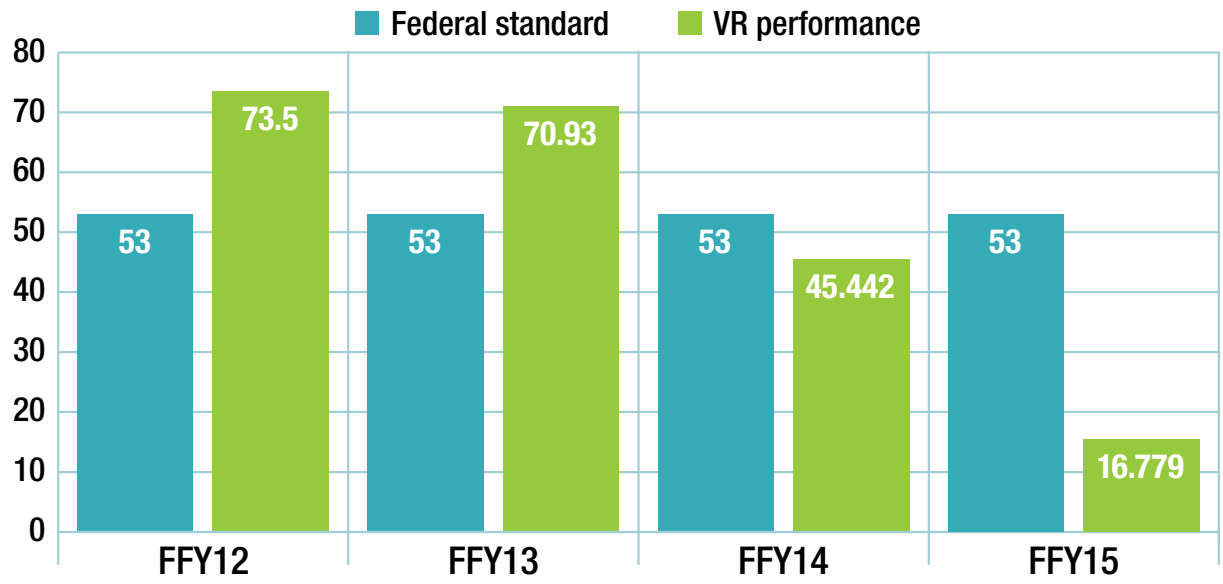


Earnings ratio*



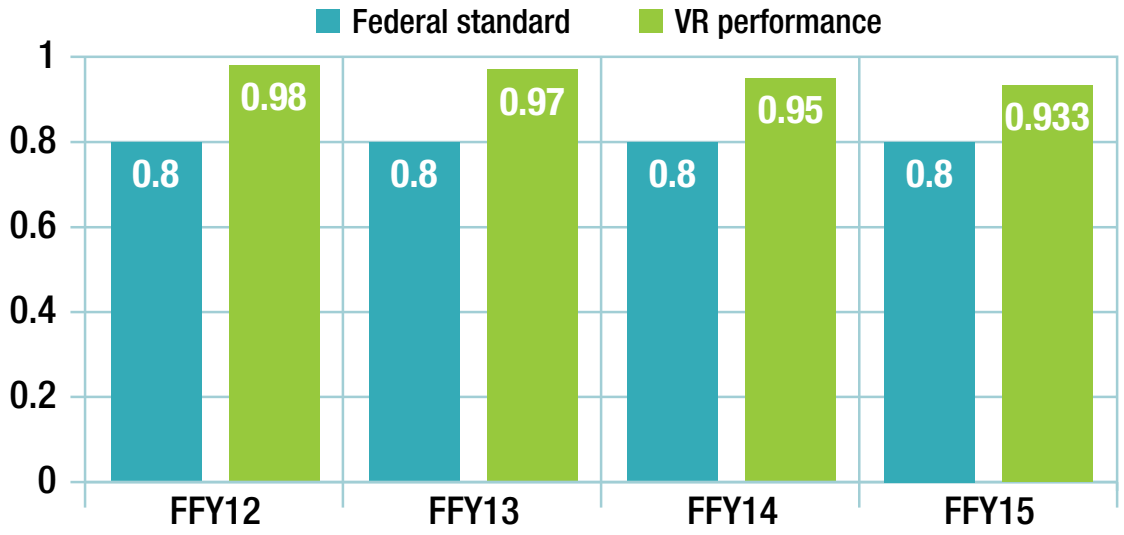
* Ratio of average state wage compared to average wage of closed cases with employment outcome greater than or equal to minimum wage

Federal standard: self-support*



* The percent of clients who leave VR with income as the primary source of self-support minus the percent of clients who enter VR with self-support as the primary source of income

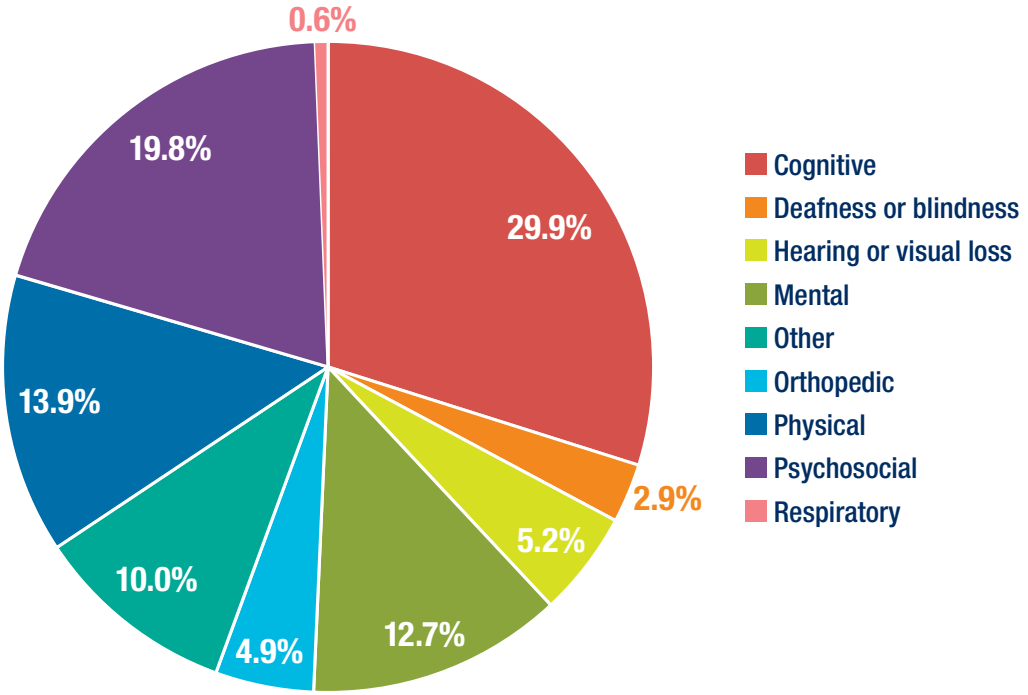
Federal standard: access to services to minorities*



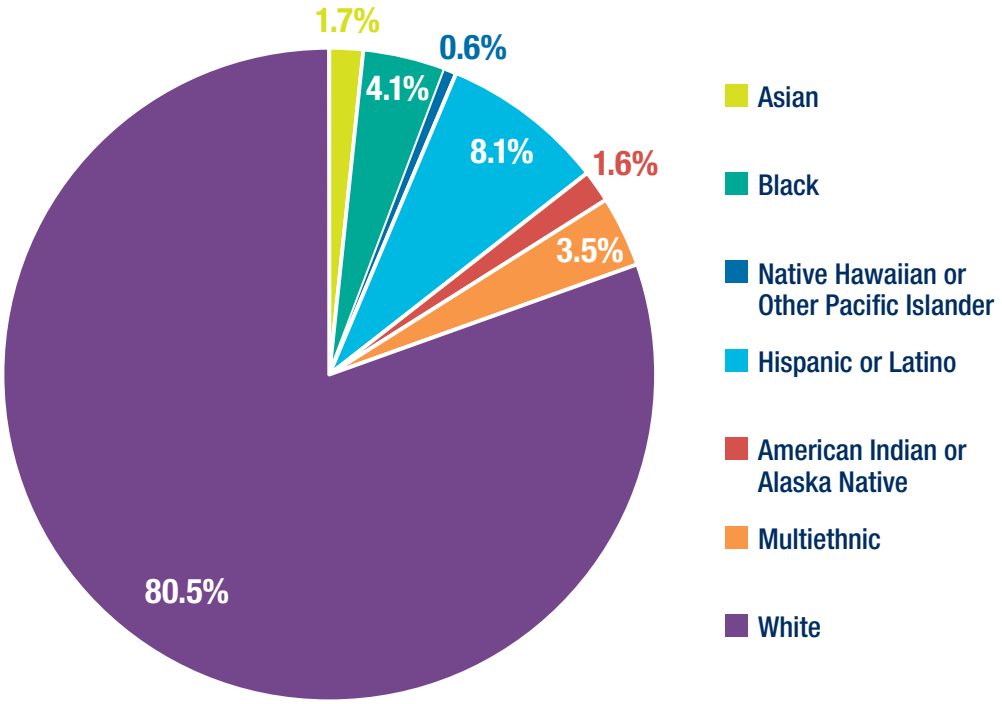
* Ratio of minority service rate compared to non-minority service rate

Client demographics

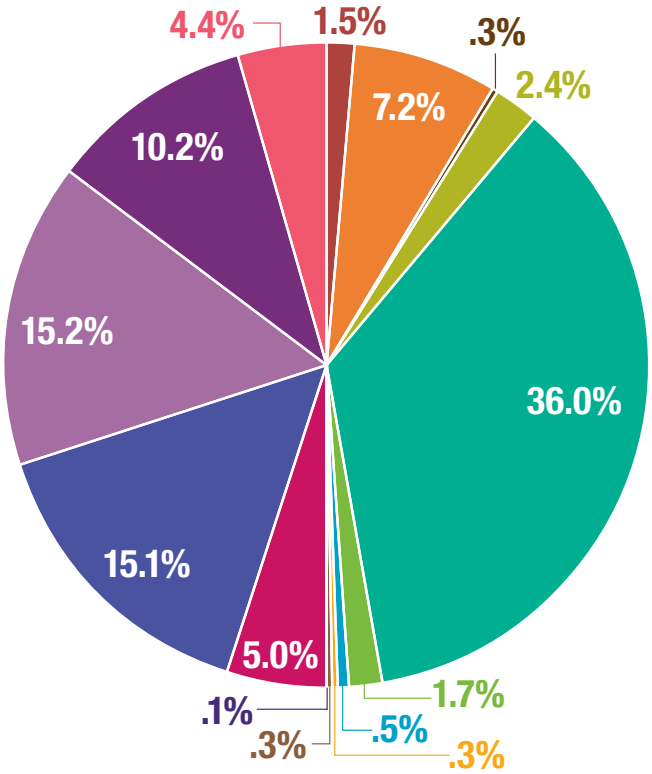
Percent of clients served, by primary disability, FFY15



Percent of clients served, by ethnicity/race, FFY15

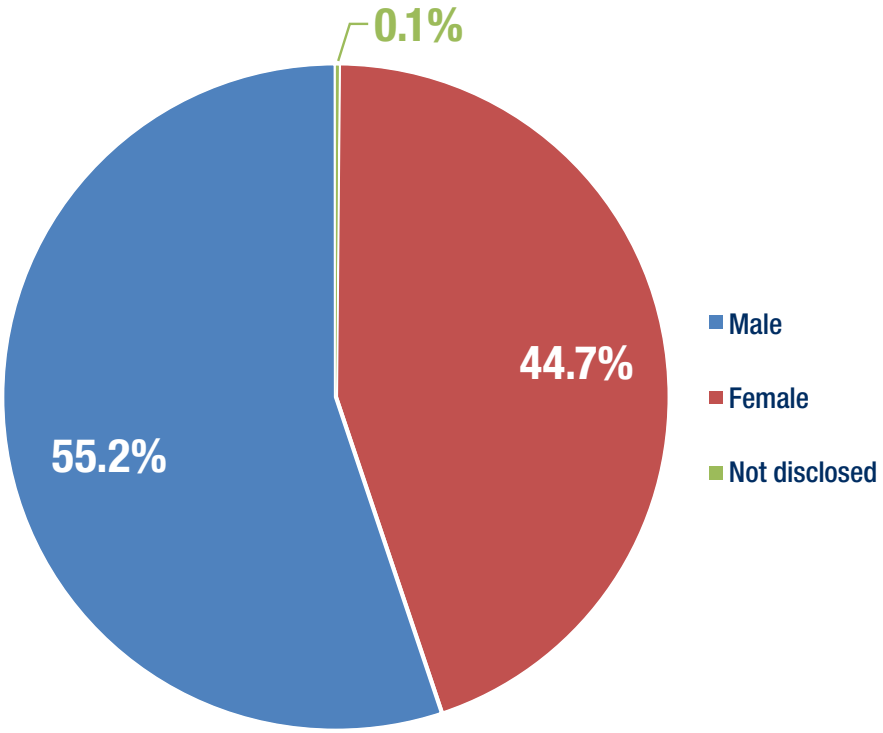


Percent of clients served, by education at application, FFY15



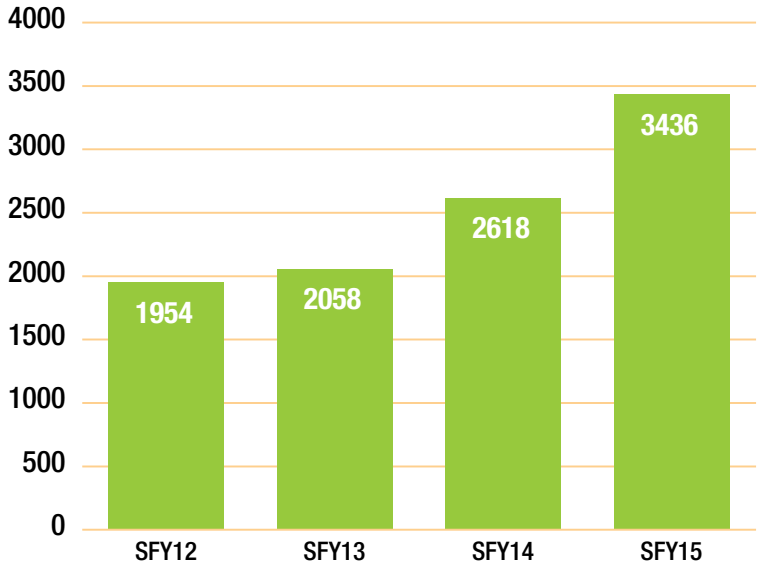
- AA degree or VoTec certificate
- Bachelor's degree
- Degree above master's (Ph.D., Ed.D., J.D.)
- Elementary education (grades 1–8)
- High school graduate or equivalency certificate
- Master's degree
- Master's degree or higher
- No formal schooling
- Occupational credential beyond grad degree work
- Occupational credential beyond undergrad degree
- Post-secondary academic degree, AA degree
- Post-secondary education, no degree or cert
- Secondary education, no high school diploma (grades 9–12)
- Special ed (completion or in attendance)
- Vocational/technical certificate

Percent of clients served, by gender, FFY15

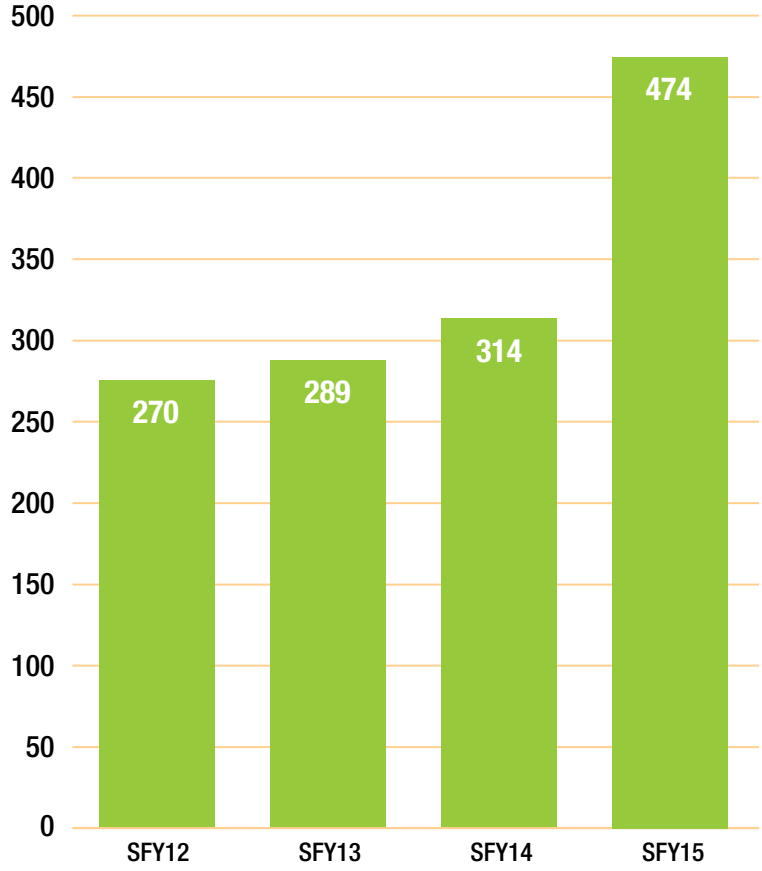


Intellectual and developmental disabilities

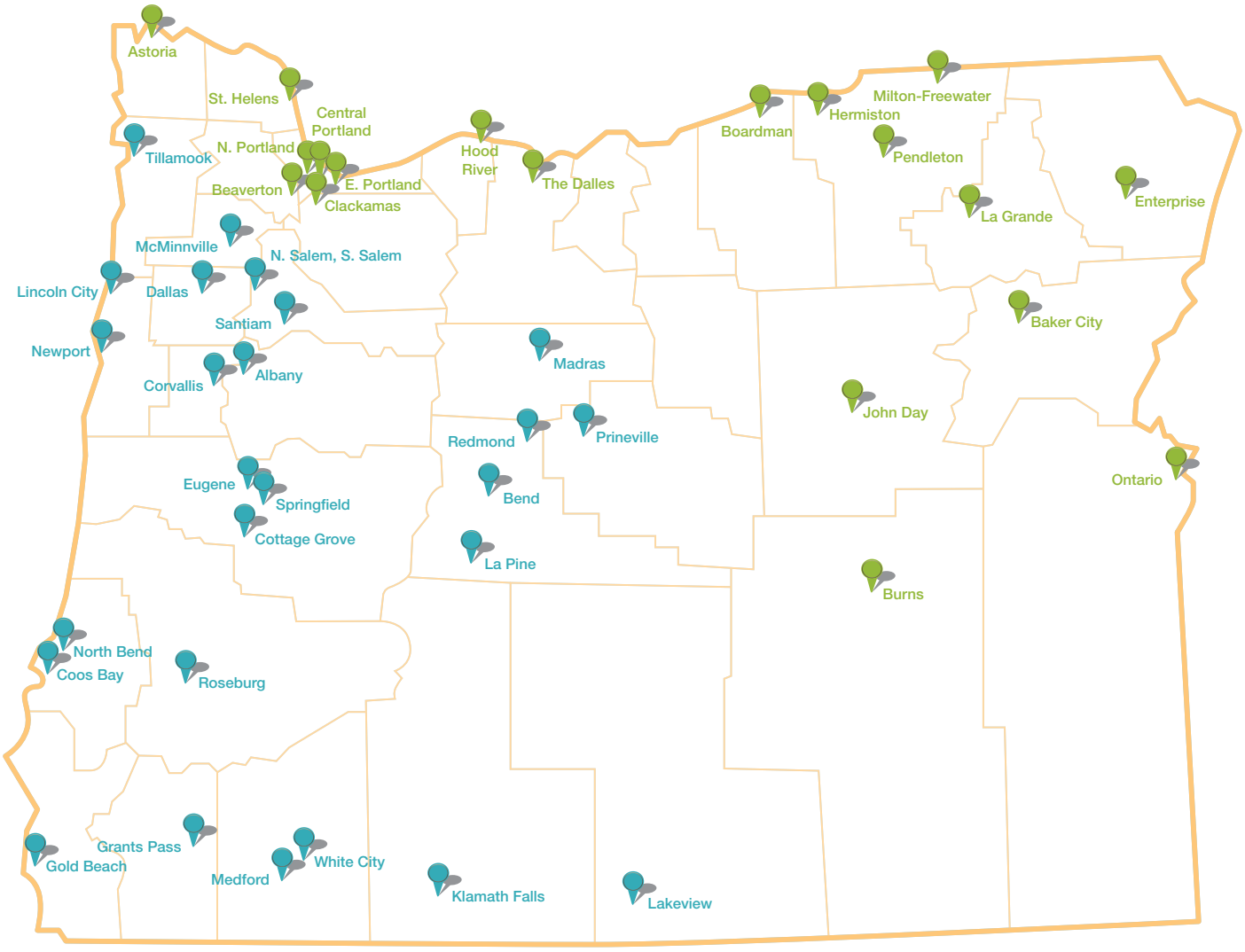
Number of clients with intellectual and developmental disabilities served, by state fiscal year



Number of individuals with IDD closed with a rehabilitation, by state fiscal year



VR branches and field service managers 2015



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Robert Costello

Joe Miller

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Acknowledgements

The council would like to thank the following people for their outstanding service:

- Renata Beck, Anne Burns, Sherry Stock and Leslie Riggs for their outstanding contributions to the SRC during their terms of service.
- VR consumers who agreed to share their success stories
- VR staff, job developers and community partners who took the time to participate in the SRC survey.
- Employers and community partners who have worked tirelessly to provide job opportunities for individuals with disabilities.
- Ed Ruttledge for providing his professional services pro bono for this report's landscape photos.
- Success story authors: Angela Yeager, Judy Rudy, Dee Dee Satran and Macy Guppy.
- Annual report designer: Eli Castillo; editor: Macy Guppy.

Quarterly meetings

2016 | OREGON STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

Feb. 5, 2016	Portland
May 6, 2016	Hood River
Aug. 5, 2016	Eugene
Nov. 4, 2016	Salem

Oregon State Rehabilitation Council

Front row left to right: Ryan Green, Jeanne Barter, Jeri Cohen, Sherry Stock, Renata Beck, Heidi Dirkse-Graw

2nd row left to right: David Abramowitz, Roberta Dunn, Susie Calhoun, Clayton Rees, Tammy Guest, Rhoda Hunter

Back row left to right: Gary Chiaravalli, Laurie Brooks, Greg Sublett, Ted Wenk, Mark Foster, Tom Giles, Norm Underwood

Not pictured: Anne Burns, Trina Lee, Chungfan Ni, Sally Simich

Steens Mountains View

2015 Annual Report

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DHS 9859 (01/2016)