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Market Research Report | **SD Department of Rehabilitation Services**

MODERN
MARKETING

Meet the Team



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Research Purpose

The Sampson House (TSH) was brought on board as the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) marketing partner in early 2024. DRS has seen a drop in applicants for their Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program over the past five years and would like to see an increase again. They released an RFP in late 2023 in search of a marketing partner to launch an outreach campaign.

TSH deployed customized surveys to collect results from VR staff and clients. We also used a variety of second-party data to analyze current market trends for people with disabilities in South Dakota.

Following this market research report, TSH will deploy a marketing campaign to increase outreach and awareness across the state in an effort to increase applications to the VR program year over year and see more successful closures. The campaign will be developed in 2024 and launched in late 2024 or early 2025.

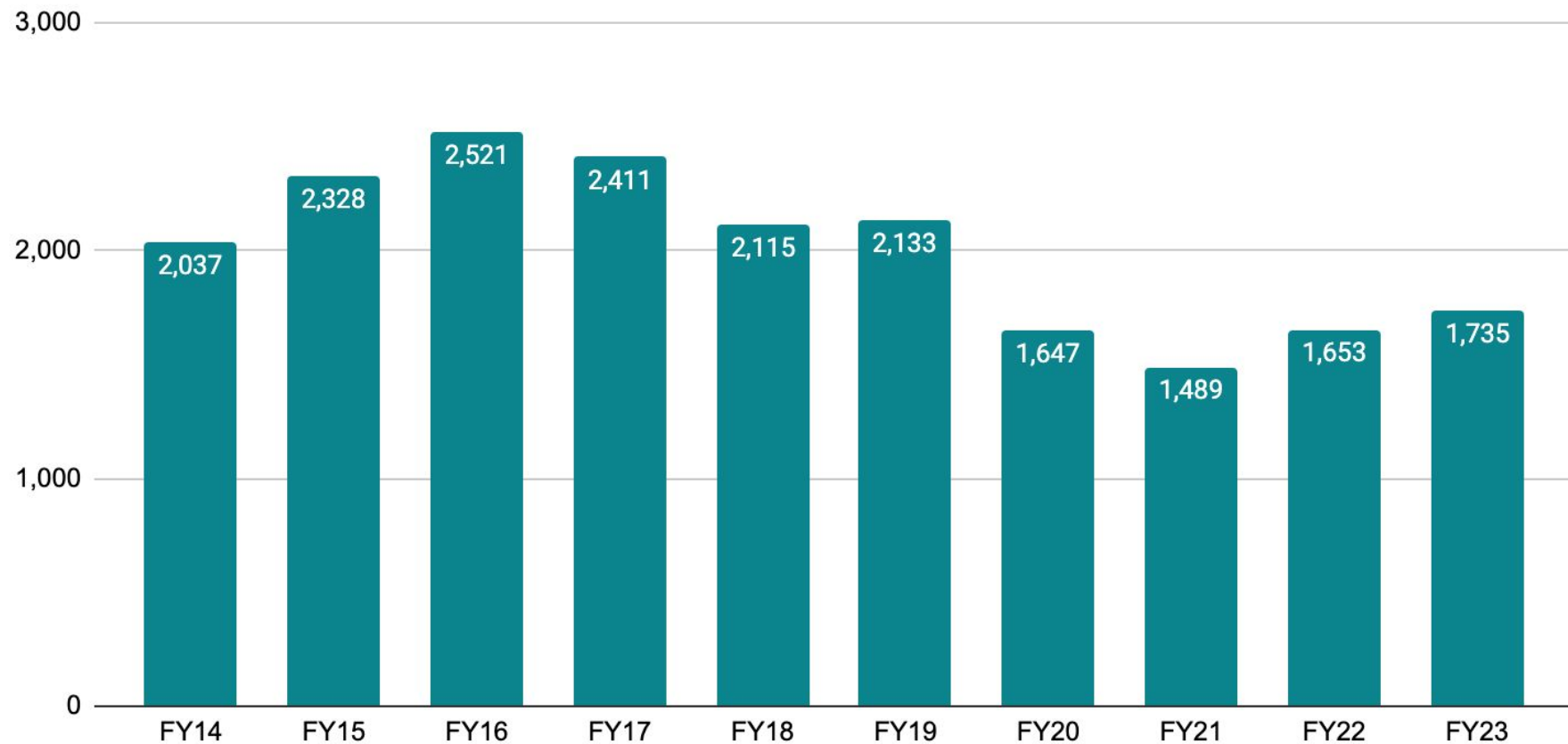
Research Objectives

- Understand the market trends of people with disabilities across South Dakota
- Create an understanding of why the program has seen a decrease in applications
- Identify opportunities for improvements to the program
- Clarify marketing messaging to be used to appeal to the target audience

Building the Framework

Vocational Rehabilitation Applications by Year

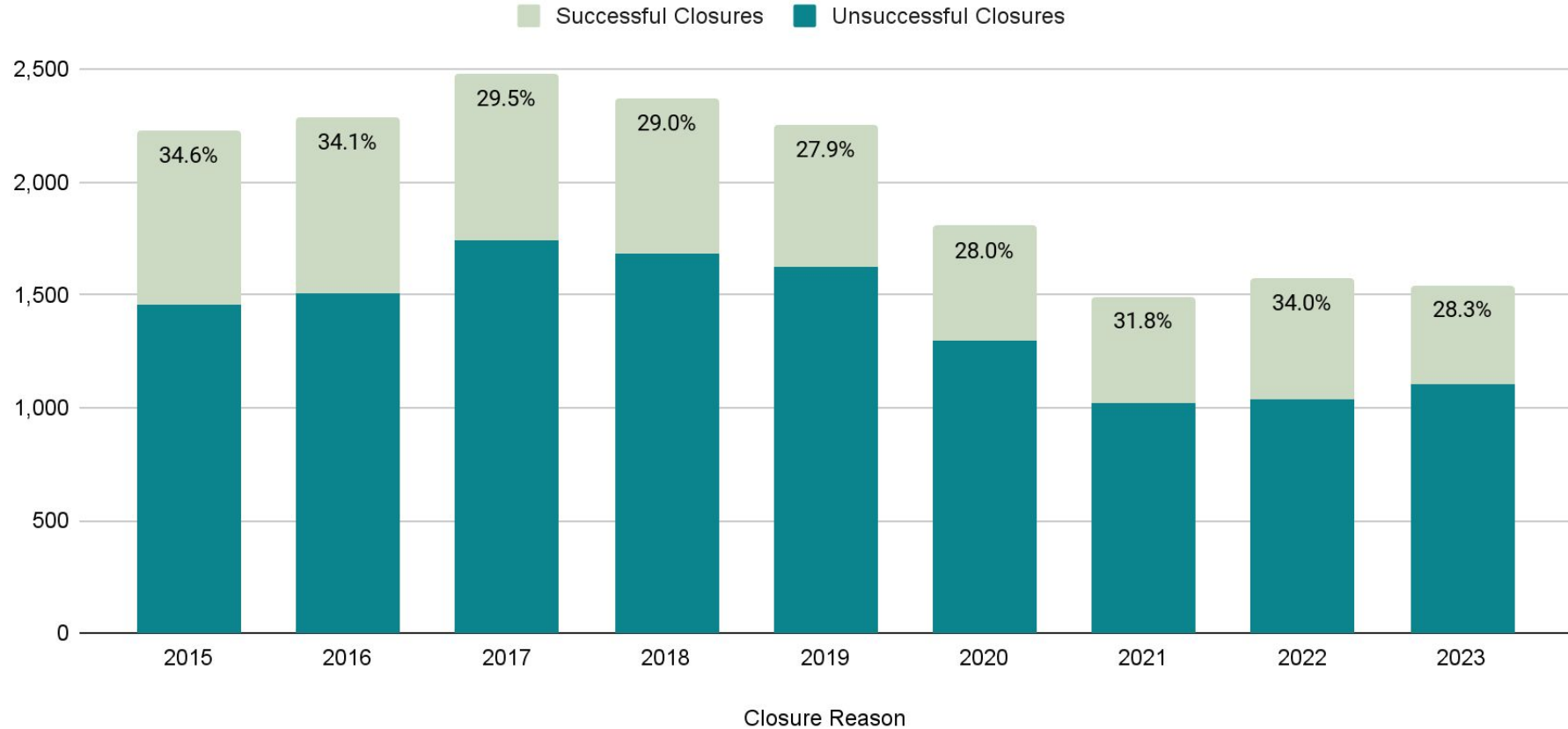
Following the COVID-19 Pandemic in FY20, DRS has seen an average 4% decrease in applicants since FY19. FY20 saw the most significant drop of a 22% decrease. FY23 saw a slight increase by 5% from FY22.



Source: SD Department of Rehabilitation Services

Vocational Rehabilitation Closures

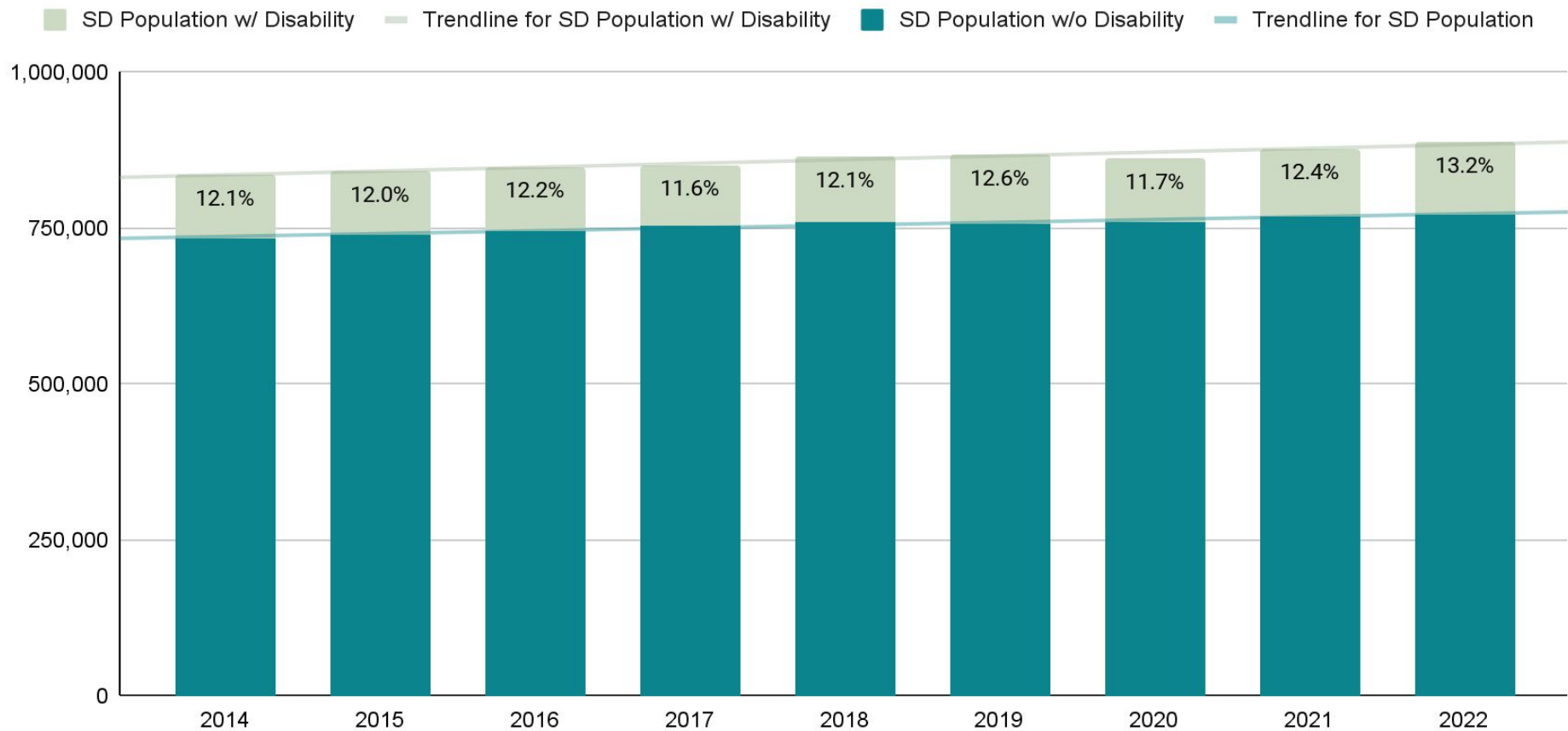
VR has seen an average successful closure rate of 30% over the past nine years. Clients most frequently don't complete the program because they are no longer interested in receiving services or are unable to be contacted.



Source: SD Department of Rehabilitation Services

Disability Population Growth

South Dakota has seen a population growth rate of 6.35% from 2014 compared to 2022. For that same period, South Dakotans with a disability has grown 15.57%. People with disabilities make up an average of 12% of the population.



Source: 2022 US Census

Market Size

Total Addressable Market _____
Total Population

South Dakota Population
888,485

Serviceable Addressable Market _____
Who can VR actually serve?

South Dakota Population with a Disability
116,972

Target Market _____
Who are we trying to reach?

Unemployed South Dakota Population with a Disability
2,546*

*Does not include those out of the workforce.

Source: 2022 US Census

Surveys

We distributed two surveys to collect insights about the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

30

Staff Respondents

207

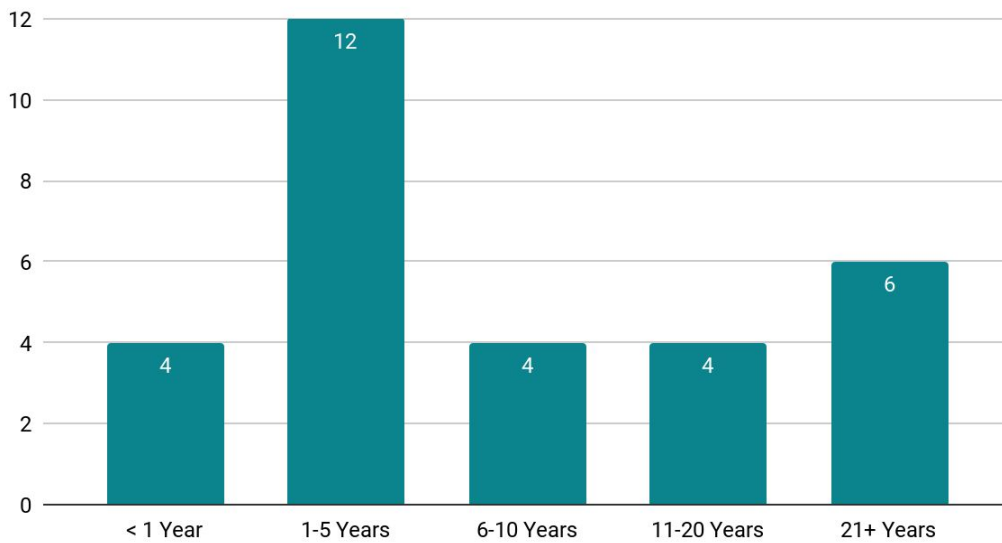
Client Respondents

Staff Survey Findings

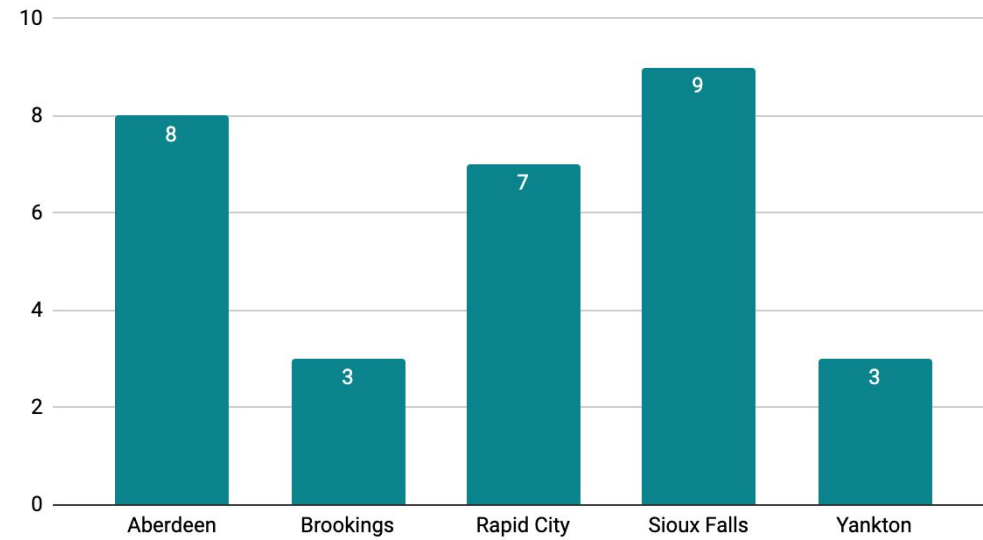
Staff Demographics

Respondents were across multiple district offices and length of employment.

How long have you worked at Vocational Rehabilitation?



What district office do you work for?



Vocational Rehabilitation Strengths

- Client-Centered Services
- Variety of Services
- Staff Flexibility
- Teamwork & Collaboration
- Passionate Staff
- Providing Opportunities for Employment
- Supportive Staff

“One of the biggest strengths our program is how flexible we are. Yes, we have procedures and guidelines, but we have such a great ability to tailor our services to each individual. We’ve been provided with many resources to do our jobs from many locations. This was heightened following the pandemic, including cell phones, Zoom, Teams, etc.” -Rapid City VR Staff Member

“Allowing someone to grow their confidence and understanding of what their purpose in life is, and finding the support that will allow them to have peace in their life.” -Aberdeen VR Staff Member

“No wrong door availability - will help people find resources. Genuineness and passion of VR's staff. Ability to support vocational goals through funded services to eliminate possible financial barriers to further self-sufficiency.” -Aberdeen VR Staff Member

Vocational Rehabilitation Opportunities

- Increase Awareness
- Balanced Caseloads
- Additional Staff
- Additional Providers
- Process Efficiency
- Explanation of Services

“1:1 time with clients and staff. Caseloads are heavy and staff don't have enough time in the day/week. I also think that the schools/providers/general public could use more information about the services we offer.” -Yankton VR Staff Member

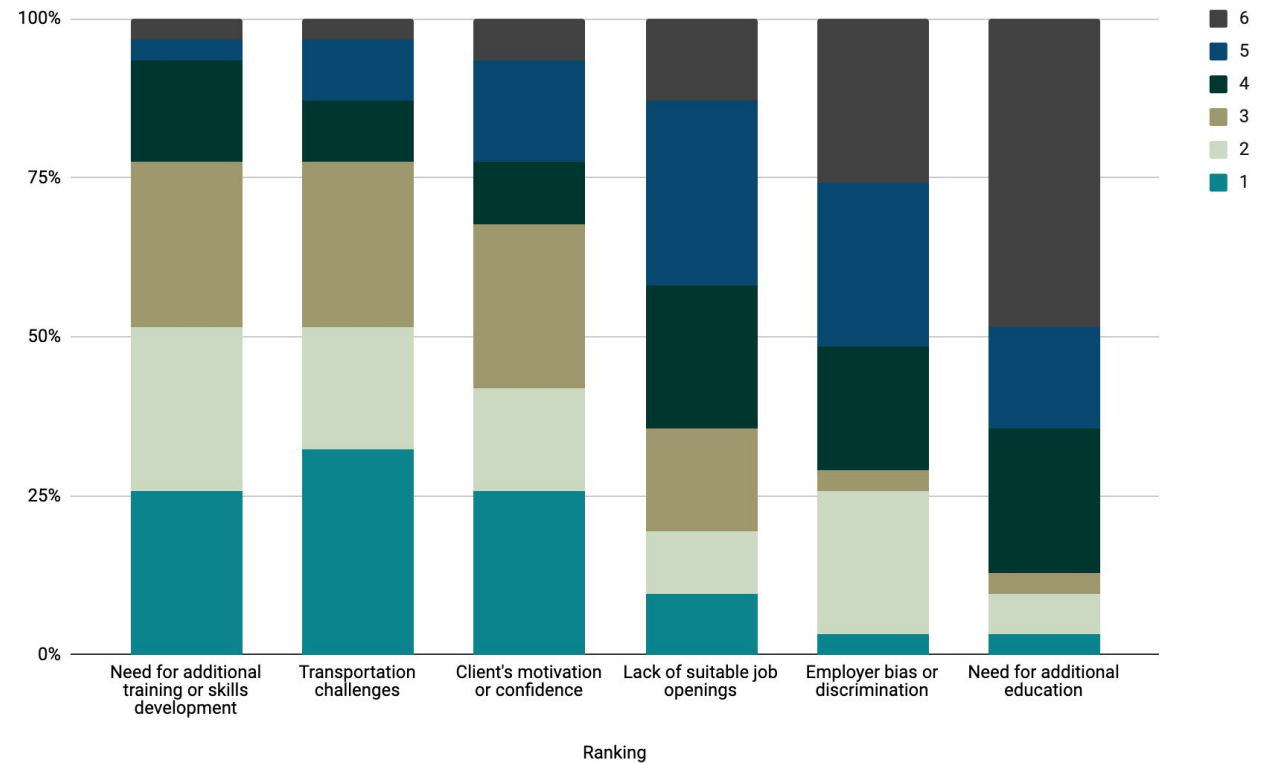
“An area of weakness currently, I feel is the understanding of what our program is about. With referrals, as well as clients that I meet with, there has recently been times where I feel like I have to explain to others what the purpose, as well as goals are with the things that I can support someone by” -Aberdeen VR Staff Member

“More efficient processes to create more time to be client facing” -Sioux Falls VR Staff Member

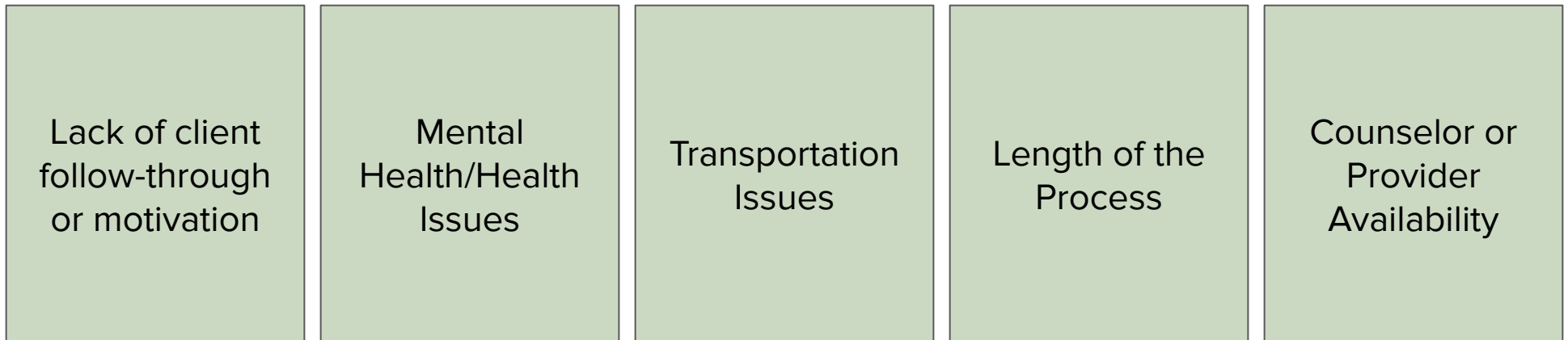
“We are in desperate need of more employment specialists in our district. We have a very difficult time providing timely and adequate services due to lack of providers.” -Rapid City VR Staff Member

Common Barriers to Not Reaching Employment

1. Need for additional training or skills development
2. Transportation challenges
3. Client's motivation or confidence
4. Lack of suitable job openings
5. Employer bias or discrimination
6. Need for additional education



Common Reasons for Leaving the Program



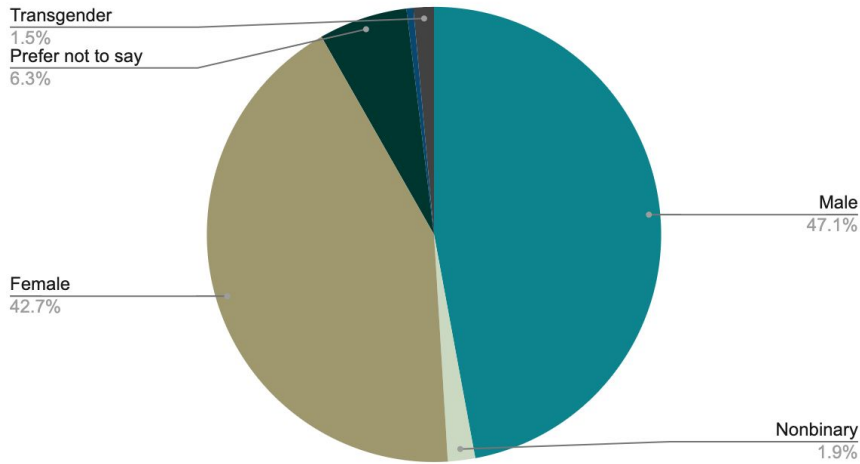
Trends & Insights

	Finding	Suggestion
Length of Process	There were frequent responses from staff about client's difficulty with the length of the process.	VR should find ways to streamline the eligibility/enrollment process to decrease the length of time before clients begin an IPE.
Communication with Providers	Many staff spoke that improvements are needed when communicating with referrals sources. Common challenges include employee turnover and having a consistent contact with providers.	VR should create consistent modes of communication with providers, such as weekly or monthly newsletters.
Explanation of Services	Many staff spoke about confusion of VR services, both from clients and providers. Since VR offers a wide variety of services, it can be hard to explain what exactly a client will be receiving.	Through the outreach campaign, messaging should be detailed to include a description of the services. Create an easy way for clients to figure out what services they may be able to access, whether through an interactive quiz on the website or through printed collateral.
Growth of Referral Sources	53% of staff think that referral sources could grow in number of applicants, most common responses included schools & mental health providers.	VR should create specific outreach to these referral sources to reach prospective clients.
Growth of Providers	Many staff spoke about the need for more providers in the state to provide employment services for clients.	Outreach should include reaching prospective providers. Without the increase in providers, the increase of clients won't result in successful closures.

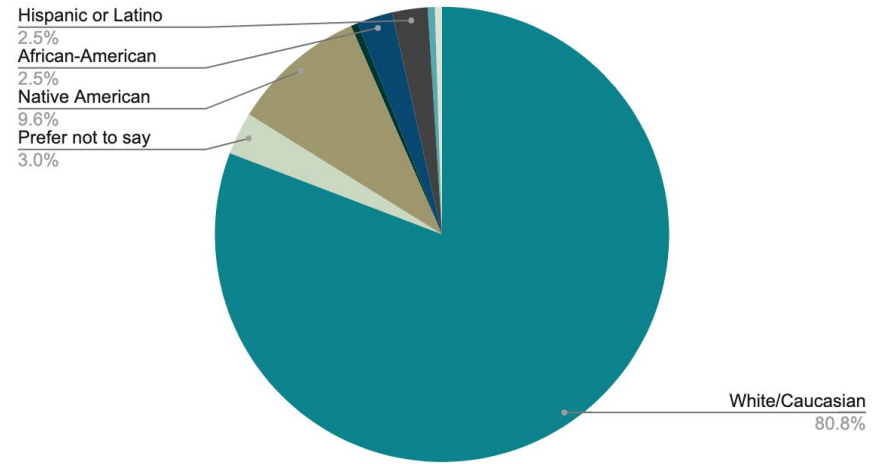
Client Survey Findings

Demographics

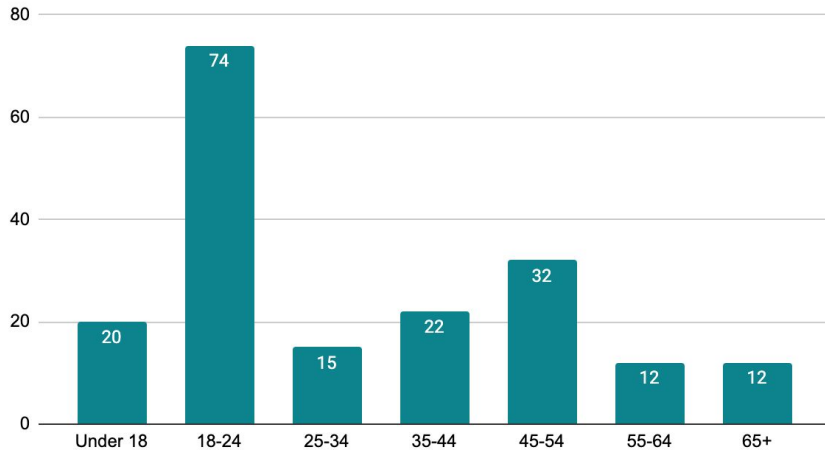
Gender



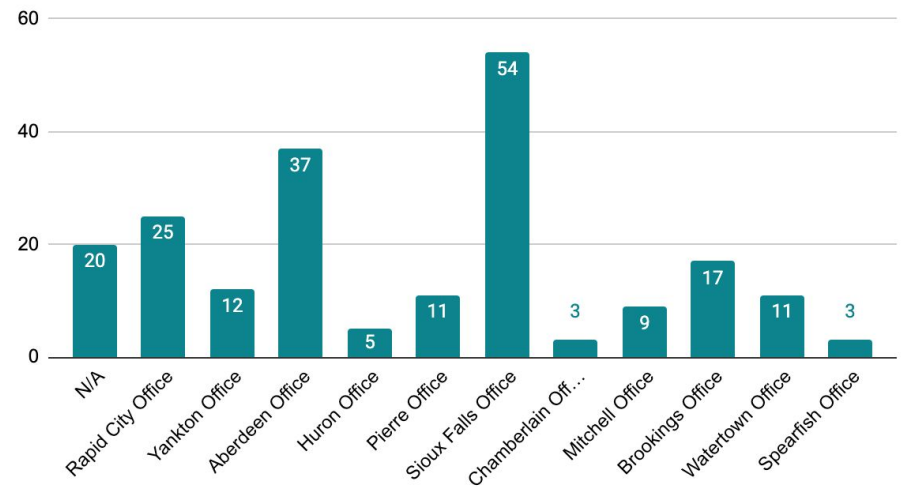
Ethnicity



Age



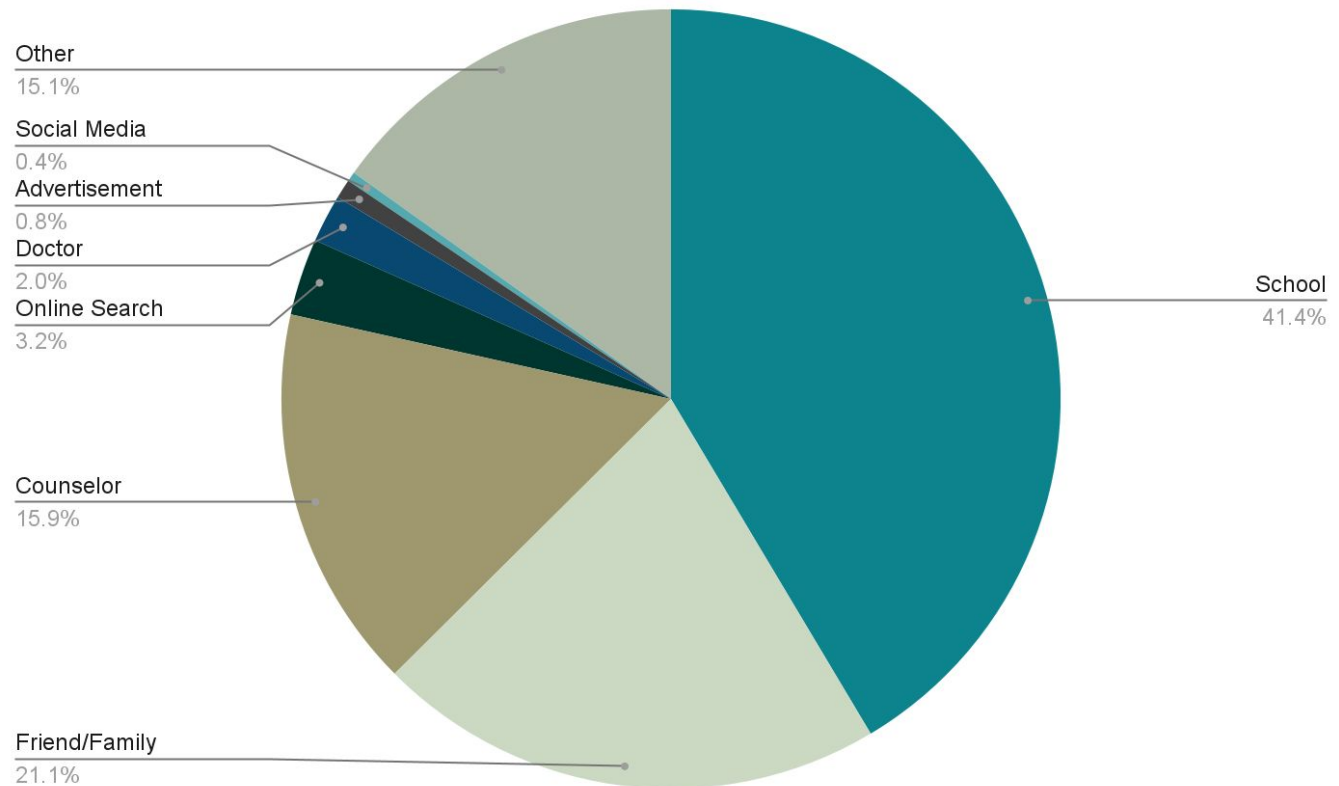
Office Location



How did you first learn about the Vocational Rehabilitation program?

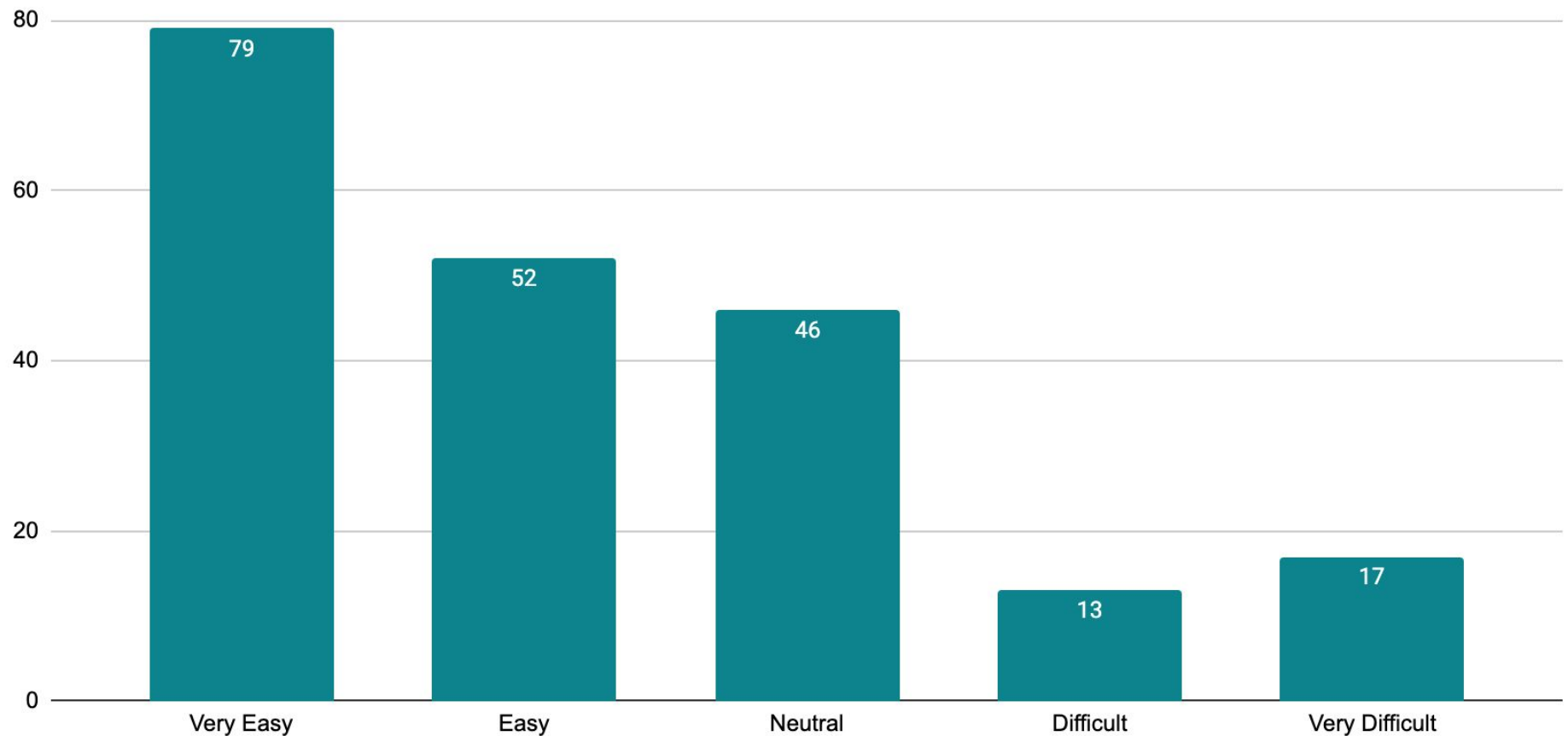
Most commonly clients learned about VR from school, friends/family, or a counselor.

Other responses most frequently listed other referral sources.



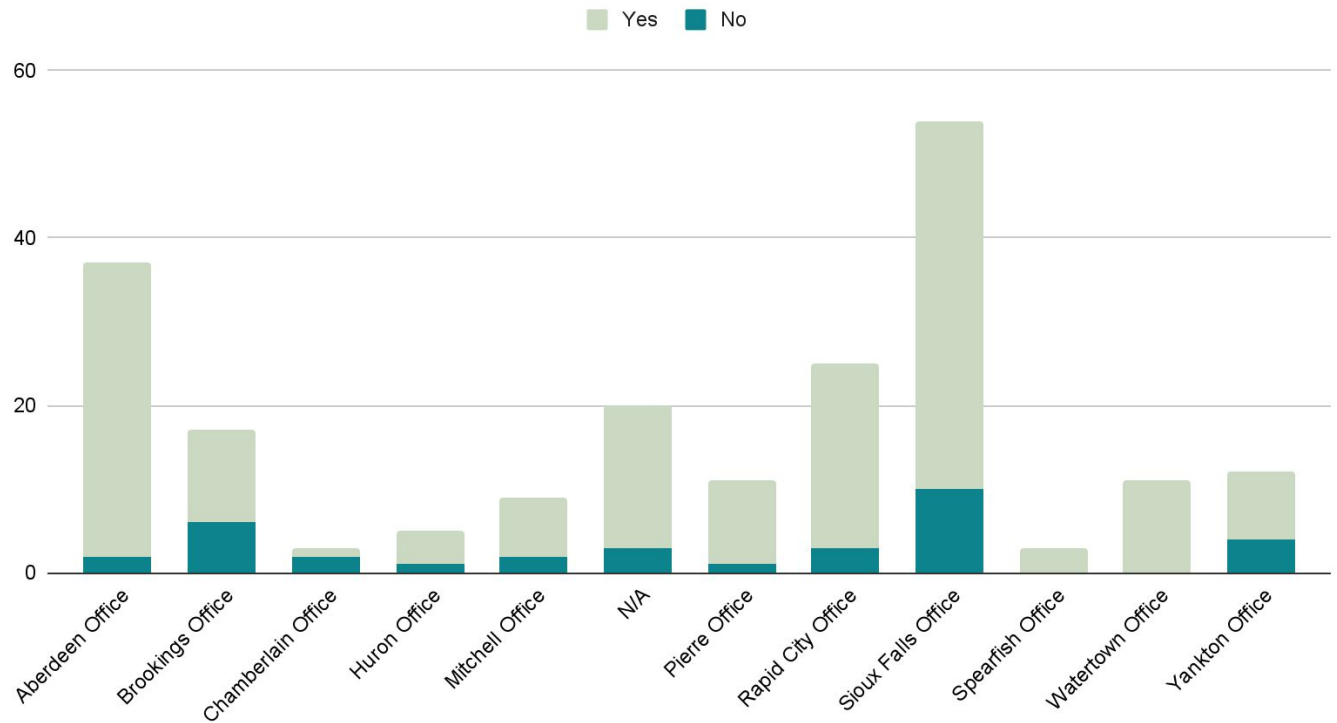
How would you rate the ease of enrolling in the Vocational Rehabilitation program?

63% of respondents noted that it was very easy or easy to enroll in the program.



Are you satisfied with the types of services offered to help you reach your goals?

Office Location	Responses	% of No's
Chamberlain Office	3	67%
Brookings Office	17	35%
Yankton Office	12	33%
Mitchell Office	9	22%
Huron Office	5	20%
Sioux Falls Office	54	19%
N/A	20	15%
Rapid City Office	25	12%
Pierre Office	11	9%
Aberdeen Office	37	5%
Spearfish Office	3	0%
Watertown Office	11	0%



What services do you value most that you received through Vocational Rehabilitation?

"I was able to reach out if I needed help and if they were not immediately available, they would get back to me as soon as they could. Having a middle man between me and my employer if we had communication issues or could not see eye to eye." -VR Client, Hughes County

"I appreciate that my counselor will listen to my concerns." -VR Client, Spink County

"I face a lot of adversity and I appreciate someone not giving up on me to reach my goals, no matter how long it may take. -VR Client, Beadle County

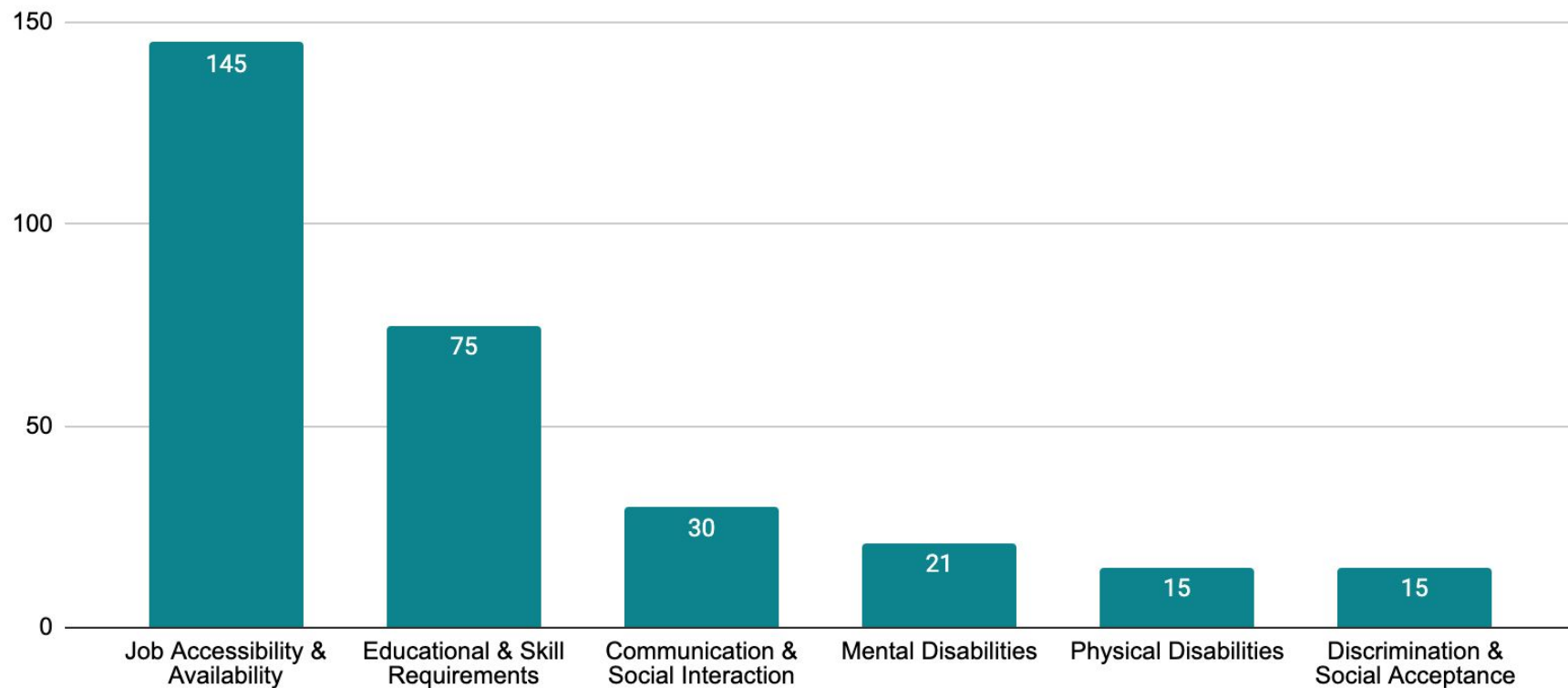
"Having someone to talk to, that will help me solve my problems." -VR Client, Potter County

"Not being judged and stereotyped." -VR Client, Pennington County

"Acceptance & understanding of where I am right now" -VR Client, Lincoln County

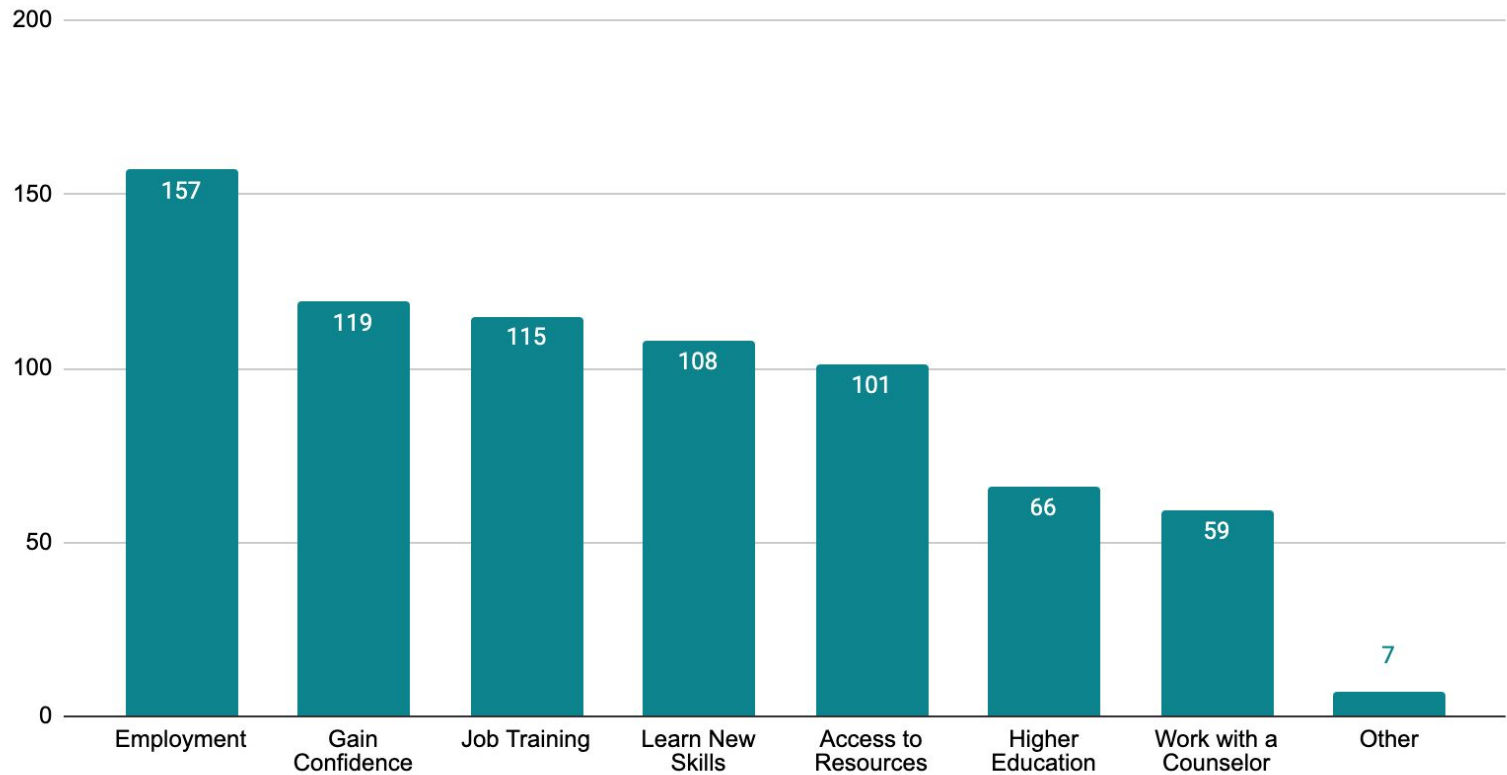
What are the biggest challenges in finding employment due to your disability?

48% of respondents listed answers related to job accessibility and availability as a challenge, followed by 25% of responses related to educational and skill requirements.



What were you hoping to gain by working with the Vocational Rehabilitation program?

Category	Percentage
Employment	21%
Confidence	16%
Job Training	16%
Learn New Skills	15%
Access to Resources	14%
Higher Education	9%
Work with a Counselor	8%
Other	1%



Improvement Suggestions & Insights

	Finding	Suggestion
Communication	Many clients mentioned they desired increased communication with their counselors. They expressed a need for more information and updates.	VR should create automated ways to communicate with clients through emails and text messages. Consistent communication about the program and how they can access services and reach their counselor.
Program Improvements	While a lot of clients are satisfied with job placement services, many expressed needs of improvement to this service. Having options for employment and length of time to find employment were common answers.	VR should find ways to increase program efficiency in order to decrease the length of time to complete the process.
Collaboration with Other Agencies	Many clients mentioned working with other agencies as a difficulty and would appreciate additional collaboration to access other services.	The outreach campaign should provide printed materials about VR for other agencies which would aid in communication between departments.
Rural Access and Transportation	Many clients expressed a need for job services in rural communities and a need to access reliable transportation.	VR should focus on increasing rural community support and increasing awareness in those communities where access to support is less accessible.

Key Takeaways

Key Takeaways

Program Efficiency

Both staff and clients are seeking improvements to the program's efficiency. Creating simplified online forms and process documents could aid in the number of applications and completion rate.

Staff Availability

Clients expressed dissatisfaction of reaching their counselors on a regular basis or having consistent access to their counselor. Staff expressed a need for an increase of staff to support higher caseloads.

Promotion of Services

Clients expressed a need to learn about VR services and knowing what they are able to access. Staff expressed a need in updated communication materials that can speak to a variety of disabilities, both visible or invisible.

Consistent Communication

Clients and staff expressed a need to increase communication between each other. Creating efficient ways to automate communication would aid both parties dissatisfaction with communication.

Any questions?

Creative Concepts

Placement Ideas

Development for this campaign may include the following:

- Website landing page
- Social media - Facebook & Instagram (paid + organic)
- Testimonial videos
- Email newsletters
- Print collateral (brochures, flyers, presentations, etc.)
- Digital video ads
- Streaming audio + radio ads
- Digital Display Ads
- Google Search

Campaign Imagery

Each concept will be developed using a variety of images to speak to the diverse target audience.

Main Imagery:

A diverse group of individuals with visible and invisible disabilities working together in a professional environment. They are engaged in various tasks, such as using computers, collaborating in meetings, and performing hands-on work. The setting should reflect inclusivity and teamwork.

Spotlights:

Portraits of individuals with disabilities successfully employed through the Vocational Rehab Program. Each portrait includes a brief success story highlighting their journey and achievements.

Lifestyle Imagery:

Images of job training sessions, workshops, and resource centers where individuals with disabilities are receiving training and support.

Employers and peers engaging with employees with disabilities, demonstrating mentorship, and collaboration.

Infographics:

Visual data showing the impact of inclusive employment, such as increased job placements, success stories, and the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities.

Concept #1

Tagline:

"From Obstacles to Opportunities"

Your Path to Employment Starts Here

Concept:

Create compelling before-and-after scenarios, showing the contrast between challenges faced and opportunities gained. Use dynamic visuals to illustrate progress and achievement, such as individuals moving from uncertain situations to successful careers or personal milestones.

Concept #2

Tagline:

"Where Every Ability Finds Its Place"

Discover Your Potential with Vocational Rehabilitation

Concept:

Feature a mosaic or tapestry of diverse individuals in various settings—at work, home, and in the community. This visual metaphor illustrates the idea that everyone has a unique place and contribution. Include imagery of DRS staff working closely with clients, providing personalized support and guidance.

Concept #3

Tagline:

"I'm Capable: More Than My Disability"

Build a Rewarding Career with Our Support

Concept:

Empowering Inclusive Employment for Individuals with Disabilities in South Dakota. We firmly believe that everyone that can work deserves a chance to work and should be afforded every opportunity to do so. Through VR services, we strive to create a culture where employment for all individuals, regardless of disability, becomes the standard rather than the exception. Whether you seek job training programs, resources for empowering and hiring individuals with disabilities, SD VR is here to help.

Concept #4

Tagline:

"Together We Thrive"

Employment Services Tailored to Your Unique Needs

Concept:

The "Together We Thrive" campaign is designed to highlight the collaborative efforts of the Vocational Rehab Program in creating inclusive workplaces for individuals with disabilities. This campaign underscores the importance of unity and partnership in fostering a culture where everyone, regardless of their abilities, can thrive and contribute meaningfully to the workforce.

Questions or Comments?

Concepts Survey

Rank your favorite taglines and concepts, with #1 being your favorite and #4 being your least favorite. We will take the top results to create mockups of visuals.



bit.ly/VR_concepts

Concept #1:

"From Obstacles to Opportunities"

Your Path to Employment Starts Here

Concept #2:

"Where Every Ability Finds Its Place"

Discover Your Potential with Vocational Rehabilitation

Concept #3:

"I'm Capable: More Than My Disability"

Build a Rewarding Career with Our Support

Concept #4:

"Together We Thrive"

Employment Services Tailored to Your Unique Needs

Thank You!