
2017

South Dakota

Board of Vocational

Rehabilitation

Annual Report



Photo courtesy of South Dakota Tourism

December 13, 2017

Governor Dennis Daugaard
State Capitol
500 East Capitol Avenue
Pierre, South Dakota 57501

Dear Governor Daugaard:

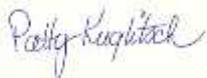
On behalf of the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation (South Dakota's State Rehabilitation Council), I am pleased to submit to you a copy of our 2017 Annual Report. We partner with the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) in the administration of the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program for individuals with disabilities in South Dakota.

Activities in this report reflect the multitude of services in South Dakota designed to assist individuals with disabilities prepare for and engage in gainful employment. We believe these services support your efforts towards making employment the first priority and preferred outcome for South Dakotans with disabilities.

The passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act, promotes supporting workers, including workers with disabilities, in accessing employment, education, job-driven training and support services. Doing so provides them the opportunity to advance their careers and secure solid jobs for the future. Your leadership and the combined efforts of VR, employers, and the public are all needed to promote the reality that all citizens are capable of full participation in competitive, integrated employment.

We thank you for your continued belief and support of the development and expansion of our workforce, and ensuring it includes people with disabilities.

Respectfully,



Patty Kuglitsch, Chairperson

Cc: Board Members
Carol Dobak, Acting RSA Commissioner
Rimal Desai, RSA Liaison

December 13, 2017

Carol Dobak, Acting RSA Commissioner
U.S. Department of Education, OSERS
550 12th Street, SW, Room 5100, PCP
Washington DC 20202

Dear Ms. Dobak:

On behalf of the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation (South Dakota's State Rehabilitation Council), I am pleased to provide you with a copy of our 2017 Annual Report. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, specifies that a report be submitted to you and the Governor of South Dakota on an annual basis.

We partner with the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) in the administration of the vocational rehabilitation program in South Dakota. Activities in this report reflect the wide range of services designed to assist individuals with disabilities prepare for and engage in gainful employment. These undertakings support Governor Daugaard's efforts to make employment the first priority and preferred outcome for South Dakotans with disabilities.

We continually evaluate the effectiveness of the DRS vocational rehabilitation program. We are pleased to report that in 2017, DRS assisted 780 individuals with disabilities accomplish their employment goals in careers of their choice through the provision of VR services. In addition, 456 students with disabilities had paid work experience prior to finishing high school.

We look forward to continuing our work with DRS to ensure services are provided to citizens with disabilities that assist them in living a life of independence and economic self-sufficiency. We thank you for your continued support of our efforts to develop and expand employment opportunities for all.

Respectfully,



Patty Kuglitsch, Chairperson

Cc: Board Members
Rimal Desai, RSA Liaison

BOARD OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION MEMBERSHIP

**SRCs are the consumer voice for the
Vocational Rehabilitation program!**

Membership as of 07/01/17

Patty Kuglitsch
Chairperson
Sioux Falls

Lisa Sanderson
Vice Chairperson
Sioux Falls

Jolleen Laverdure
Member-at-Large
Lower Brule

Cole Uecker
Pierre

Chuck Quinn
Pierre

Beth Schiltz
Pierre

Kristi Eisenbraun
Sioux Falls

Kendra Gottsleben
Sioux Falls

Kim Hoberg
Aberdeen

Joe Vetch
Summerset

Colleen Moran
Hartford

Brad Koneche
Brookings

Bill McEntaffer
Pierre

Peter Bullene
Watertown

Eric Weiss
Pierre

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL OVERVIEW FFY 2017

The **State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)** is established and meets the criteria set forth in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

South Dakota's State Rehabilitation Council is known as the **Board of Vocational Rehabilitation (Board)**. The Board:

- Provides guidance to and works in partnership with South Dakota's general vocational rehabilitation agency – the Division of Rehabilitation Services.
- Plays a significant role in ensuring that the vocational rehabilitation program remains responsive to the needs of those served and operates effectively.
- Works with the Division of Rehabilitation Services to develop policies, plan activities, evaluate program effectiveness and carry out other functions related to the vocational rehabilitation program.

Federally mandated membership requirements include a broad range of stakeholders to ensure various constituencies have a voice in the conduct of the VR agency.

The Council must be composed of at least 15 members – regulations specify composition.

The relationship between the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Division of Rehabilitation Services is a partnership focused on ensuring that eligible individuals with disabilities receive appropriate, timely and effective vocational rehabilitation services leading to successful integrated employment within communities throughout South Dakota.



BOARD OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COMMITTEES

In addition to quarterly meetings, the Board utilizes three standing committees to complete its work. They conduct their work by conference call, video conference, email and face-to-face meetings. Their work is reported out to the full Board at each quarterly meeting. Below is a brief description of these three standing committees.



Photo courtesy of SD Tourism (Mitchell)

The **Executive Committee** acts on behalf of the Board to perform necessary business matters between regular meetings. Their actions must receive concurrence of the full Board at the next meeting (e.g., annual reports, state plan, staff support agreement, meeting agendas).

The **Consumer Services Committee** works on activities such as consumer satisfaction survey, Division goals and strategies, systems change priorities, policy recommendations and public meeting topics.

The **Public Awareness Committee** coordinates National Disability Employment Awareness Month activities, the annual Governor's Awards ceremony and other public outreach activities.

Quarterly Meetings of the Board

December 2, 2016 via video-conference

March 30/31, 2017 in Ft. Pierre

June 21/22, 2017 in Pierre

September 14/15, 2017 in Pierre



Photo courtesy of SD Tourism (Kadoka)

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT REAUTHORIZATION OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 ENACTED JULY 22, 2014

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which included Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, was designed to improve the quality of the workforce, increase economic self-sufficiency, reduce welfare dependence, meet employer skill requirements and enhance the nation's productivity and competitiveness.

Changes to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, under Title IV of WIOA, have had a profound impact on individuals with disabilities, especially students and youth with disabilities transitioning from education to employment. These provisions have strengthened and increased opportunities for individuals with disabilities to acquire skills and supports necessary to maximize their potential and enter competitive, integrated employment in communities throughout this country and state.

The final implementation regulations for the VR program under WIOA strongly adhere to three goals:

- 1) Align the VR program with the workforce development system;
- 2) Strengthen VR's focus on competitive employment; and
- 3) Expand VR services to students and youth with disabilities.

WIOA was designed to strengthen and improve the nation's workforce system, help Americans with significant barriers to employment, including people with disabilities, obtain high quality jobs and careers, and help employers hire and retain skilled workers.

Beyond emphasizing competitive, integrated employment, changes have also strengthened an emphasis on transition services, including pre-employment transition services. New innovations have focused on greater employer engagement and collaborative opportunities for partnering across the workforce development system. Each state submits a Unified or Combined State Plan to the US Secretary of Labor that outlines a four-year workforce development strategy for their workforce development system. The core programs are: Adult Program, Dislocated Worker Program, Youth Program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Program, Wagner-Peyser Act Program and Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT'S IMPACT ON THE BOARD OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Program-specific requirements in the Unified State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation program authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA – Title IV (Section 676.125), requires States to submit a VR services portion as part of the Unified State Plan. All submission requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan are in addition to the jointly developed strategic and operational content requirements prescribed in WIOA (Section 102(b)).

Goals of the VR Section of the State Unified State Plan

Five goals jointly developed by the Board and Division for the VR portion of the State Unified Plan include:

Goal 1: Students will enter their adult lives capable of self-advocacy with sufficient experience to make choices about work and career, and being appropriately supported and living as independently as possible.

Goal 2: A strong statewide community with DRS presence and partnerships with business, community service providers, schools, State Government, workforce system and service organizations.

Goal 3: DRS participants will have greater access to transportation services needed to obtain and maintain employment.

Goal 4: A VR services delivery system that results in enhanced earnings, employee benefits, retention and career advancement for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Goal 5: DRS participants will have the skills, motivation and supports necessary to make an informed choice for successful daily living, employment, money management, personal and work relationships.

The relationship between the Board and Division is a partnership focused on ensuring that individuals with disabilities receive appropriate, timely and effective vocational rehabilitation services resulting in successful employment outcomes for those served.

BOARD OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The Board’s commitment to hear and learn from consumers and stakeholders statewide is partially supported by hosting their meetings in communities around the state. It is also supported by ensuring that all meetings are held in accessible locations, as well as made accessible to people needing effective communication to fully participate.

Participants are invited to provide input during the “public comment” period of each meeting, or during time set aside for meeting with specific groups. These are opportunities to hear about what is working well and what could be improved. They also provide time to brainstorm ideas on how individuals with disabilities across the state can be better served through vocational rehabilitation services. Whenever possible, Board meetings are scheduled to coincide with meetings of other groups in an effort to provide opportunities to learn from one another and to enhance collaboration.

December 2, 2016

This meeting was held via video-conference with sites in Aberdeen, Chamberlain, Mitchell, Pierre, Rapid City, Sioux Falls and Watertown.

Community Collaboration – The Board approved the Executive Committee’s funding recommendation to assist with speaker costs for an upcoming Watertown event. The speaker, survivor of a work-related fire, was being brought to the community by the Mayor’s Committee, Northeast SD Society of Human Resource Management and the local school district. Presentations were planned for employers, the general public and students and faculty of schools from middle to post-secondary levels. Consensus was this was an excellent opportunity to partner within a community to support an event that promoted work safety and the abilities of people with disabilities.

**In 2017, the
Division of Rehabilitation Services
served 5,220 South Dakotans with disabilities,
and 99% of all participants had a significant
disability.**

VR Return on Investments
The average annual income of
participants successfully rehabilitated
was **\$15,676.30.**

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

Director's Report – The DRS Director reported on: (1) the DRS budget, (2) Supported Employment funds and services, (3) the approaching State Legislative session and known issues with potential impact on vocational rehabilitation services, and (4) the request for proposal process involved in securing staff support for the Board and the Statewide Independent Living Council.

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) Update – The Board member who also serves on the SILC provided this report. New member orientation was provided at their last meeting, including the history of the Independent Living movement in South Dakota and the nation. An overview of Western Resources for Independent Living – one of South Dakota's centers for independent living (CILs) – was presented. Other information presented at the SILC meeting included a presentation by Consumer Credit Counseling Services and information on the 2017 SILC Congress and South Dakota's assistive technology project.

Year End Data – At the conclusion of every fiscal year, DRS prepares a year-end data report. The data presentation at the December meeting included application trends, age of applicants, student status of applicants, referral sources, primary impairment of eligible individuals and successful closure trends. The report also examined participant satisfaction survey results, which were generated at various points within the case service process.

Competitive Integrated Employment Program Guide – This program guide had been disseminated to members prior to the meeting. It addressed the new federal definition of competitive integrated employment and other required components for a competitive integrated employment setting e.g., competitive earnings, integrated location, advancement opportunities. As it was reviewed, a few minor edits were made to it. It was explained that the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired would also be reviewing and acting upon this document. A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the "draft" document with noted edits.

In 2017,

- A total of **2,412** individuals applied for VR services from DRS.
- The average age of applicants was **34.6** years of age.
- **36%** were transition age (16 to 24 years of age at application).

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

Board of Vocational Rehabilitation Annual Report – The Board is responsible for producing and submitting an annual report to the Governor and the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Commissioner. It must be completed and submitted by December 31st of each year. This report focuses on Board activities during the just completed fiscal year and information relating to the provision of vocational rehabilitation services. A process and timelines were established, which would provide the Board ample opportunity to review the “draft” report and provide comments, prior to the report being finalized and submitted. A motion was passed in support of the process and timelines.

DRS Program Initiatives – DRS continually seeks to identify new and innovative ways to strengthen vocational rehabilitation services to meet the changing needs of individuals with disabilities and employers. They instituted a variety of initiatives involving a wide network of community partners. Following are a few that were reported on during this meeting:

**South Dakota’s
employment
rate for people
with disabilities
is second
highest in the
nation at**

51.7%.

Establishment Grants – These grants were designed to assist a number of community rehabilitation programs to expand their supported employment programs. It provided support to agencies for adding additional employment specialist positions. The grants also provided training for employment specialists. This training supports the service provider certification process instituted to increase reimbursement rates.

Section 511 Reviews – Initially there were approximately 1,300 individuals working in sub-minimum wage positions. That number is now about 1,000. For those remaining in sub-minimum wage positions, periodic reviews must be conducted. DRS has contracted with three retired VR professionals to conduct the reviews. The reviews must be completed by July 22, 2017. Almost all reviews had been completed at this time.

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

Summer Initiatives – Seven grants were awarded in two areas: providing pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities and providing employer based work experiences for vocational rehabilitation clients. Debriefings were held between providers and DRS staff. Feedback will be used as the Division considers requests for early 2017.

Contracts to Expand Business-led Technical Assistance – DRS is supporting the expansion of business led, community based organizations with a goal of providing education, consulting and technical assistance to their business communities. It was reported that they were providing funding to groups in Aberdeen, Brookings and Yankton.

Project Skills – DRS reported that they have been working with leadership within State government to expand paid work experiences for high school students with disabilities. The goals and outcomes of this effort are:

Year 1: Identify five youth to work in various state government positions; nine were identified and placed.

Year 2: Identify eight youth; ten were identified and placed.

Year 3: Identify 11 youth to work in various state government positions; so far two have been identified and placed.

Ability for Hire - DRS reported that it continues to work with Episocity, a marketing firm, to produce materials that educate and provide technical assistance to businesses who are interested in hiring people with disabilities.

Governor's Awards Ceremony and NDEAM Activities – Both of these activities are collaborative efforts between the Board, the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Statewide Independent Living Council and the Department of Human Services – Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. This was an opportunity to review the outcome of this year's activities and begin dialogue on whether changes were envisioned for the coming year's activities.

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

March 2017 Meeting

Office of Special Education – Post Secondary Indicator 14 Survey – A report was provided on this survey that examined “exiters” – students who were on an IEP when they left high school by either graduating with a diploma, aging out or dropping out. The survey has been conducted since 2008-2009. Students are grouped in five different tiers: higher education, competitive employment, other post-secondary education or training, some other employment and disengaged. The data from 2014-2015 was based on 418 responses out of a total of 653. It showed 15.5% were enrolled in higher education; 67.5% were enrolled in higher education or competitively employed; 81% were enrolled in higher education or in some other post-secondary education or training programs or competitively employed or in some other employment; and 75 respondents were disengaged. This data showed the largest percentage of students considered to be competitively employed (60.8%) since data has been collected on Indicator 14. A few observations made were: (1) students with emotional disturbance showed more positive response than years past; (2) Native American students that were disengaged were at a lower rate than the previous year; and (3) the more activities a student was involved with during high school, the more likely the student would be engaged later on down the road.

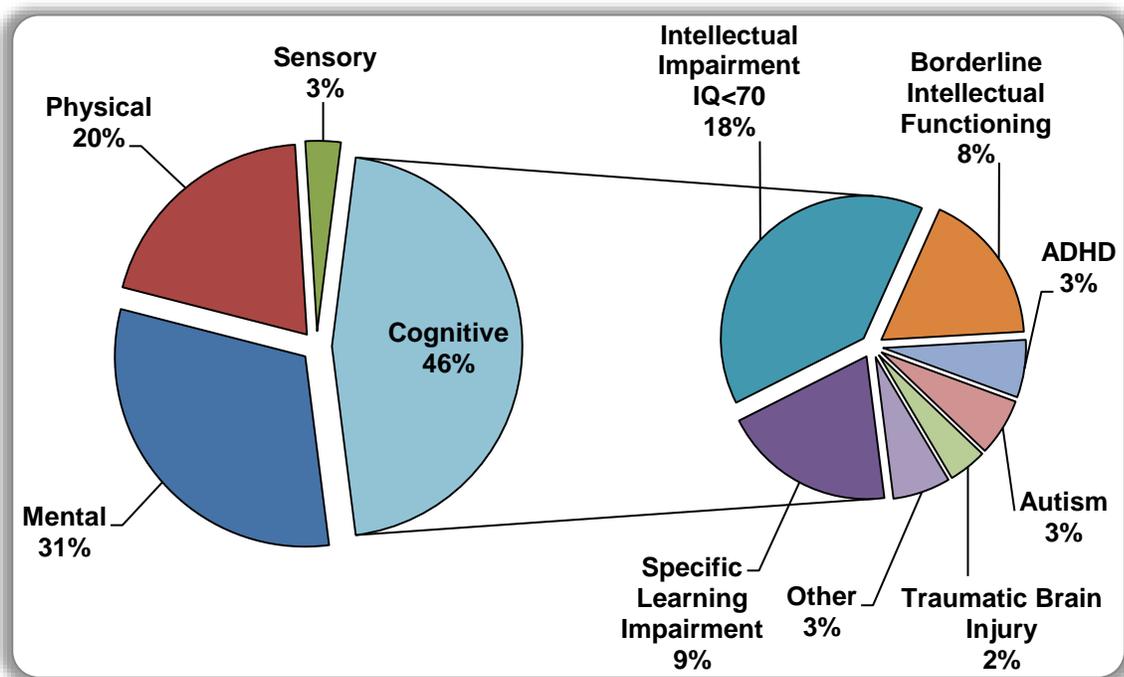
Transition Services – The Transition Services Liaison Project (TSLP) is a product of a previous systems change grant. It provides technical assistance to transition age students, their families, local education agencies and other providers. It is now a collaborative effort between the Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Office of Special Education.

Major TSLP activities are: Youth Leadership Forum, Catch the Wave, Project Skills, transition forums and trainings. Staff are involved in “monitoring” for quality assurance, joining education specialists in reviewing IEP files. This is a collaborative effort between TSLP and Department of Education, Office of Special Education. One example of trainings they hosted was training for post-secondary institution disability service coordinators on service animals and comfort/emotional support animals.

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

Director's Report – The Director reported on: (1) the Division's budget, (2) the recently concluded State Legislative session, and (3) a Governor's Executive Order renaming and moving the Division of Adult Services and Aging within the Department of Social Services to the Division of Long Term Services and Supports under the Department of Human Services. This change will become effective April 12th, and it impacts approximately 100 staff statewide. One result is that all Medicaid waivers will be within one department. The hope is that this will improve efficiencies for those served by the waivers and within functioning of the waivers.

Solicitation for Board Nominations – Staff reported that the joint solicitation of nominations for vacancies due to occur on the Board, the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Statewide Independent Living Council had been disseminated statewide. They had also been posted on websites of public and private disability related organizations. Vacancies are scheduled to occur as of June 30th. Nominations are gathered and submitted to the Governor for his consideration and action prior to that time.



Primary Impairment of Eligible Individuals

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

DRS Program Initiatives – Establishment Grants – A review was provided of all current grants, followed by dialogue on the impact that staff turnover is having on the success of these grants. In an effort to continue to support the agencies and their staff, DRS continues to provide webinar trainings, which are recorded and available to all new staff. **Section 511 Reviews** – The majority of required reviews have been completed.

Approximately 75 individuals were referred to DRS as a result. Individuals who continue to work at sub-minimum wage jobs will continue to have periodic reviews. **Annual Case File Review** – DRS carries out this activity annually, and it is scheduled for April. The plan is to review approximately 330 cases, including cases at various stages within the VR process. Seventeen staff will conduct the reviews. The review serves as a training opportunity and a way to identify trends and promote consistencies across the state.

Employment Works Initiatives – DRS recognizes that along with its customers – people with disabilities seeking employment – they have a second customer base – employers. In an effort to better meet the needs of employers, DRS is involved in several key initiatives.

Business Led Community Organizations – The Sioux Falls Business Resource Network is the first such organization in South Dakota. It was followed by the creation of the Workforce Diversity Network of the Black Hills. Both are providing education, awareness, technical assistance and support to local businesses on hiring, maintaining and retaining individuals with disabilities within their workforces. **Business Specialist Activities** – A part of the Governor’s Employment Initiative was the establishment of a Business Specialist within the Department of Human Services. This person works with employers to address their needs for information and resources relating to the employment of individuals with disabilities, complying with the ADA and other disability related laws and regulations, and promoting the value of a diverse workforce. The specialist has collaborated with groups such as South Dakota Retailers Association, Society of Human Resource Management, and the Bureau of Human Resources to promote the value of employing people with disabilities to the individuals and the businesses. **Ability for Hire** – A report was shared on website and social media analytics relating to this marketing campaign. The website had 6,766 users of which 6,713 were new (1/16 – 12/16). Social media impressions from January through December 31, 2016 totaled 1,149,918. Women between the ages of 25 – 34 led the activity on the social media pages.

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

South Dakota Retailers and Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) – SD Retailers received a grant through ODEP. Through that grant, they produced a video featuring interviews of employers and employees with disabilities. They are located in smaller and larger communities. Its purpose is to promote the value of an inclusive workforce. As their project continues, they are collaborating with DRS, the Business Specialist and other disability related organizations throughout the state to promote the positive story for all that results when people with disabilities are part of our workforce.

Statewide Independent Living Council – One key activity reported on was the pending completion of the annual 704 Report. This report is submitted to the Administration for Community Living. One portion is completed by the Statewide Independent Living Council and the Designated State Entity (DSE). Another portion is completed by each center for independent living (CIL) in the state. A report on the status of annual CIL reviews was provided – a DSE responsibility. CIL staff training has been scheduled for May and an invitation to participate has been extended to the Native American VR programs and the Adult Services and Aging – soon to be Long Term Services and Supports – staff.

Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities (MAWD) – This program resulted from a Medicaid Infrastructure grant received in 2006. The grant led to the provision of personal attendant services in the workplace and the creation of South Dakota’s Medicaid Buy-In program – MAWD. To be eligible for MAWD, a person must have a disability, must be working, unearned income must be less than \$755/month, earned income is limited to 250% of the federal poverty level and assets must be less than \$8,000. There are 300 – 400 individuals on the program at any one time.

VR Return on Investments

- The average annual income of participants rehabilitation was **\$15,676.30** a year.
- **780** VR participants obtained employment.
- Of those obtaining employment, **173 (22%)** utilized formal supports with an average wage of **\$9.51/hour**.
- Average hourly wage of employed individuals after receiving VR services was **\$10.75/hour**.
- Upon completion of their VR program, participants will be working an average of **26 hours per week**.

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

SD Benefits Specialist Network – There are six benefit specialists in the state who assist SSI and SSDI beneficiaries to better understand how employment will affect their benefits. Over 70% of referrals to this program come from VR. The remainder come from community rehabilitation programs, schools, self-referrals and others. Annual training is provided statewide to various public and private agency staff who support people with disabilities. These trainings focus on work incentives available to assist beneficiaries in keeping needed medical coverage, while earning more income and having greater economic self-sufficiency.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) – The joint committee comprised of members from the Board, the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and Statewide Independent Living Council reviewed 12 community funding proposals. Their funding recommendations totaled \$18,760. The Board considered what level of funding it would provide to these activities, recognizing that the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Statewide Independent Living Council historically provide additional funding in support of these activities. The Board approved spending up to \$13,000 in support of the 2017 NDEAM activities.

Eligibility for VR Services

An individual must have a documented disability.

The disability must create a substantial impediment to the employment outcome.

The individual must require services to achieve an employment outcome.

The individual must be able to benefit from services to achieve an employment outcome.

Available VR Services

Evaluations – medical, psychological, educational, work related

Vocational Counseling – adjustment to disability, planning for the future, interest assessments and more.

Training – on the job, job coaching, post-secondary

Employment – resumes, applications, interviewing, job placement assistance and much more...

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

June 2017 Meeting

Sioux Falls Business Resource Network (BRN) – Vicki Kerkvliet, Director of the BRN, addressed the BRN structure, and its three areas of emphasis – education, awareness and provision of resources for businesses as it relates to the hiring, retaining and maintaining employees with disabilities. As a result of presentations to community groups e.g., Society of Human Resource Management, SDN Communications, Minnehaha County, relationships have been built leading to regular conversations on workforce needs of specific employers, recognition of employers hiring individuals with disabilities, and collaborating with the city’s Disability Awareness Commission in recognizing businesses which employ persons with disabilities. A change she has seen is that employers are now contacting BRN with questions on how to support employees with recent injuries or disabilities/ diseases that have progressed, and they wish to retain these valued employees.

Director’s Report – Youth Leadership Forum – Forty-six students were selected to participate in this year’s event. It was held on the Northern State University campus in Aberdeen. The Richard Hicks Award Luncheon included parents, legislators, employers and sponsors. BVR member Kendra Gottsleben received this year’s Richard Hicks Award, given to an individual who has participated in a previous Youth Leadership Forum and continues to carry on the work of self and systems advocacy and community involvement. Pre-Employment Transition Services – Starting with the FY2015 grant, each state must expend 15% of their allotment on pre-employment transition services. DRS met this threshold for 2016. Examples of expenditures that are counted towards this 15% are dollars directed to the TSLP contract, Project Skills, staff time spent on providing transition services, post-secondary education and support of summer initiatives. Case Management System – WIOA changes impacted performance measures, and these changes called for revisions to the data collection system used to report to RSA. The number of data items reported on case closures doubled. Reporting will now take place on a quarterly basis rather than on an annual basis. Staff training is presently underway on these changes to the system. Student with a Disability “Draft” Program Guide – This document was provided for the Board’s review and comment. It has been written to assist DRS staff in tracking expenditures within the budget that can be applied to the 15% threshold in the area of Pre-Employment Transition Services.

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

Case File Review – DRS staff reported that the case file review was completed, and it involved sixteen staff from DRS and the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. The review focused on eligibility, development of the individualized plan for employment (IPE), VR services provided and case closure. Any areas falling below 90% were identified as needing improvement. A total of 333 cases were randomly selected, and 304 were reviewed. Identified training needs included: maintenance services, benefit analysis, plans for sustaining employment, IPE goals and financial need determinations.

Summer Initiatives – A Pre-Employment Transition Services for Students project served seven students in Mitchell. Classes were held Monday through Thursday mornings, and the project ran for three weeks. The project targeted Juniors and Seniors in high school, up to age 21.

Areas addressed by this project were: job readiness, employment skills, job shadowing, social skills for work, self-awareness and self-advocacy. Various partners collaborated on this project, helping to make it a success for the participating students.



In 2017

- **35%** of VR applicants received either Social Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).
 - **319** received SSI
 - **391** received SSDI
 - **131** received both
- **31%** of VR participants reported having a serious mental illness as their primary disability

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

A second initiative was an employer based work experience involving County Fair Food Store in Mitchell. Again, classroom training was provided, focusing on person centered tools, daily routines, goal setting, attitude, interests, interviewing preparation and participating in mock interviews. Participants also received orientation to the business site, a tour, dress code information and job shadowing opportunities. County Fair Food Store employees conducted the mock interviews, and the employees worked at making this experience as real as possible e.g., treating the participants like new hires – providing them with name tags and uniforms.

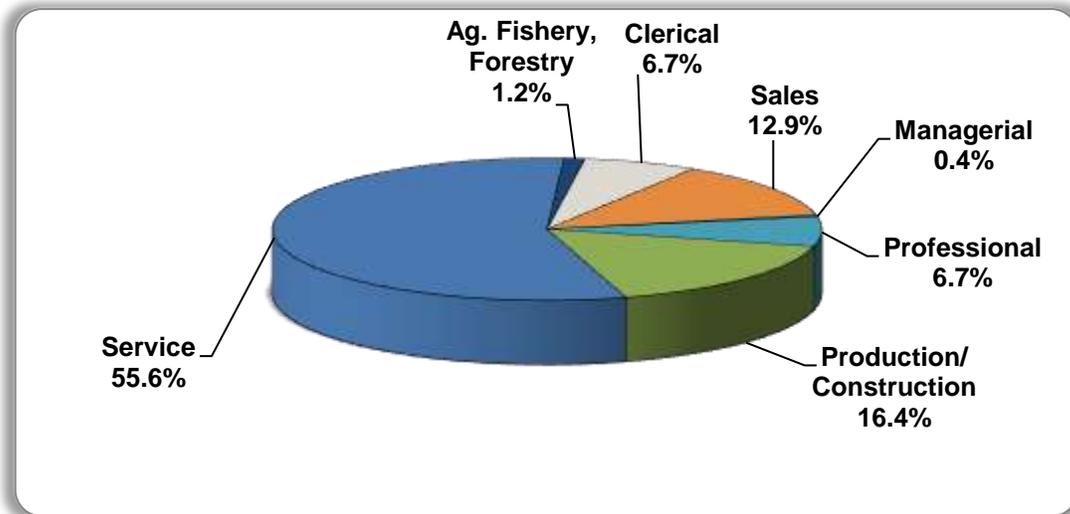
Aspire Update - This five-year research project is focusing on youth ages 14 – 16 on SSI at the time of enrollment in the project. Aspire is a consortium involving South Dakota, Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Montana and North Dakota. It seeks to determine the difference made by providing extra services to youth and their families as the youth progress from education to independent living and employment. The intervention services provided by the project are: training and information for families, financial literacy, self-determination, case management services, paid work experiences and access to benefits specialists.

Workforce Diversity Network of the Black Hills (WDBNH) – Catherine Greseth, director, explained how WDBNH is similar in nature and focus to BRN in Sioux Falls. They, too, seek to be a resource to businesses and employers seeking to maintain a diverse workforce, inclusive of persons with disabilities. Their activities have focused on recruiting and hiring needs of employers, as well as how to provide requested accommodations. She has also provided trainings, as well as assisted employers of all sizes with reviewing and rewriting job descriptions to ensure they focus on the essential functions of the positions. She has provided articles to the Rapid City Journal, Rapid City Chamber of Commerce Investment Report and Black Hills Lifestyle magazine relating to success stories of employing persons with disabilities.

Statewide Independent Living Council – Two of the three centers for independent living have had their annual reviews completed. An overview of the results was provided to members. In addition, an update on the outcome of the State/Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation joint meeting was provided and a report from the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Older Blind IL Program.

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

Election of Officers and Farewell to Outgoing Members – Traditionally, this meeting includes both of the above activities. A slate of officers was elected at this time. Those members exiting the Board were thanked for their service and presented with a small token of appreciation.



Occupations at Closure

September 2017 Meeting

New Member Orientation – New members were provided with introductory information on the Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services, Role of the State Rehabilitation Council (Board of Vocational Rehabilitation), and some of the workings of the Board. The information included a summary of DRS programs and services. Board staff also provided members with an overview of their member manual, committee structure, the State’s boards/commissions portal and reimbursement procedures.

Director’s Report – Expenditures – It was reported that DRS has seen a significant increase in applicants over the past couple of years. This has resulted in a big impact on expenditures. The Ticket to Work program has provided beneficiaries with greater choice, and it has provided DRS with an avenue for generating revenue to provide VR services. Alternative Funding Program for Assistive Technology – Funding has been awarded to a community rehabilitation program to establish a revolving loan fund to

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

assist people with disabilities seeking to purchase needed assistive technology. It is expected this program will help bridge the gap between conventional funding sources and the assistive technology needs of individuals with disabilities in South Dakota.

HB1006 – This bill’s passage and signing into law has resulted in changes to how State boards, councils and commissions carry out their work. An overview was provided, citing examples of the areas affected e.g., publishing of public notices, voting when meetings are held via electronic means.

The World of Supported Employment – Dr. Wendy Parent-Johnson, Executive Director of the University of South Dakota, School of Medicine, Center for Disabilities, presented on this topic. The key components of the presentation were: (a) an overview of supported employment, (b) what does this mean for service delivery, (c) intersection of VR and DDD, (d) VR and Center partnership to expand supported employment, (e) national supported employment perspective, and (f) discussion of needs and strategies in South Dakota. Critical points made were that supported employment has a “presumption of work” – focus on solutions; the question needs to shift from “can this individual work?” to “what is the best job match for this person?”

Transition Services and DRS – A Deep Dive – Youth with disabilities have had a significantly higher rate of cognitive impairments than adults with disabilities served by DRS. Youth received many of the same services as adults accessing VR services. The types of services they received at a higher rate were Project Skills or employment skills, assistive technology services, assistive technology devices, and tuition and fees/room and board. VR counselors were surveyed for their input on transitions services. Soft skills attainment and collaboration with schools were identified as key areas needing focus.

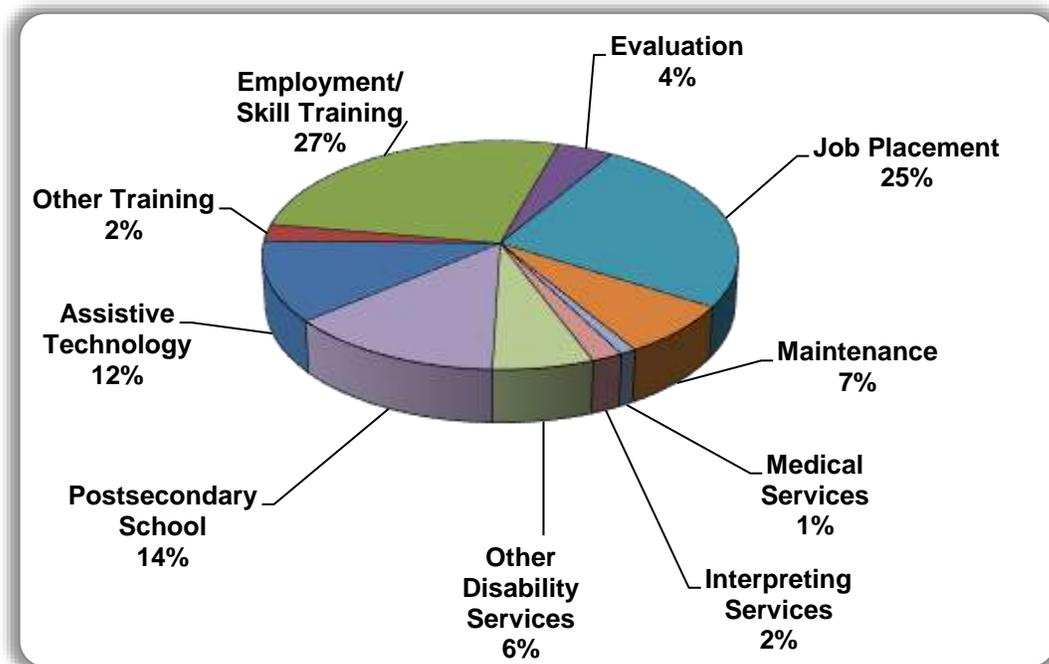
Project Skills/Employment Skills Initiative with State Government - For 2017, DRS had established a goal of 11 individuals obtaining work experiences in state agencies. A total of 12 individuals are working in state agencies. Examples of the involved agencies are the Bureau of Human Resources; Game, Fish and Parks; Department of Human Services; SD State Historical Society; and the Department of Labor and Regulation.

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

Employers as Our Customers – Best Practices for VR – With the implementation of WIOA, the customer base for VR became not only individuals with disabilities seeking employment. It also became employers seeking employment ready individuals for their workforce. As a result, it became important for VR staff to learn how to effectively engage with business leaders. A “draft” document was shared with the Board focusing on what is business engagement and why is it important; what are some best practices when interacting with businesses; rehabilitation language vs. business language when interacting with businesses and employers.

Statewide Independent Living Council Report – Three key components of the last meeting, beyond the regular reports and updates, were passing a motion to provide \$3,000 in support of 2017 NDEAM events, and two presentations on “Emergency Preparedness and People with Disabilities” and “Public/Rural Transit in South Dakota.”

NDEAM Update – Information was shared on the activities planned in 12 communities statewide during October. Members were encouraged to participate in events in or near their home communities.



Payments by Service Types

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

Governor's Awards Update – A press release had gone out announcing the 2017 award recipients and upcoming ceremony. The 2017 recipients were: Koni Sims (Sioux Falls – Outstanding Citizen with a Disability); Pizza Ranch (Spearfish – Outstanding Public Employer (small employer category); Tami Francis (Sioux Falls) – Outstanding Employee with a Disability; County Fair Food Store (Mitchell) – Outstanding Public Employer (large employer category); Meri Erickson (Groton) – Outstanding Transition Services Award; and Yankton Area Mental Wellness, Inc. (Yankton) – Distinguished Service Award.



Lt. Governor Matt Michels presented the 2017 Governor's Awards



Award Recipients (left to right): Koni Sims; Meri Erickson; Pizza Ranch/Ted and Jill; Yankton Area Mental Wellness Inc./Pam; Tami Francis; County Fair Food Store/Brett, Carrie, Ryan & Justin.

BOARD CONTACT INFORMATION

To contact the Board, you may write them at:
Board of Vocational Rehabilitation
221 South Central Avenue, Suite 34A
Pierre SD 57501

You may call their staff at 605.945.2207 or 1.800.210.0143

All board meetings are open to the public. They are announced in advance, and a variety of information may be found at the State of South Dakota's Boards/Commissions website portal: <http://boardsandcommissions.sd.gov/>

