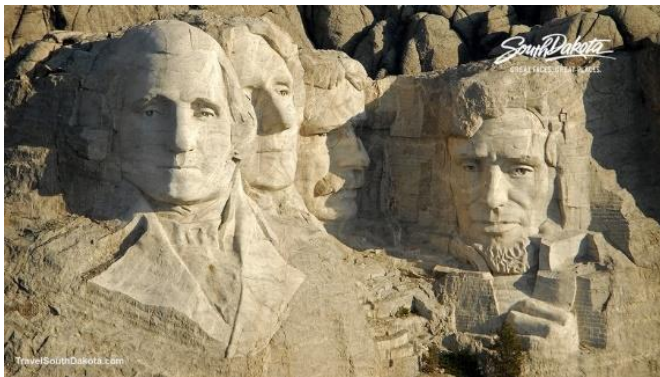


State Rehabilitation Council

Annual Report 2022



South Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation Services (General Agency)



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(Photos by Travel South Dakota)

Letter from the State Rehabilitation Council

To the Honorable Governor Kristi Noem and RSA Commissioner Carol Dobak,

On behalf of the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, South Dakota's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), I am pleased to present to you our 2022 Annual Report. This report highlights the work of the Board during the past year. It also shares highlights from the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program which provides services and supports to individuals with disabilities as they prepare for and engage in meaningful employment.

The Board successfully met throughout this reporting period through the use of virtual meetings. Since the onset of COVID-19, members displayed resiliency and adapted easily to utilizing video conferencing. Board meetings continue to be conducted remotely; this is done primarily because it allows volunteers with limited mobility to connect from their own homes.

This report includes information of individuals with disabilities who utilized vocational rehabilitation services to achieve their goal of competitive, integrated employment. It includes photos of the 2022 Governor's Awards recipients. The pictures reflect individuals with a variety of experiences, abilities, and interests and a shared desire to obtain competitive integrated employment along with employers who have been supportive throughout the process. The information provides a snapshot of South Dakotans' strength and adaptability in overcoming barriers.

We look forward to continuing working in partnership with the VR program in providing employment related services for individuals with disabilities so they may prepare for and engage in competitive, integrated, and gainful employment. We thank you for continued support and belief in a statewide workforce inclusive of all individuals.

Respectfully,

Cole Uecker

Cole Uecker, Board Chairperson

Cc: Board members

Jason Hunter, RSA's SRC Liaison (Email Copy)

Christyne Cavataio, RSA Liaison (Email Copy)

Board of Vocational Rehabilitation

Board Membership

Cole Uecker,
Pierre

Brad Konechne,
Brookings

Kevin Barber,
Sioux Falls

Jolleen Laverdure,
Lower Brule

Chris Olson,
Madison

Lisa Merchen,
Spearfish

Vicki Stewart,
Sioux Falls

Jennifer Trenhaile,
Yankton

Jonathan Englund,
Piedmont

Joe Vetch,
Summerset

Brooke Lusk,
Pierre

Bill McEntaffer,
Pierre

Eric Weiss,
Pierre

Beth Schiltz,
Pierre

Peter Bullene,
Watertown

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is established and meets the criteria set forth in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. SRCs are the consumer voice for the VR program.

The SRC has federally mandated membership requirements that include a broad range of stakeholders to ensure that various constituencies have a voice in the conduct of the VR agency.

SRC members represent a broad array of partners such as individuals with disabilities, counselors, employers, parents, educators, community rehabilitation programs, and other stakeholders in the VR program.

SRC members reinforce the value that individuals with disabilities are able to achieve quality employment outcomes and become self-sufficient.

In **South Dakota** - the SRC 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 (DRS).*
- ❖ *Plays a significant role in ensuring that the VR program remains responsive to the needs of those served and operates effectively.*
- ❖ *Works with DRS to develop policies, plan activities, evaluate program effectiveness and carry out other functions related to the vocational rehabilitation program.*

The relationship between the Board and the Division of Rehabilitation Services is a partnership. This partnership is focused on ensuring that eligible individuals receive appropriate, timely and effective vocational rehabilitation services.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services are designed to support individuals with disabilities to reach their career goals in successful integrated employment in communities throughout South Dakota.

Board of Vocational Rehabilitation

The Board's commitment to represent persons with disabilities and other stakeholders statewide is supported by hosting meetings in the most accessible and risk-free environment. All meetings are held in either an accessible location or utilizing a virtual platform that provides multiple means of access (computer, phone, support for closed captioning). This has allowed the Board to continue operating in the safest manner possible during very unpredictable times.

All meetings were held in compliance with federal and state open meeting laws. A "public comment" period is incorporated into each meeting agenda.

Each meeting contains standing agenda items such as the Director's Report, Quarterly Data Updates, Vocational Rehabilitation Initiatives, VR Program Initiatives, SILC Report, and Board Staff Report.

Quarterly Meetings

December 1, 2021
Via Zoom/virtual platform

March 22, 2022
Via Zoom/virtual platform

June 16, 2022
Via Zoom/virtual platform

September 7, 2022
Via Zoom/virtual platform

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

The SRC in South Dakota is termed the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation

Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act (as amended) requires:

- ❖ **At least 15 members**
 - **Majority with disabilities**
 - **Cross section of stakeholders**

People with disabilities Related service Agencies
Disability Advocates Community Business People



Beth Schiltz with her farewell gift

OUTGOING MEMBERS

The Board bid farewell to two members this reporting period. Members were honored with gifts from the Suzie Cappa Art Center for their service and commitment to advancing employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Thank you for your service!

Board of Vocational Rehabilitation - Quarterly Meeting Highlights & Division of Rehabilitation Services Accomplishments

The Governor of each State must submit a Unified or Combined State Plan to the Secretary of the US Department of Labor that outlines a four-year strategy for the State's workforce development system. South Dakota has elected to submit a Unified State Plan.

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified State Plan must include descriptions and estimates to include the input of the State Rehabilitation Council. Among other required components it must identify the goals and priorities to carry out the VR and Supported Employment programs that were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council.

One role of the *State Rehabilitation Council* or the Board is outlined under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Workforce Investment & Opportunity Act of 2014; this role specifies ~ ***Participate in Statewide Needs Assessment every 3 years.*** Thus, a major focus for the Division and Board this reporting period was to initialize the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). Federal regulations stipulate that the CSNA describe the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing in the State, particularly the vocational rehabilitation service needs of ~

- Individuals with most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
- Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;
- Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system; and
- An assessment of the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state.

The Board provided input in the areas of developing the CSNA, data collection and survey development. A mixed method of data collection was utilized to include a review of historical data, secondary data analysis from multiple sources, in addition to conducting surveys with staff, providers and businesses.

A final report is due which will contain the findings, identification of opportunities for improving program performance, review of transition services, and projection of needs impacting service provisions.

This information will guide the Division and Board with developing the goals and priorities for the agency. The goals will be based on the analysis of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment findings, performance of the Division in meeting the federal standards and indicators, and public input.

Board of Vocational Rehabilitation - Quarterly Meeting Highlights & Division of Rehabilitation Services Accomplishments

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (DHS): The December meeting involved meeting with DHS Secretary and Deputy Secretary. Dialogue focused on the Department's vision and the importance of the Board in their role of advocating for ways to improve vocational services and maximizing employment and independent living opportunities for eligible South Dakotans with disabilities.

DISTRICT OFFICE: Overview of the Rapid City office was provided during this period, which completed information shared on all district offices. The overview included office and satellite office locations, staff in each office, counties and school districts served, partner agencies to include the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services Programs. Members posed questions unique to this office and the territory served.

TRANSITION SERVICES FOR NATIVE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES: Oyate' Circle, Sinte Gleska University and Tribal VR program staff presented on programs, trainings and outreach being conducted to better serve Native American students with disabilities. The Native American youth population has been growing significantly over the past decade, which includes an increasing number of students with disabilities, those acquiring disability, and other health related issues due to the impact of long term COVID. Dialogue included the need to conduct better outreach, service provision, transition services, building tribal relationships, and what works best in Indian Country.



(Photo by Travel South Dakota)

AMERICAN INDIAN VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES PROGRAMS: Staff from two of the six Tribal VR programs in South Dakota (Oglala Sioux Tribe VR Program and

Sinte Gleska University Sicangu Vocational Rehabilitation Program) spoke of work carried out during COVID in the midst of other complications, i.e., travel restrictions, students on IEPs dropping out of school resulting in the loss of special education funding, the struggle to utilize technology, students missing therapeutic appointments, and needed outreach to identify/contact students about returning to school.

Dialogue included the challenges of bringing new programs to the nine nations, i.e., jurisdiction, sovereignty issues, obtaining tribal approval for research, and cultural issues.

Board of Vocational Rehabilitation - Quarterly Meeting Highlights & Division of Rehabilitation Services Accomplishments

LAKOTA TECH HIGH SCHOOL: Oyate' Circle staff spoke of this school opening the fall of 2020. It is located near the Pine Ridge reservation, so it does not have to follow tribal directives. This provides more options to students with disabilities.

The school provides career and technical education with an emphasis on Lakota culture. Coursework combines both college preparation and real-world workforce skills developed into a customized educational program.

The school focuses on internships and exposing students to different careers and industries. Center for Disabilities staff joined the transition conversation as well.

Presenters spoke to the work being done to improve transition services for students with disabilities to include preparing teachers in Special Education, accommodating students in a culturally appropriate manner, and identifying ways to improve pre-employment services and IL skills training.

WIOA amendments to the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973* added two new requirements; the CSNA must identify, report, and address the VR service needs of youth with disabilities and students with disabilities with respect to:

- their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services; and
- an assessment of the needs for transition services and pre-employment transition services and the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under the *IDEA*.

WIOA requires VR to set aside 15% of their federal funds to provide “pre-employment transition services” to Students with Disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services.

STATE UNIFIED PLAN: The Unified State Plan is a four-year plan approved by the US Department of Labor. The Division’s State Plan is just one section of the Unified State Plan. The Division is required to provide updates to specific sections every two year. Seven sections were updated to include the Memorandum of Understanding with Special Education. Division staff worked with Board members on changes to sections. This information was posted on the Division’s website for review and comment prior to presenting it to the State’s Workforce Development Council for final review.

Board of Vocational Rehabilitation - Quarterly Meeting Highlights & Division of Rehabilitation Services Accomplishments

POST SECONDARY OUTCOMES INDICATOR 14 SURVEY RESULTS: Information was presented on the post high school outcomes survey conducted for the 2019-2020 school year. The survey examines the percent of youth who are no longer in secondary school, had Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in effect at the time they left school, and were enrolled in:

- higher education;
- higher education or competitively employed;
- higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program; or competitively employed in some other employment within one year of leaving high school.

When comparing results with previous year's results, there were notable differences in areas and respondent representativeness. Survey respondents were also impacted by COVID in various ways. The table below reflects a variety of responses in terms of school attendance and the impact on employment.

Responses to COVID Impact Survey Questions	
	Responses
Lost job	14
Not comfortable working	19
Hours cut at work	35
Employment wasn't affected by COVID	9
Quit school/not comfortable going to school	15
Couldn't afford to go to school	5
Education not impacted by COVID	4

Work is being done to improve the response rate for future surveys, i.e., pre-notification through a post card, extensive training for hired callers; recruit more district personnel (teachers/staff) as students are more familiar/comfortable with them.

Research highlights the importance of student involvement in transition planning to adulthood. There is a connection between the students' stake in planning their transition from school to adult life and their post school success.

Gathering information on the employment and education activities of students who receive special education services after they leave school will provide families, school districts, providers and others with a clear picture of how well young people with disabilities are doing within their first year of leaving school. This will also indicate how well students were prepared while in school.

Board of Vocational Rehabilitation - Quarterly Meeting Highlights & Division of Rehabilitation Services Accomplishments

SECTION 511 REVIEWS: WIOA added language in 2014 which limited the ability of employers to pay subminimal wages to workers with disabilities. It required workers with disabilities who are age 24 or younger (youth) to complete requirements to improve their access to competitive, integrated employment including transition services, VR, and career counseling, before being employed at subminimal wage. The Division meets with these individuals and provides them information, career counseling and referral. There were 916 individuals who required a Section 511 review in 2017 and this number dropped to 104 in 2022. This represents an 88% decrease in sub-minimum wage employment since SFY 2017. As sub-minimum wage employment decreases, DRS is working with providers to offer services that help people with disabilities acquire meaningful skills and better employment opportunities in the community.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services completed reviews on the following number of individuals.

State Fiscal Year (July 1 to June 30)	Number of Individuals
SFY 2022	104
SFY 2021	167
SFY 2020	443
SFY 2019	621
SFY 2018	807
SFY 2017	916

CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT: Customized Employment is an individualized service that leads to better support for people with significant disabilities that require extensive services to obtain integrated employment. An overview of customized employment was provided to members outlining the process that matches the unique strengths, needs and interests of the job candidate with a disability and the identified business needs of the employer (or self-employment business needs of the candidate). The “Discovering Personal Genius Staging Record” was utilized, showing the time intensive, lengthy process utilized to assist an individual with achieving competitive integrated employment.

FINANCIAL NEEDS/VEHICLE ASSESSMENT AND MODIFICATIONS/MERIT

SCHOLARSHIPS/POST EMPLOYMENT SERVICES POLICY REVISIONS: Policies were updated following the review and further investigation of federal regulations, state codified laws, insurance coverage, and comparable benefits. Drafts of the policies and explanations of findings were shared with the Board for final review and consideration.

Division of Rehabilitation Services Between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022

- A total of 1,679 applications were received for VR Services
 - 1,560 Individuals were found eligible for VR Services
 - Average age of applicants was 32.1 years of age
 - Average time from application to eligibility determination was 30.3 days.

**A total of
535 Successful
Employment
Closures
Between
July 1, 2021 -
June 30, 2022**

Board of Vocational Rehabilitation - Quarterly Meeting Highlights & Division of Rehabilitation Services Accomplishments

DISABILITY RIGHTS SOUTH DAKOTA: Members met the staff member who is responsible for coordinating Partners in Policymaking training sessions. Information was received about the six-month training program that provides leadership and advocacy training. Members were encouraged to complete an application and attend and to encourage others to apply.

SOUTH DAKOTA ADVOCATES FOR CHANGE: Disability Rights coordinates the SD Advocates for Change Program. It involves adults with disabilities who have participated in training and are now available to provide sessions on stress and COVID, transition, relationships, and more. The advocates are involved with developing a video on voting which will be shared on social media.



South Dakota Advocates for Change

LIGHTING THE WAY; AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS IN OUR COMMUNITY: The Board provided financial support of the 2022 conference. Training focused on gaining strategies to build the person's communication, engagement, positive behavior, daily living skills, with new sessions added on managing grief, addiction and advancing autism advocacy.

FALL CONFERENCE "The Challenge of Change" was held in Deadwood, SD. Sessions included Oyate' Circle staff speaking to services for Native American Youth with Disabilities; assistive technology; customized employment; ethical thinking; abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults; community resources; neurodiversity; and much more. Eight members' attendance was supported through the staff support agreement. Booths/Vendors were available in addition to other special events.

BOARD SUPPORT AGREEMENT: Staff support for the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) is provided through an agreement with Black Hills Special Services Cooperative. Staff is supervised and evaluated by the Board and SILC leadership or the Board/SILC as a whole.

BOARD NOMINATION PROCESS: The Board and the Statewide Independent Living Council disseminated a joint solicitation packet to individuals and organizations representing a broad range of individuals with disabilities seeking nominees to fill pending vacancies. Nominations are forwarded to the Governor for review and consideration of appointment.

Board of Vocational Rehabilitation - Quarterly Meeting Highlights & Division of Rehabilitation Services Accomplishments

UPDATES ON VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM INITIATIVES: Members were informed of the following items and invited to participate with several initiatives.

- ❖ Employment Specialists Coordinator positions. The Division issued a request for proposal seeking four new positions to meet the needs of consumers/employers in very rural areas. Primary responsibility for the coordinators is obtaining competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities. The new positions were located in Aberdeen Pierre, Rapid City and Yankton to increase provider capacity.
 - ❖ Contract with Griffin-Hammis and Associates. Year two of the contract was finalized to continue with provider training. Outcomes are geared towards continued training, increasing certification of providers, training on customized employment, supervisor and leadership training, business engagement, ethics, and a manager course.
 - ❖ Quality Assurance/Expansion of the Case File Review: The Division incorporated a quarterly targeted review of cases with the intent of reviewing a smaller number of cases in order to make it more manageable for field staff. This provides timelier feedback to staff or needed clarification on policies/procedures to reduce errors.
 - ❖ Monthly Newsletter: a staff newsletter was started in January, and it disseminates information about the case management system and policy changes. Information and other resources are shared for staff to utilize in day-to-day work.
 - ❖ Proposals to Expand Transition Services: The Division published a request for proposals in late 2021. The RFP would help with startup costs for establishing or expanding transition program for students with disabilities between the ages of 18-21. Four grants were awarded for both the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school year.
 - ❖ Trainings for Businesses: Division staff works in partnership with the two business led agencies' staff to provide interactive training for employers and others to become more inclusive. Staff have been certified to provide the WINDMILLS training which consists of twelve modules of disability training curriculum. Staff have expanded training audiences to include businesses, city/corporations, providers, Chambers of Commerce, SHRM organizations, and state government agencies. Partners have included SD Retailers Association and Rocky Mountain ADA Center.
 - ❖ Case File Reviews: The Division incorporated a quarterly targeted case file review in conjunction with the annual review. This provides timelier feedback to counselors regarding discovered areas needing improvement and it will reduce the number of cases to be reviewed during the annual review.
-

Board of Vocational Rehabilitation - Quarterly Meeting Highlights & Division of Rehabilitation Services Accomplishments

- ❖ VR and School District Collaboration Survey: Division staff disseminated a survey to VR counselors and local education agencies to learn more about collaboration efforts. Results revealed great collaboration and that Pre-Employment Transition Services were being provided. VR staff will schedule meetings at the beginning of the school year to meet new staff, explain VR services, encourage referrals, and ensure teachers are aware of the student's VR application status. Brainstorming continues on how to improve family outreach efforts.

- ❖ 2022 Summer Pre-Employment Transition Services' Call for Proposals:

The Division has supported summer camps since 2016 offering Pre-ETS training for students with disabilities. The Division supported initiatives again for 2022. A total of twelve proposals were received, and all were approved. Training content focused on job exploration, workplace readiness, instruction in self-advocacy, post-secondary training exploration in addition to information on VR services and other programs available to assist students with disabilities.



- ❖ VR and School District Collaboration Survey: Division staff disseminated a survey to VR counselors and local education agencies to learn more about collaboration efforts. Results revealed great collaboration and that Pre-Employment Transition Services were being provided. VR staff will schedule meetings at the beginning of the school year to meet new staff, explain VR services, encourage referrals, and ensure teachers are aware of the student's VR application status. Brainstorming continues on how to improve family outreach efforts.
 - ❖ Minimum Age for Providing Pre-Employment Skills Training: Division staff explored the possibility of providing services to students who are 14/15 years old vs. waiting until they turn sixteen. Typically, states follow the transition age required by the Department of Education. Guidance was sought from RSA regional staff to determine if this was a possibility, and if so, what needs to be done in order to proceed. An update was provided during the September meeting and the Division was in the final stages of completing the Transition Services Cooperative Agreement with the Departments of Human Services, Education, Social Services, and Labor. It will be routed for signatures once finalized.
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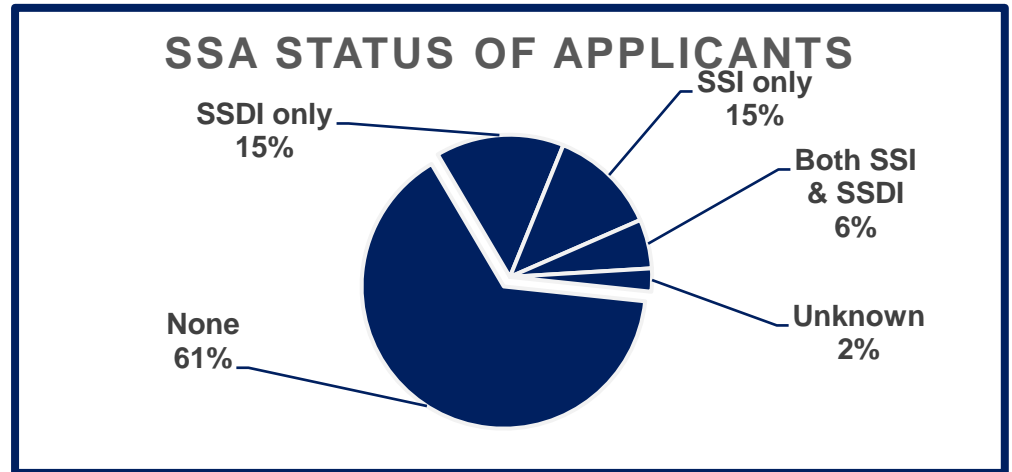
Board of Vocational Rehabilitation - Quarterly Meeting Highlights & Division of Rehabilitation Services Accomplishments

- ❖ VR Work Experience Survey: The Division developed and disseminated surveys to businesses and VR clients to obtain feedback on VR's work experience programs, especially the Project Skills program. The information will be reviewed to help improve work experiences for future participants.
 - ❖ Project Skills Report: The report that teachers utilize to complete for students with disabilities involved with Project Skills was revamped to make it easier for teachers to complete and to assist with obtaining needed information for VR counselors. The report is utilized to identify program and/or activities that occurred and shared with employment specialists, i.e., students' likes/dislikes, what worked/didn't work, and how to address concerns in a timelier manner. The information is utilized to identify an employment setting that is a better match with the students' interests, skills, and abilities. It was distributed and positive feedback was received from both teachers and agency staff. And, as of July 1st, the hourly wage was increased.
 - ❖ Student Work Experience/Project Skills Satisfaction Survey: Student participants were surveyed regarding their satisfaction regarding their employment placement. Questions asked about work placement and match with employment goal; the level of support provided by the job coach, VR counselor, and employer; hours worked; and whether the experience was beneficial. There was a 17% response rate (319 surveys disseminated with 53 returned). The majority of responses were either strongly agree or agree. The majority of responses were positive.
 - ❖ Employer Work Experience Survey: This survey had a 53% response rate; a total of 418 surveys were disseminated and 223 returned. Questions were asked regarding the work experience program being explained; was it beneficial for the participant; support services adequate to train the participant; adequate communication from the school/provider regarding the participants work; number of hours worked per week were adequate for the business and participant; and would the employer be willing to host future participants in this work experience program. All questions received a 50% or higher, strongly agree responses. Written responses were positive, e.g., great program, participant an excellent addition to the team, would love to have more individuals with disabilities working with us.
 - ❖ Business Survey: A survey was developed to disseminate to businesses after contact has been made with the VR agency. Responses will be reviewed to help VR improve services that businesses receive to improve employment outcomes for persons with disabilities.
-

Board of Vocational Rehabilitation - Quarterly Meeting Highlights & Division of Rehabilitation Services Accomplishments

- ❖ South Dakota Benefits Specialists Network: The Benefits Specialists continue to provide services to recent and current VR clients through financial support from the Division. The Benefit Specialists provide planning and guidance to SSI and SSDI beneficiaries.

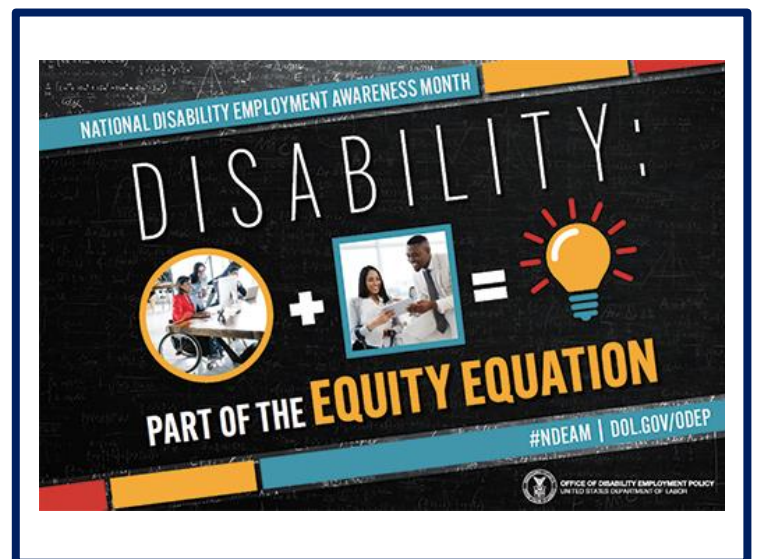
SSA funding is utilized to fund a half time FTE in SD to work with individuals who are NOT VR recipients.



Benefits Specialists offer guidance through the following services:

✓ Information and Referral	✓ Benefits Analysis
✓ Work Incentives Planning	✓ Benefits Management

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). The 2022 NDEAM theme was “Disability: Part of the Equity Equation”. NDEAM is led by the US Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), but the true spirit lies in the observances held at the grassroots level across the nation. South Dakota communities conducted activities to celebrate the contributions of workers with disabilities and educate the public about disability employment issues. NDEAM recognizes the significant role of people with disabilities play in a diverse and inclusive American workforce.



Board of Vocational Rehabilitation - Quarterly Meeting Highlights & Division of Rehabilitation Services Accomplishments

TRANSITION SUMMER CAMPS:

Independent Living Choices (ILC) was one of eight agencies approved to host summer transition camps. ILC has satellite offices located in various communities; and each office designed the training agenda based upon the needs of their demographics.



Students Grocery Shopping

Camps offer job exploration activities, workplace readiness, self-advocacy, information about VR and other adult service providers. Speakers addressed topics, such as hygiene, health, safety, banking, finances, dietary needs, housing, post-secondary school, and field trips.

Students learn about safety in the classroom



Students meet First Responders who live and work in their communities



Pre-Employment Transition Services – Required Activities

(Can be provided in group setting or on an individual basis)

- Job exploration counseling
- Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs
- Work-based learning experiences
- Instruction in self-advocacy, including peer mentoring

Board of Vocational Rehabilitation - Quarterly Meeting Highlights & Division of Rehabilitation Services Accomplishments

TRANSITION SERVICES LIAISON PROJECT: Project activities aim to improve and expand options for students with disabilities through the provision of technical assistance, resources, and training. Staff conduct activities including the Youth Leadership Forum, Catch the Wave, regional transitional forums, “Let’s Talk Work” and Indicator 13 workshops.



2022 YLF Student Delegates, Team Leaders, Assistant Team Leaders, & Staff



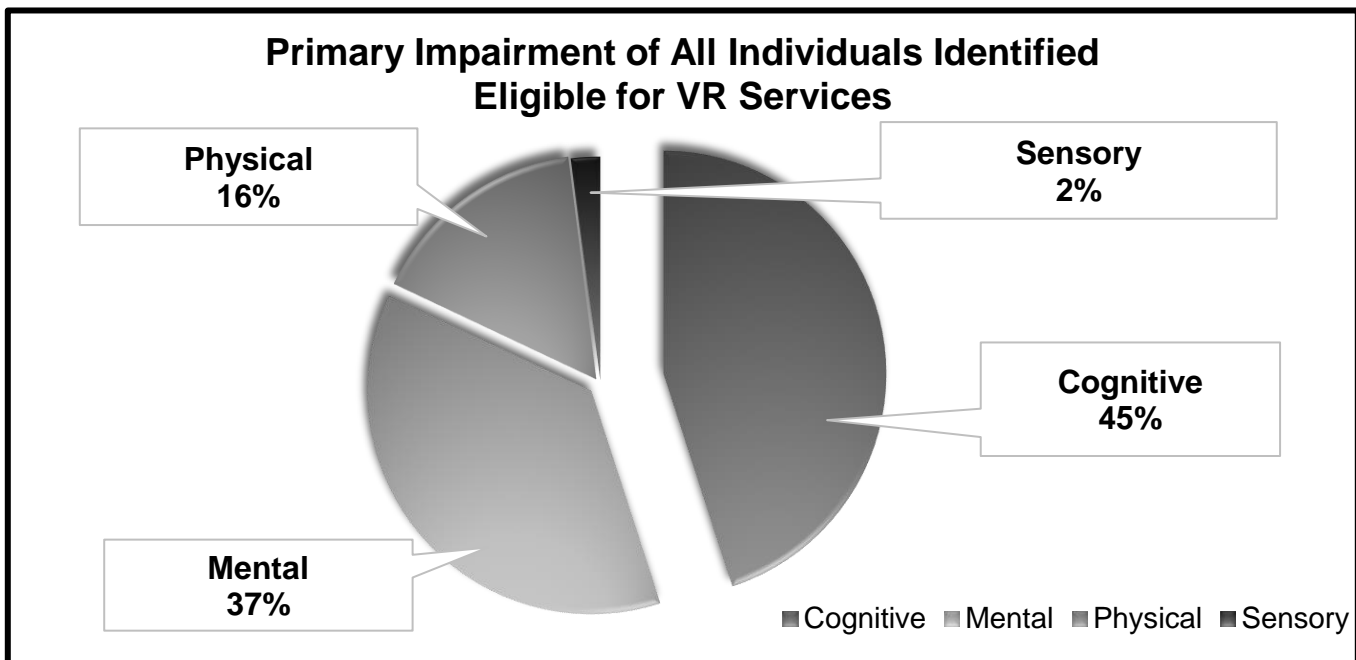
YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM (YLF): The 23rd YLF was held in June on the campus of Northern State University in Aberdeen. Forty-two student delegates were selected to attend along with individuals with disabilities who served in the roles of team leaders, assistant team leaders, MC, and videographer. YLF provides training in leadership, self-advocacy skills and career awareness to high school students with disabilities.

Other activities coordinated by the project include the Transition Summer Institute, Disability Services Resource Coordinators meeting, employment and SSA benefits workshops, and Transition Sharing Roundups. This project provides information and resources to students, their families, teachers, VR counselors, in addition to adult service agency staff.

Division of Rehabilitation Services Accomplishments

The Division of Rehabilitation Services serves thousands of individuals with disabilities statewide by helping them reach vocational goals. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services include the provision of individualized services to employers and people with disabilities, developing career pathways that link qualified employees to jobs, resulting in greater independence and a more inclusive workplace.

The chart below reflects the primary disability categories of individuals who applied for VR services and identified as eligible for VR service.



Description of Disability/Impairment Categories

Cognitive Impairment: intellectual disabilities, borderline intellectual functioning, specific learning disabilities, ADD and Autism.

Mental Impairment: depressive/mood disorders, anxiety disorders, autism, schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders, personality disorders.

Physical Impairment: accident/injury, physical disorders/conditions, arthritis, and rheumatism, cause unknown, amputations.

Sensory Impairment: congenital condition or birth injury, cause not specified, accident injury, physical disorders/conditions.

Division of Rehabilitation Services Accomplishments

The Division of Rehabilitation Services completed 2,793 plans for employment. The average amount of time from eligibility to IPE was 52.8 days. The data comes from initial plans completed between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022.

The Division is committed to enhancing the quality of life of persons with disabilities. The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is a written plan that identifies the employment goal, services that will be provided to assist the individual to achieve their employment goal and the time frames for those services. Below is a listing of barriers identified by individuals with disabilities as they complete their IPE.

Barriers to Employment for Individuals Eligible for VR Services Between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022	% of Yes Responses
Low Income	37%
Long Term Unemployment	22%
Basic Skills Deficient/Low Levels of Literacy	20%
Ex-Offender	8%
Single parent	4%
English Language Learner	2%
Cultural Barriers	2%
Exhausting TANF within 2 years	1%
Foster Care youth	1%
Homeless Individual	1%
Displaced Homemaker	1%
Migrant Seasonal Farmworker	1%

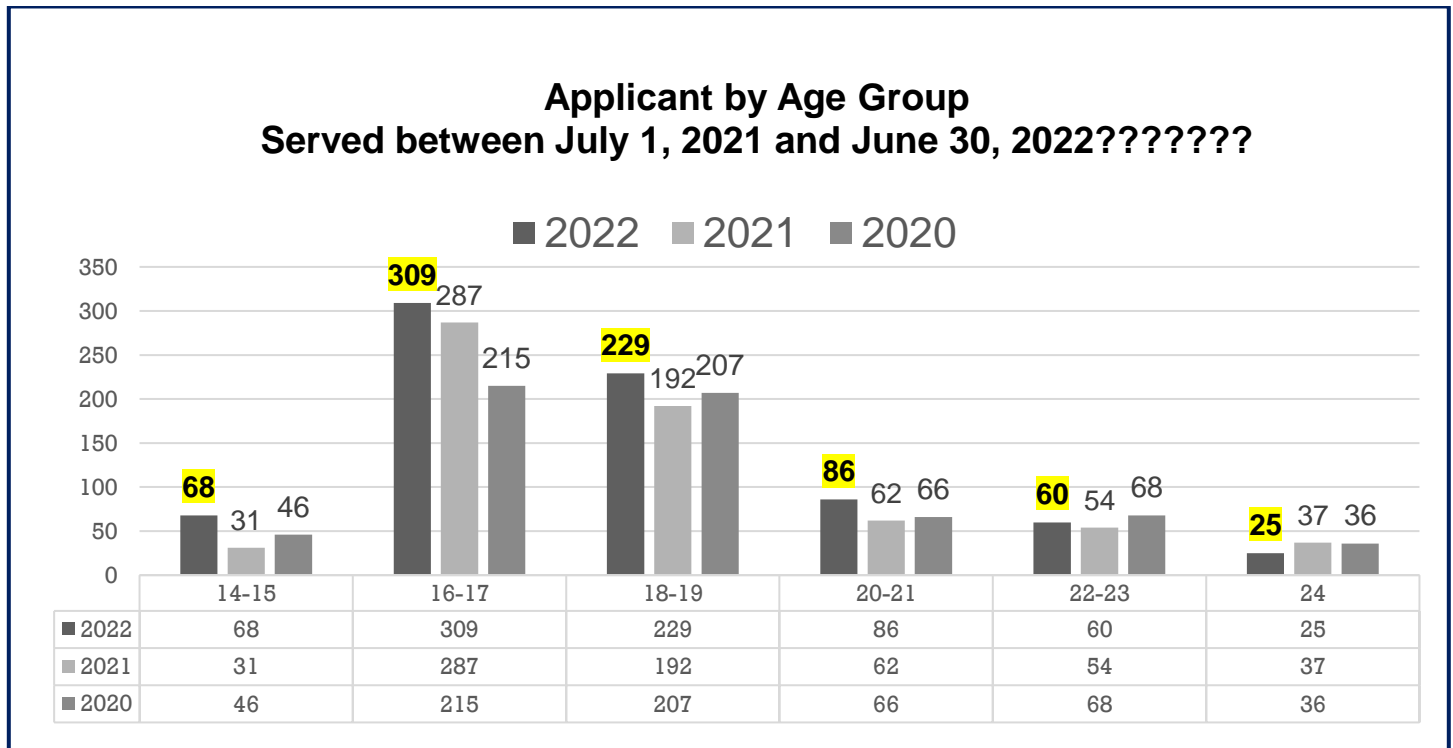
Medical Insurance – A positive impact for individuals with disabilities who applied for VR services

- ✓ **The percentage of individuals with disabilities who applied for VR services with no insurance was 19%. This was reduced to 11% at the time of closure.**
- ✓ **Less than 3% of individuals with disabilities had private insurance through an employer at the time they applied for VR services; those with private insurance at the time of closure increased to 18%.**

Division of Rehabilitation Services Accomplishments

The Division served 1,873 youth with disabilities and completed 1,733 plans for employment for youth with disabilities between the timeframe of July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022. The Division saw a slight decrease in the number of youth served over the last year, however there was an 8% increase in individual plans completed with youth.

The primary impairments of youth eligible for services: cognitive (62%), mental disabilities (32%), physical (3%), and sensory (3 %).



Project Skills

A cooperative arrangement between VR and local schools. VR funds wages, worker's compensation and FICA and the schools provide job development, job coaching and follow along services for the student at the job site.

October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022

- ❖ 494 Student Participants
- ❖ 95 Schools currently participating

Most Common Planned Services for Youth

Counseling and Guidance	89%
On the Job Training	30%
Project Skills Wage and Benefit	28%
Follow Along Services	17%
Job Coaching Services	14%
Job Placement Package	13%
Employment Service	10%
Evaluation-Situational Assessment	9%
Employment Experience Wage & Benefit	8%
Benefit Specialists Services	7%

Division of Rehabilitation Services Accomplishments

Consumer Satisfaction Survey

To ensure that the VR program is meeting the needs of those who receive services as well as to provide the highest level of service as possible, the Division in collaboration with the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation conducts an ongoing satisfaction survey.

Four survey instruments are utilized targeting consumers at different stages of the VR process. Each survey contains six questions targeting satisfaction with informed choice, services, employment outcomes and unsuccessful closures. Individuals are randomly selected to receive a survey each quarter depending upon where the client is in the VR process. Individuals can provide their responses online, through a toll-free number, or return the postcard. Majority of responses reflect responses falling into the strongly agree and agree with satisfaction of services. This item is monitored and updated as needed.

Project SEARCH

This project is a unique business-led transition program for students/interns with disabilities who want to work by providing them the opportunity to explore careers and develop transferable job skills. The goal of Project SEARCH is competitive, community employment for each participating intern. South Dakota currently has five sites statewide with host businesses in Aberdeen, Brookings, two sites in Sioux Falls, and Rapid City.

Project SEARCH recognizes program sites that have achieved 70% to 100% competitive employment for all interns in a given program year. At the 2022 national SEARCH conference, sites were recognized for the 2020-2021 program year where four South Dakota sites were recognized as having positive competitive, community employment outcomes for their interns.



Avera St. Luke's site in Aberdeen and Monument Health site in Rapid City earned the Excellent Outcome Award. And the 100% Outcome was awarded to Avera McKennan in Sioux Falls and South Dakota State University in Brookings!

Pictured is part of the South Dakota team accepting South Dakota's awards: Emily Champa (DRS/VR), Heather Hoeye (BHSSC – SEARCH coordinator at Monument Health), Laura Schmidt (DRS/VR), Katie Gran (DRS/VR), Jodi Bruckner (Monument Health Business Liaison).

Snapshot of Individuals Served

The Division has twelve offices across the state and offers individualized services to persons with significant disabilities to get and keep employment compatible with their disability.

Primary Support at Application vs. Primary Support at Closure (Includes only consumers with employment at time of application and at closure)

People with disabilities that receive VR services and successfully obtain their employment goal(s) report that they are much more independent and less reliant on other sources for their needs.

Type of Support	Percentage at Application	Percentage at Closure
Personal Income	20%	72%
Public Support	35%	23%
Family and Friends	41%	4%
All other sources	4%	1%

Who applied for VR services between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022

Race/Ethnicity of VR Applicants	Percent of Applicants
White	74%
American Indian or Alaska Native	14%
Black or African American	4%
White & American Indian or Alaska Native	2%
White & Hispanic	2%
No race marked & Hispanic	1%
American Indian or Alaska Native & Hispanic	<1%
Asian	<1%
Black or African American & American Indian or Alaska Native	<1%
Black or African American & Hispanic	<1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	<1%
Three races	<1%
Two races & Hispanic	<1%
White & Asian	<1%
White & Black or African American	<1%
White & Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	<1%

Snapshot of Individuals Served



Donald loves his job!

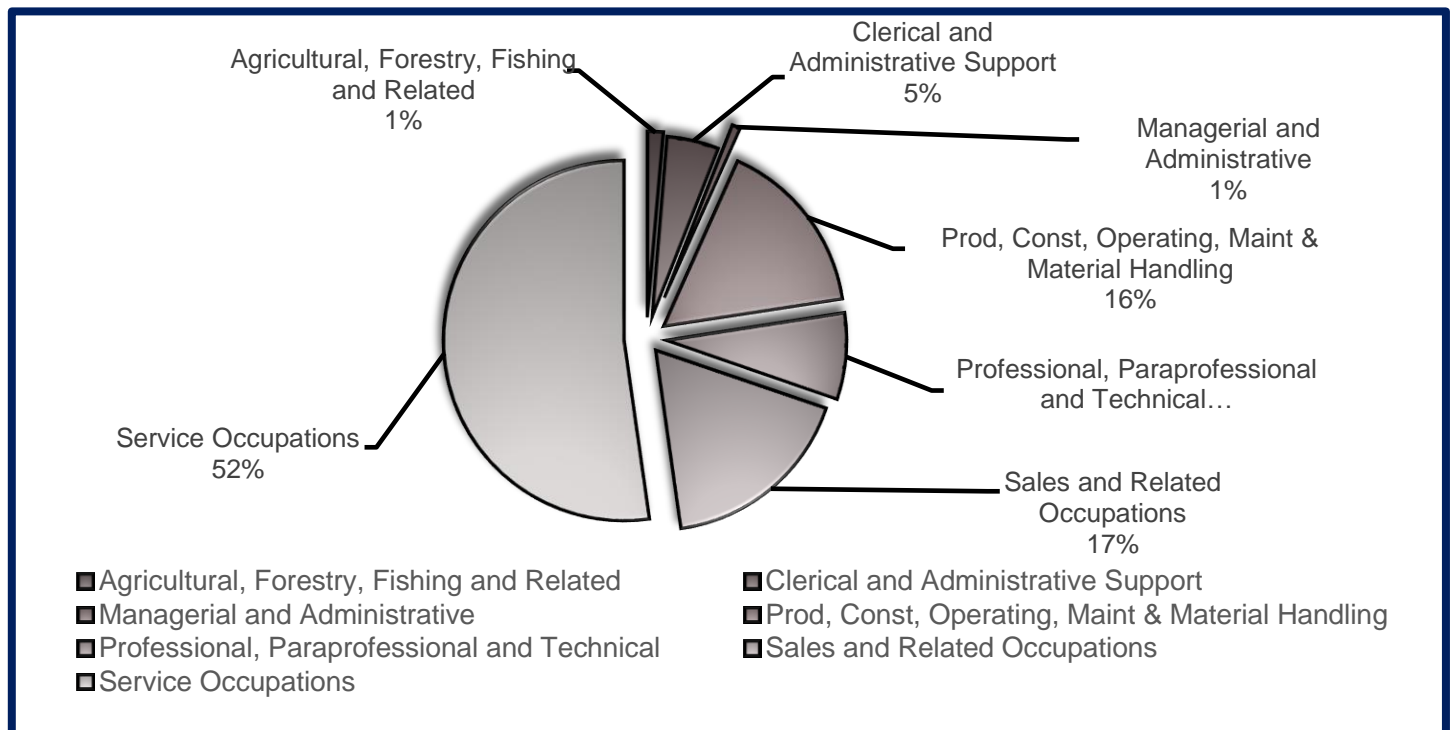
Donald works at *The Plains* five days a week, which provides steady work and income. With the help of his VR counselor, Donald was able to put together a resume and prep for interviews with business managers and owners.

Having independence is a key factor in Donald's employment. Earning a paycheck not only gives him the opportunity to have funds for food and rent, it provides him the freedom to go on trips.

To read more about Donald and others go to:
<https://dhs.sd.gov/rehabservices/stories.aspx>

A VR case can be closed as successfully rehabilitated after the individual maintains stable employment for 90 days. The Division successfully closed 535 cases for individuals who obtained competitive integrated employment between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022.

Types of Employment Occupations Chosen by Vocational Rehabilitation Consumers



Governor's Awards

The Governor's Awards celebrate the accomplishments and contributions of employers, people with disabilities, and others who are making a difference in communities throughout the state.



Outstanding Employee With A Disability

Recognizes an employee with a disability in recognition of outstanding achievements in competitive, integrated employment.

Kayley Shade, Sioux Falls. Began working with the Sioux Falls Storm with a part time internship opportunity. Upon completion of her internship, she was offered a full-time position and has risen through the ranks and is now the Director of Media Relations. She develops and maintains the team's online social media sites, designs graphics and publications, writes press releases, and provides live up dates during the games. She also accepted the role of Director of Media Relations for the Indoor Football League.

Outstanding Individual With A Disability

Recognizes an individual with a disability for outstanding achievements in promoting employment opportunities for others with disabilities.

Helen Hartmann, Sioux Falls. Providing individual and group peer support in the southeast part of the state and has done so since 1984. Her interest started with Prairie Freedom Center in 1990 when she was involved in writing a grant for peer support activities. She provides peer support because she realizes the importance of it and the need for people to remain connected. She started the SD Association of the Blind's Gadgetry program in the late 1970s and assisted people with vision loss in finding adaptive equipment so they could achieve greater independence. She assisted with the "See What You Can Do" marketing program with the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and continues to educate media staff to better understand the importance of independent living services.



Outstanding Employer Awards

Private Employers (Small and Large): Awards recognizes a small and large employer (non-government) for outstanding achievements in improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Public Employer: Recognizes a public employer (any size); government (local, county, state, federal) or educational (school district, university, or technical college) for outstanding achievements in improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Governor's Awards

Outstanding Private Employer (Small Employer)



DHS Sec. Rechtenbaugh, Jack Nielsen (JoDean's owner)
& Governor Noem

JoDean's Steakhouse & Lounge, Yankton is a locally owned restaurant serving Yankton area for over 45 years. Jack Nielsen, owner, has developed a positive and supportive work environment for numerous individuals with disabilities. JoDean's is open to working as a team in the hiring and training of staff. Management leads by example and welcomes a team approach to finding and retaining employees while working with vocational rehabilitation, Ability Building Services, and other providers. They support a variety of pre-employment and employment retention services, and they are open to working with employment specialists to problem solve and provide an inclusive work environment.

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Outstanding Private Employer (Large Employer)

Family Fare Supermarket, on Mountain View Road, Rapid City. Family Fare engages in business practices that promote the long-term wellbeing of the environment, community, and customers. They are committed to a fostering a 'people first' culture. Family Fare has a proud tradition of employing people with disabilities. Staff partners with community service providers and the VR program to recruit and hire job seekers with disabilities. They are open to work experience programs, on the job retention supports, and provide workplace accommodations.



DHS Sec Rechtenbaugh, Family Fare
Supermarket: Tom Dickman, Nick Sedlacek,
Gina Kinstle, Deanne Wright, Chris
Williamson & Governor Noem



DHS Sec. Rechtenbaugh,
Catherine Schlimgen
& Governor Noem

Outstanding Public Employer

Midco Aquatic Center, Sioux Falls. This indoor aquatic center is managed and operated by the City of Sioux Falls Parks and Recreation Department. Midco builds inclusion into their culture. They have a diverse team and celebrate diversity by making sure everyone feels welcomed and valued. Midco partners with Augustana University's Access Program in facilitating students with disabilities in having internship opportunities, with some resulting in permanent employment. Midco's staff have worked hard to build a culture of inclusion, accommodation, and diversity. The City of Sioux Falls encourages the hiring of people with disabilities and realizes the importance of providing accommodations which supports success for both the employee and employer.

Governor's Awards



Sec. Rechtenbaugh,
Bev Petersen &
Governor Noem

Outstanding Transition Services Award

Recognizes an individual or organization (public or private) for extraordinary contributions to developing and providing a program to assist students with disabilities as they transition from school to adult life.

Bev Petersen, Sioux Falls. A liaison with the Transition Services Liaison Project (TSLP) since 2001; Bev provides technical assistance to individuals, families, schools, teachers, and providers. She works with staff and students with 48 schools. She works to ensure that students with disabilities and their families are equipped with needed resources, personnel, and information to help them transition successfully from high school to the adult world.

Bev developed two events for youth in transition. The Let's Talk Work event is now an event that serves 75 -100 students annually. She developed the Meet and Greet event at the Yankton High School to further connect youth with disabilities and community agencies. Bev provided significant contributions to undertakings such as the Transition Tackle Box, Transition Technical Assistance Guide, Transition Workshops, Transition Sharing Roundups, Transition Tip Sheets and Disability Coordinator's meetings, Summer Institute, and other transition related activities.

Distinguished Service Award

Recognizes an individual or organization for extraordinary contributions in advancing the empowerment and employment of people with disabilities.

John Hamilton, Sioux Falls. Has worked for Disability Rights SD for over 35 years and is the Operations Director. He has provided sustained and exemplary work, leadership in often challenging environments, and dedication to those he has and continues to serve. John has many accomplishments and contributions, successful work activities, and devising resolutions to complex challenges which have resulted in a positive manner not only for the individual, but for the greater state of South Dakota. John's knowledge and skills in the areas of employment, education and independent living have helped countless individuals with disabilities, and his work continues to be looked to for solutions. He utilizes his skills, knowledge, and experiences to develop new ways to address challenging barriers for those with disabilities struggling to improve their employment opportunities, become truly independent and live in communities of their choice.



John Hamilton &
Governor Noem



These awards recognize South Dakota businesses, individuals with disabilities, and other South Dakotans for their contributions toward the employment of people with disabilities.

Board of Vocational Rehabilitation Seeks Public Input

The Board is committed to hearing from the public on matters relating to the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in South Dakota under the Division of Rehabilitation Services. Consequently, all regular and special Board meetings are announced in advance, open and accessible to the public.

The Board also holds public hearings and forums as they deem them necessary. These, too, are announced in advance, open and accessible to the public.

All meetings are called by the Board Chairperson, in cooperation with DRS and Board staff, as stipulated in the bylaws.

If you wish to let the Board know your thoughts on the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, you may reach them in the following ways:

Phone: 605.494.3613

Write: Board of Vocational Rehabilitation
221 South Central Ave, Ste 33
Pierre, South Dakota 57501

Attend: Meetings – copies of agendas can be obtained by contacting Board staff at the above phone number or by going to the State of South Dakota Boards and Commissions portal at: <http://boardsandcommissions.sd.gov/>

At this site you may also access additional Board information such as member listing and past meeting minutes. If you are interested in becoming a member of the Board, a nomination form is also available, or you may request it from Board staff or DRS.

*Governor Kristi Noem
&
The 2022 Governor's
Awards Recipients*

