
2023 STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (SRC) ANNUAL REPORT SOUTH DAKOTA



Picture of South Dakota's Badlands at Sunrise - Photo by Travel South Dakota

Board of Vocational Rehabilitation South Dakota's State Rehabilitation Council

Annual Report 2023

South Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation Services Division of Rehabilitation Services (General Agency)



Picture of Buffalo on the open plains - Photo by Travel South Dakota

Letter from the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation Chairperson

Dear Governor Kristi Noem and Commissioner Danté Quintin Allen,

It has been a privilege and honor for us to serve on the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, South Dakota's State Rehabilitation Council. The dedication of the volunteer members that make up the Board and committed staff of the Division of Rehabilitation Services has resulted in continued success this past year. The overall goal is to maximize employment for all South Dakotans, including persons with disabilities.

The Board was able to host our regularly scheduled meetings utilizing the Zoom platform. With new members representing the Department of Education/Office of Special Education, providers, and persons with disabilities, the energy and growth will continue. It is our goal to bring more onto the Board to broaden the representation of persons with disabilities, providers, and other stakeholders to ensure that various constituencies have a voice in delivery of vocational rehabilitation services.

On behalf of the Board, I am pleased to present to you our 2023 Annual Report. The report highlights the work of the Board during the past year, and it shares highlights from the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program. The report includes information of individuals with disabilities who utilized VR services to achieve their goal of competitive, integrated employment. It also includes photos of the 2023 Governor's Awards recipients. The information provides a glimpse of South Dakotans' strength and perseverance in overcoming barriers to living and working as independently as possible.

We welcome your input and involvement with the Board and hope the coming year proves to be one of strength, support, and continuing success for all citizens of South Dakota.

Respectfully,

Cole Uecker, Chairperson

Cc: Board members
Jason Hunter, RSA's SRC Liaison (Email Copy)
Michele Mulhern, RSA Liaison (Email Copy)

About the Board

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is known in South Dakota as the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR). The Board collaborates with the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) in administering the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program. Among its responsibilities, the Board reviews, evaluates, and advises the VR agency regarding its performance and effectiveness in delivering services, including the effect of service provision on the achievement of employment outcomes by individuals with disabilities.

Board composition and responsibilities are specified in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR Sections 361.16 and 361.17. A majority of Board members must be individuals with disabilities who meet federal requirements and are not employed by the VR agency. The Governor appoints all Board members.

The Board seeks input from individuals with disabilities, community advocates, business and industry leaders, and disability groups, as agencies develop and implement policies and procedures that directly impact individuals served by VR.

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

Board Membership

Cole Uecker, Pierre
Brad Konechne, Brookings
Chris Olson, Madison
Vicki Stewart, Sioux Falls
Jonathan Englund, Piedmont
Bill McEntaffer, Pierre
Eric Weiss, Pierre
Shawn Lyons, Pierre

Kevin Barber, Sioux Falls
Jolleen Laverdure, Lower Brule
Lisa Merchen, Spearfish
Jennifer Trenhaile, Yankton
Joe Vetch, Summerset
Brooke Lusk, Pierre
Kara Schweitzer, Sioux Falls

Quarterly Meetings Held This Reporting Period

December 1, 2022

March 2, 2023

June 14, 2023

September 12, 2023

Board Meetings

The Board held four quarterly meetings during the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY), October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023, time period. All meetings were held in compliance with federal and state open meeting laws. A “public comment” period was incorporated into each meeting agenda. The meeting dates were determined by the Board; and meeting related information, (agendas, minutes, handouts) was posted on the Open Government Board and Commission’s portal located at:

[https://boardsandcommissions.sd.gov/.](https://boardsandcommissions.sd.gov/)

The Board conducted its meetings utilizing ZOOM, a virtual platform, which provided multiple means of access (computer, phone, support for closed captioning). A physical location was also offered for individuals to attend in person who wanted to participate in the virtual meeting. The meetings were publicly announced, open and accessible to the public. This allowed the Board to continue operating in the safest manner possible.

Each meeting contained standing agenda items such as the Director’s Report, Quarterly Data Updates, Vocational Rehabilitation Program Initiatives, Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) Report, and Board Staff Report.

Functions of the Board

- ✓ Review, analyze, and advise the VR agency on the performance of their responsibilities related to eligibility and order of selection; the extent, scope, and effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation services; functions that affect the ability of individuals with disabilities in achieving employment outcomes
- ✓ Partner with the VR agency in developing goals and priorities; evaluating the effectiveness in obtaining these goals
- ✓ Advise the VR agency in the vocational rehabilitation portion of the Unified State Plan
- ✓ Conduct a review and analysis of consumer satisfaction
- ✓ Submit this report and make it public
- ✓ Coordinate activities with other named Councils within the state, to include the Statewide Independent Living Council
- ✓ Perform other relevant functions that Board determines appropriate and consistent with the purpose of the VR agency

Board Business

The Board and its committees conducted business utilizing Zoom this reporting period. The impact of COVID led to meeting virtually, which resulted in increased meeting attendance. The Board was successful in continuing its mission and partnering with the VR agency.

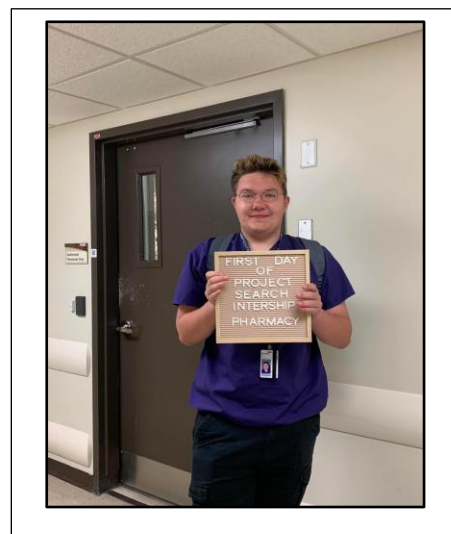
December 2022

- ❖ Input was obtained from the Board and Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), key stakeholders, and advocacy groups on proposed language of a bill to expand qualifying certifications for deaf interpreters.
- ❖ Board input was sought as the Division worked to update the administrative rules for programs that impact persons who are deaf, hard of hearing and those with disabilities that impact speech. Proposed changes would allow more individuals to qualify for the Telecommunication Equipment Distribution and Telecommunication Adaptive Devices Programs. The Division also worked with advocacy groups and key stakeholders regarding the proposed changes.
- ❖ The Consumer Services Committee was tasked to assist the Division with the State Plan development process and draft the State Plan goals and priorities based upon the results of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.
- ❖ The Board received an update on the 18-21 Transition Programs and Project SEARCH sites. These initiatives provide students with disabilities with more choice and supports to gain life skills in the areas of employment and independent living. Work is in progress to start a new Project SEARCH site in Yankton.
- ❖ The Board received an update on provider training. Input/feedback from the Board, staff and providers ensures training is continually evolving to meet the unique training needs of providers located across the state.
- ❖ Six board members and staff attended the 2022 Fall Conference, Today's Vision: Tomorrow's Reality. Session topics included: ethical situations in rehabilitation, disability and violence, social thinking in the workplace, workforce landscape, job coaching fundamentals, informed choice, expanding apprenticeships, effective communication, Social Security Administration (SSA) disability process and age 18 redeterminations.
- ❖ The Board learned of the Division's progress incorporating the Sara Digital Assistant software with the case management system. This software will assist staff with client follow-up, data entry, and obtaining supporting documentation.

- ❖ The Board was updated on the business specialist’s activities to include work involved with the state’s two business led organizations, trainings conducted, resources developed, and development of a business satisfaction survey.
- ❖ The Board received a summary of the Governors Awards Ceremony held in October. This information was shared with the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (B/SBVI) and SILC as partners/co-sponsors.
- ❖ Staff support for the Board and SILC is provided through an agreement with Black Hills Special Services Cooperative. Staff is supervised and evaluated by Board and SILC leadership. The agreement was renegotiated for another year.

Project SEARCH – Monument Health, Rapid City

Brayden is holding a sign which reads “First Day of Project Search Internship Pharmacy”. Students choose three rotations in various settings. Brayden’s tasks include restocking medications, labeling medications, and delivering medications to different departments of the hospital. He will meet with his team to determine his second internship, the same process will be utilized to determine his third internship, all while exploring competitive community employment opportunities.



Project SEARCH 2022 – 2023 School Year

Project SEARCH

A business led transition program for students with disabilities; based on a national model partnering with a large employer, local school district and VR.

Students with disabilities explore careers and learn job skills through internships.

Students work at host businesses and receive accommodations, adaptations, and on the job coaching.

Project SEARCH Sites in South Dakota

Aberdeen – Avera St. Lukes Hospital

Brookings – South Dakota State University

Rapid City – Monument Health

Sioux Falls/Teachwell Solutions – Avera McKennan

Sioux Falls School District – Dow Rummel Village

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)

- ✓ The Board received a summary of the 2022 NDEAM events held across the state. Events were conducted in 11 communities. The burden of planning, preparing, and hosting these events falls upon a local planning committee. The events have evolved with increased participation and attendance from businesses, human resource staff, service providers and others.
- ✓ NDEAM local committee partnerships have also grown to include representation from Chambers of Commerce, State Human Resource Manager (SHRM) Chapters, Centers for Independent Living (CILs), and Mayor's Committees.
- ✓ The Board convened a "Debriefing" with the local NDEAM community planners, and an invitation was extended to B/SBVI and SILC members to participate. The dialogue went very well and discussion points included what went well, what could be improved upon, and how to better engage employers.
- ✓ The evaluations from the 2022 events reported over 1,534 attendees.

March 2023

- ❖ The Board and SILC conducted a statewide solicitation for nominations in January to fill upcoming vacancies. Information was forwarded to the Governor's office in April for review and consideration.
- ❖ The Consumer Services Committee has met throughout 2023 to develop the goals and priorities for the State Plan. A timeline was agreed upon for finalizing the State Plan documents, including gathering input and hosting public meetings.
- ❖ The Board learned of the Performance Measures and information gathered on all participants served. Performance Measures compare the state's performance with national rankings. Staff training was conducted to ensure a more accurate view of program effectiveness with assisting participants with obtaining careers.
- ❖ Nine agencies submitted a total of 18 proposals in response to the Division's Request for Funding to conduct Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre ETS) initiatives in the summer. Proposals were submitted by ILC, Center for Disabilities, and 3 new school districts.
- ❖ Certified trainers provided members disability awareness training. The trainers utilized the Windmills training curriculum, and they are available to provide training to groups utilizing the modules which reduce employer biases and increase the hiring, supervising, and promoting persons with disabilities.

- ❖ A presentation was provided by the Office of Special Education and Black Hills State University on the Post Secondary Outcomes Survey Results. The Post Secondary Indicator 14 Study gathered information from the 2021 high school graduates.
 - The survey identified what the student is doing one year after leaving high school, e.g., going to post-secondary school, working competitively, who sought other training or employment (work on a farm), and who was not engaged at all after leaving high school.
 - Data gathered included respondents' disability, ethnicity, and gender.
 - The findings reported the fourth highest engagement percentage since data was collected in 2010-2011.

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

Gathering information on the activities of students who receive special education services after they leave school provides families, schools, providers, and others with a clear picture of how well youth with disabilities are doing within their first year of leaving school.

Most Common Planned Services for Youth	
Counseling and Guidance	96%
On the Job Training	31%
Project Skills Benefits	29%
Project Skills Wages	29%
Follow Along Services	20%
Job Coaching	15%
Job Placement Package	15%
Employment Services	11%

Planning for 2023 National Disability Employment Awareness Month



2023 NDEAM Poster
"Advancing Access & Equity"

- ❖ The BVR, B/SBVI and SILC prepared and disseminated a Request for Proposal to conduct the 2023 NDEAM events.
- ❖ Requests were reviewed and funding was approved during the March meeting to conduct activities in 12 communities.

June 2023

- ❖ The Career Programs Coordinator, Southeast Technical College, spoke about the STRIVE program. The program builds skills of young adults needed to be successful in college, i.e., adjust to campus life, manage a schedule that includes college courses, career exploration and life skills lessons. Students can work on obtaining stackable credentials, earning certificates and/or college credits.
- ❖ The Consumer Services Committee presented the goals and strategies for the State Plan for the Board's consideration. There was Board consensus to accept this information and post it on the Division's website for additional input.
- ❖ The Board learned of the 18 proposals submitted in response to the Division's request for proposals to conduct Summer Pre ETS initiatives.
- ❖ Two employers spoke with the Board about their partnership with the Division. Dialogue included training conducted to date and efforts conducted in the areas of how best to meet the business community's workforce needs across the state.
- ❖ Elections were held for officer positions to include Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Member-At-Large. The Board honored members who were terming off with farewell gifts, thanking them for their commitment of time and service.
- ❖ Employment Disability Resources (EDR) provided an update to members of their recent strategic planning and "rebranding" of the organization.

What does Employment Disability Resources (EDR) do?

- Provides presentations and resources to local businesses on hiring and working with persons with disabilities.
- Raises awareness through its Disability Friendly Recognition Program.
- Promotes a NDEAM event each year.
- Supports youth with disabilities transitioning to the workforce through education, mentoring, volunteering opportunities, and partnering with local businesses and organizations.

Workplace Disability Network (WDN) of the Black Hills (Formerly known as the Workforce Diversity Network)

WDN was created to foster education and connection with businesses, entrepreneurs, and individuals with disabilities.

WDN supports educational opportunities, events and consultants to create a more diverse and inclusive workplace. WDN provides training on disability awareness, effective communication strategies, and disability related laws.

- ❖ The Board provided support to promote events such as the Governor’s Awards, National Disability Employment Awareness Month, and local awards ceremonies that recognize employees with disabilities and employers who have contributed to improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
- ❖ The Board received an update on the 2023 Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) conducted in Aberdeen by the Transition Services Liaison Project (TSLP).

What is the Youth Leadership Forum (YLF)?



**Golden Retrievers Team
YLF Student Delegates & Leaders**

- ✓ YLF is a five-day leadership training and career awareness program for high school students with disabilities.
- ✓ An application must be completed, and all applicants are interviewed.
- ✓ Students learn more about their disability and others’ disabilities. They learn about leadership, self-advocacy, disability laws, and more.
- ✓ 2023 Theme was “Find Your Place in the Circle of Life”.
- ✓ Forty-two (42) students with disabilities attended from across the state.
- ✓ National and local speakers were utilized. Students learned about

available services from state agencies.

- ✓ Volunteer experiences were arranged for students at the Salvation Army, Boys & Girls Club, Public Library, Safe Harbor, and the Aberdeen Area Senior Center.
- ✓ Other activities included going to Wylie’s Park, Red Rooster Coffee House, and the Richard L. Hicks Awards Ceremony.
- ✓ Plans are progressing for the next YLF which will be held June 2-6, 2024, on the campus of Northern State University.



**Simba’s Pride Team
YLF Student Delegates & Leaders**

September 2023

- ❖ The Board received two new appointments and one reappointment prior to the meeting. The agenda included a basic overview of the Division and Board-related information.
- ❖ The Board approved financial support for the 2023 Lighting the Way Conference.
- ❖ The Board learned of the Division's initiative seeking professional services to conduct a market analysis and utilize research to develop, implement, manage, and evaluate a comprehensive outreach marketing program to raise awareness of VR programs and services.
- ❖ The Board was apprised of the performance accountability measures. The Division exceeded four of the five attainment rates, with the credential attainment rate only 1% away from meeting the negotiated rate. The Division has conducted training with staff and identified changes needed in terms of what and how information is reported through the case management system.
- ❖ The findings from the Division's case file review were shared with the Board. The review focused on areas of the VR process, application, eligibility, IPE, services, and case closure. Findings identified the need for policy clarification, specific training needs, and the need to review procedural changes.
- ❖ The Board in collaboration with the Division conducts an ongoing satisfaction survey to ensure VR is meeting the needs of those served. Results of the survey were reviewed. Four different survey instruments are disseminated to VR consumers at various points in the process on a quarterly basis to consumers randomly selected. Each asks six questions. The results were very positive. Further consideration will be taken after examining the written responses obtained to questions asked about what services might have helped and why the person chose to stop services.
- ❖ The Board was updated on the summer Pre-ETS initiatives conducted throughout the state; 13 camps were conducted with 134 students with disabilities participating.
- ❖ The Board approved the Program Guide on Self Employment. Language was updated, the process was simplified, and the dollar amount contributed by VR was increased.
- ❖ The Division's Business Specialist updated members of the services/supports provided to employers. Employers sought information or technical assistance in the areas of recruiting, hiring, retaining employees with disabilities, workplace accommodations, ADA basics, disability awareness training and more.

- ❖ An update was received on the Transition Services Liaison Project (TSLP) events, staff changes and other transition-related activities, e.g., Catch the Wave, Let's Talk Work, Indicator 13 workshops, and regional transition forums. Other items Included:
 - Project SEARCH sites in South Dakota were recognized during a national Project Search conference. Avera McKennan in Sioux Falls and Monument Health were recognized for Excellent Outcomes.
 - South Dakota State University Project SEARCH site was awarded the 100% employment outcomes, all interns left with community employment.

Pre-Employment Transition Services – Required Activities
(Can be provided in group setting or on an individual basis)

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

Standing Agenda Items:

- ❖ Quarterly updates were provided on consumer-related information, e.g., applications, eligibilities, individuals served, and number of individuals cases closed (unsuccessful and successful).
- ❖ Employer initiatives conducted, trainings and new resources created. These efforts build relationships, increase exposure of workforce needs, and broaden the exposure of VR services. Employers learn about workers with disabilities seeking employment and what services VR can provide.
- ❖ Quarterly updates were provided from the Statewide Independent Living Council to increase communication and enhance partnerships on activities, e.g., Governor's Awards Ceremony, National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), public listening sessions, solicitation for nominations for board/council vacancies, trainings, and Centers for Independent Living staff training.
- ❖ Quarterly updates were provided by support staff to stay abreast of activities pertaining to Governor's Awards activities, NDEAM, solicitation for vacancies for both BVR/SILC members, Fall Conference, and the budget.

2023 Governor's Awards

Outstanding Employee With A Disability

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



(L to R) DHS Secretary
Shawnie Rechtenbaugh
Carissa Brandt
Governor Kristi Noem

Carissa Brandt (Pierre) was diagnosed with a brain tumor when she was six months old. She endured surgeries, placement of a shunt, shunt replacement, chemotherapy and lost her hearing prior to Kindergarten. She received VR services in high school and participated in Project Skills.

She earned an associate degree in medical assisting and obtained a Clinical Medical Assistant License. She returned to Pierre and began working with Avera Medical Associates Clinic. Avera quickly realized her worth and asked her to work full time. Her duties include rooming patients, taking vital signs, scheduling appointments, and data entry. The only accommodation she utilizes is a stethoscope made for individuals with hearing loss.

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Outstanding Individual With A Disability

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

Patty Kuglitsch (Sioux Falls) was born deaf and faced communication challenges throughout her life. She obtained undergraduate and graduate degrees from Gallaudet University. She has exemplary achievements as a teacher, counselor, trainer, program developer, and administrator.

Patty volunteered as a support provider and a tactile sign language interpreter. She served on committees, boards, and councils at the local, state, and national levels. She volunteered countless hours to support the South Dakota Association of the Deaf. Her advocacy led to improved services in areas including communication, interpreter certification, telecommunications, and other services.



(L to R) DHS Sec.
Rechtenbaugh
Patty Kuglitsch
Governor Kristi Noem

Employer Awards

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

Outstanding Private Employer (Small Employer)

Yakkity Yak Coffee Shack (Sioux Falls), owned and operated by Kathy Luke. This small business employs people with significant disabilities; and employees gain skills and confidence which leads to more opportunities for them. Yakkity Yak Coffee Shack provides an inclusive and diverse workplace.

Kathy and staff work closely with VR staff, job placement providers, and other community agencies in finding the best fit for job seekers with disabilities.

Yakkity Yak Coffee Shack creates a safe work environment for students and adults with disabilities, allowing them to learn and grow.

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Outstanding Private Employer (Large Employer)

AMCON Distributing Company (Rapid City), one of the largest convenience wholesale distributors in the US. The distribution center in Rapid City employs approximately 90 staff.

AMCON developed a relationship with VR staff almost ten years ago to address workforce needs. AMCON partners with VR, Department of Labor and Regulation staff, and other community providers to recruit job seekers with disabilities.

AMCON realizes the importance of providing accommodations for employees. This supports success for both the employee and the company. AMCON staff speak about the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities and serve as a resource to other employers in the community.



(L to R) Sec. Rechtenbaugh,
Bill Bailey, AMCON
Rapid City Division Manager
Governor Kristi Noem



(L to R) DHS Sec.
Rechtenbaugh
Kathy Luke, Yakkity Yak
Coffee Shack Owner
Governor Kristi Noem

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.



(L to R) Governor Noem, Sec. Rechtenbaugh, Robert Rendon, Kim Dodd, Lt. Governor Rhoden

Outstanding Public Employer

City of Rapid City (Rapid City) promotes diversity and inclusion in its workforce by recognizing the attributes of each employee. Rapid City's Human Resources department has an open-door policy where employees feel safe with disclosing disability related information or requesting an accommodation.

They encourage the hiring of people with disabilities and realize the importance of providing accommodations. Rapid City is committed to a healthy and inclusive community, evident in the city's hiring practices and efforts to retain employees who acquired disabilities.

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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.



(L to R) DHS Secretary Rechtenbaugh, Ashley Halvorson Governor Noem

Ashley Halvorson (Beresford) has worked as a special education teacher for the Beresford School District for 15+ years. It is estimated that she has impacted over 450 high school special education students. She has mentored or assisted 30 new teachers and student teachers!

Ashley invites community agencies to student's IEP meetings, to ensure a smooth transition from school to the adult world. She and a colleague developed a Self-Advocacy Class for students to learn and practice running their own IEP meetings. She has arranged for outside agency staff to provide training to students (Soft Skills Curriculum). She has taken students to annual events such as Let's Talk Work and Catch the Wave. Many of her students have attended transition events like the Youth Leadership Forum because of her encouragement.

Distinguished Service Award

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

Sandy Hook (Pierre) began working with individuals with disabilities in 1996, with Disability Rights South Dakota. A few years later, she assumed the role as the Partners in Policymaking Program Coordinator. Partners builds participants' competencies to become better advocates and to learn about the power of advocacy. Partners has positively changed the way people with disabilities are supported, taught, live and work.

Sandy designed this comprehensive training program (based on a National Partners in Policy Making Model) for people with developmental or intellectual disabilities, parents, and other interested individuals. She made it unique to South Dakota by incorporating specific resources and providers who work in our state. She added a continuing educational opportunity for former graduates inviting them to return during graduation. She organized 25 years of Partners' sessions, assisting over 700 graduates find their voice, and empowering parents and self-advocates.



(L to R) Secretary Rechtenbaugh, Sandy Hook Governor Noem

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2023 Governor Award Recipients

Front Row (L to R) Sec. Rechtenbaugh, Kathy Luke, Carissa Brandt, Sandy Hook, Patty Kuglitsch, Governor Noem and Lt. Governor Rhoden

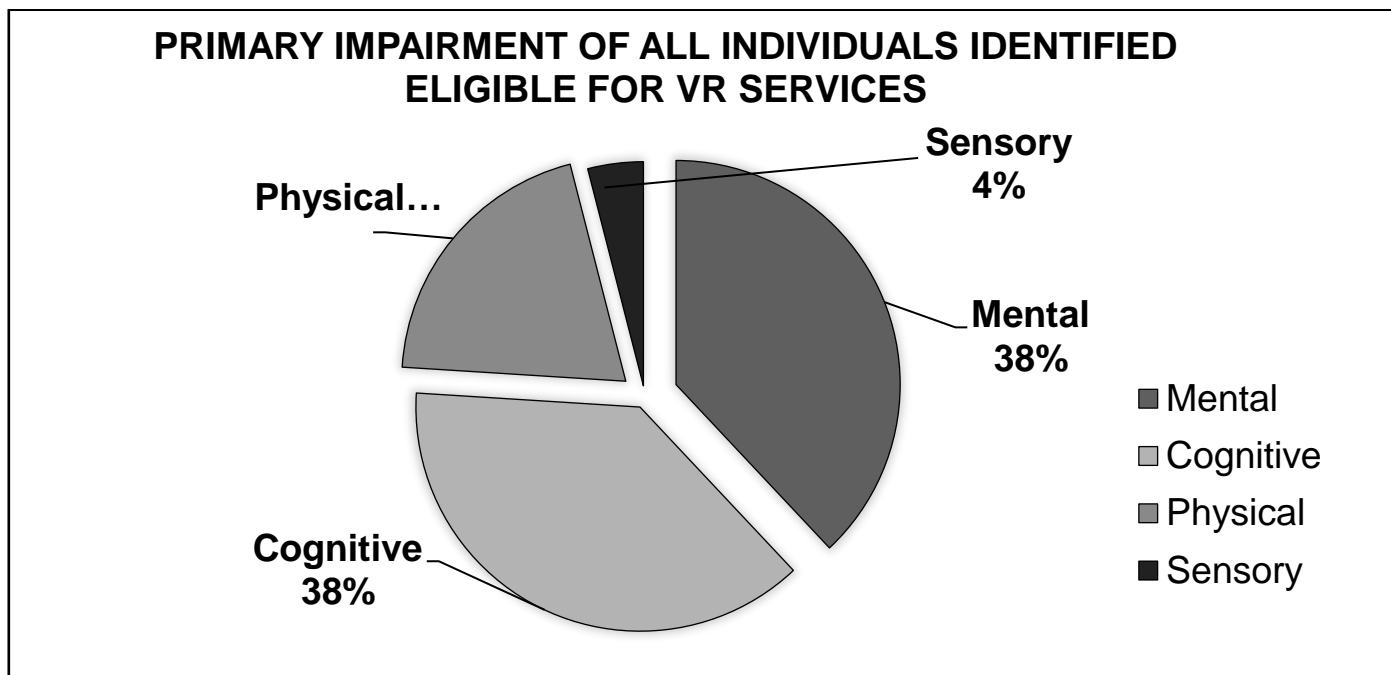
Back Row (L to R) Robert Rendon, Kim Dodd, Ashley Halvorson, and Bill Bailey

The Governor's Awards recognize South Dakota businesses, individuals with disabilities, and other South Dakotans for their contributions toward the employment of people with disabilities.

Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) A Year in Review - July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023

The Division serves thousands of individuals with disabilities statewide by helping them reach their 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 more inclusive workplaces.

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



Description of the Disability/Impairment Categories include:

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

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

Physical Impairment: accidents other than TBI/SCI, arthritis and rheumatism, physical disorders, cause unknown, cardiac, and other conditions of the circulatory system.

Sensory Impairment: congenital condition or birth injury, physical disorders not listed elsewhere, accident,/injury not TBI/SCI, and immune deficiencies excluding HIV/AIDS.

A Year in Review

The Division completed 3,207 plans for employment. The average amount of time from eligibility to IPE was 54.5 days. The data comes from initial plans completed between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023.

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 initial IPE.

Largest Reported Barriers to Employment (Completed at initial IPE)	% of Yes Responses
Low Income	40%
Basic skills deficient/low levels of literacy	19%
Long Term Unemployment	19%
Ex-offender	10%
Single Parent	4%
Homeless	4%

Other highlights include:

- A total of **2,536** people with disabilities received services; an increase of 207 served.
- A total of **1,750** applications were received for services; with **1,644** found eligible. Compared to 1,679 applications received last year.
- The average hourly wage was **\$14.58**
- The average work hours weekly: **26.8 hours/weekly.**
- The average age of the person served was **33.8** years old.

**The Division had a total of
435 Successful
Employment Closures
Between July 1, 2022 –
June 30, 2023**



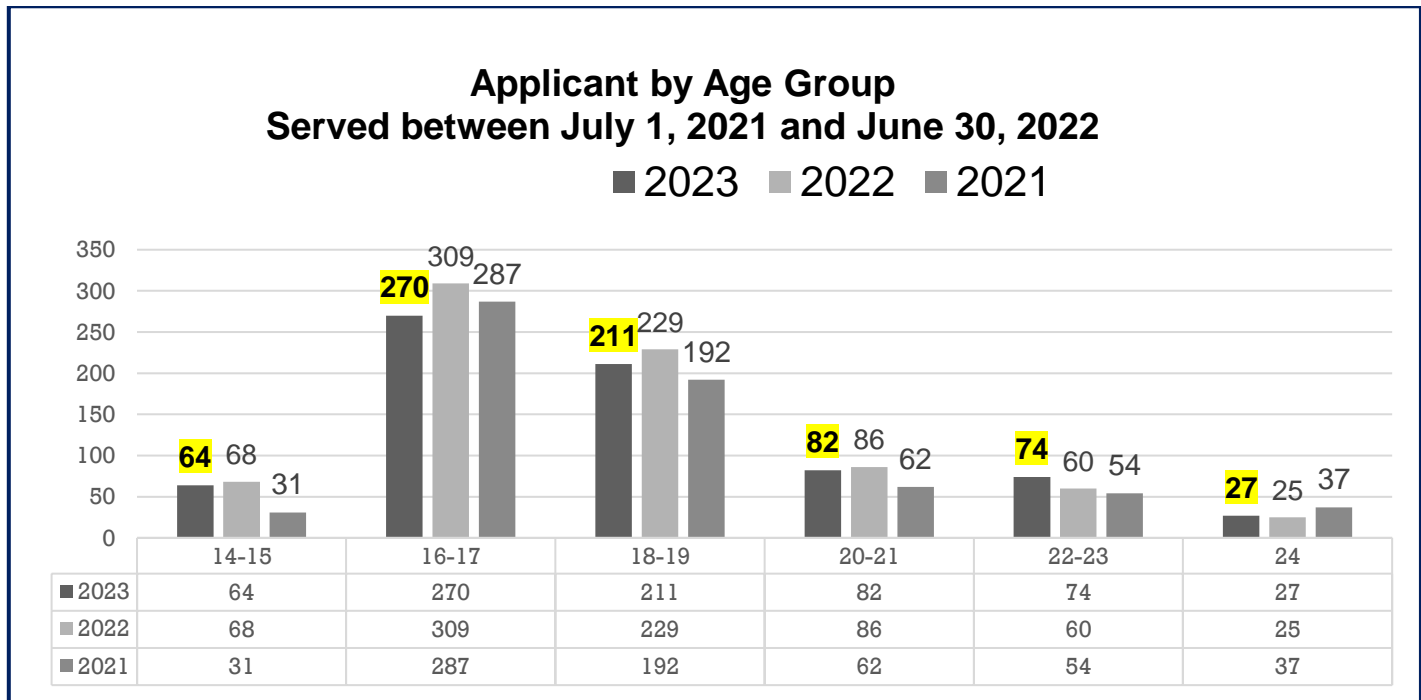
Project SEARCH

Mason is pictured interning at Monument Health Orthopedic & Specialty Hospital in the rehabilitation unit. Mason cleans rooms, cleans the gym, assists therapists by putting away therapy items and is learning how to clean the therapy pool. Mason's mentor is teaching him his duties to work towards being independent on the job.

A Year in Review - Serving Youth with Disabilities

The Division received a total of 728 youth applications between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023. VR counselors served a total of 2,710 youth with disabilities and completed 1,829 plans for employment for youth with disabilities.

The primary impairments of youth with disabilities eligible for services: cognitive (57%), mental disabilities (34%), physical (6%), and sensory (3%). The chart below shows applicants by age group.



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, 2022 – September 30, 2023

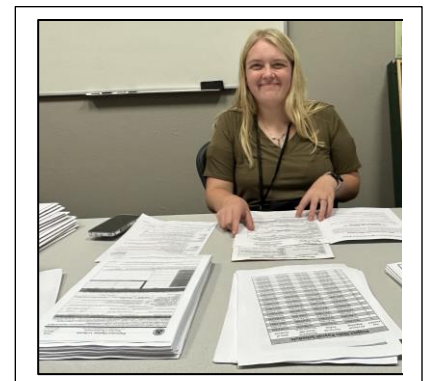
- ❖ **372 Student Participants**
- ❖ **94 Schools currently participating**

Project Skills

Abby works in the VR office, maintaining the front desk. Her duties include answering and transferring phone calls, responding to emails, mailing documents and other duties as assigned.

"I like Project Skills because I meet new people and learn more about responsibility... You get paid while learning new things and having fun!"

Abby L



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. 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. The below table shows the primary support for an individual at the time of application compared to their primary support at closure.

Type of Support	Percentage at Application	Percentage at Closure
Personal Income	17%	70%
Public Support	36%	24%
Family and Friends	44%	6%
All other sources	3%	0%

Who applied for VR services between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023

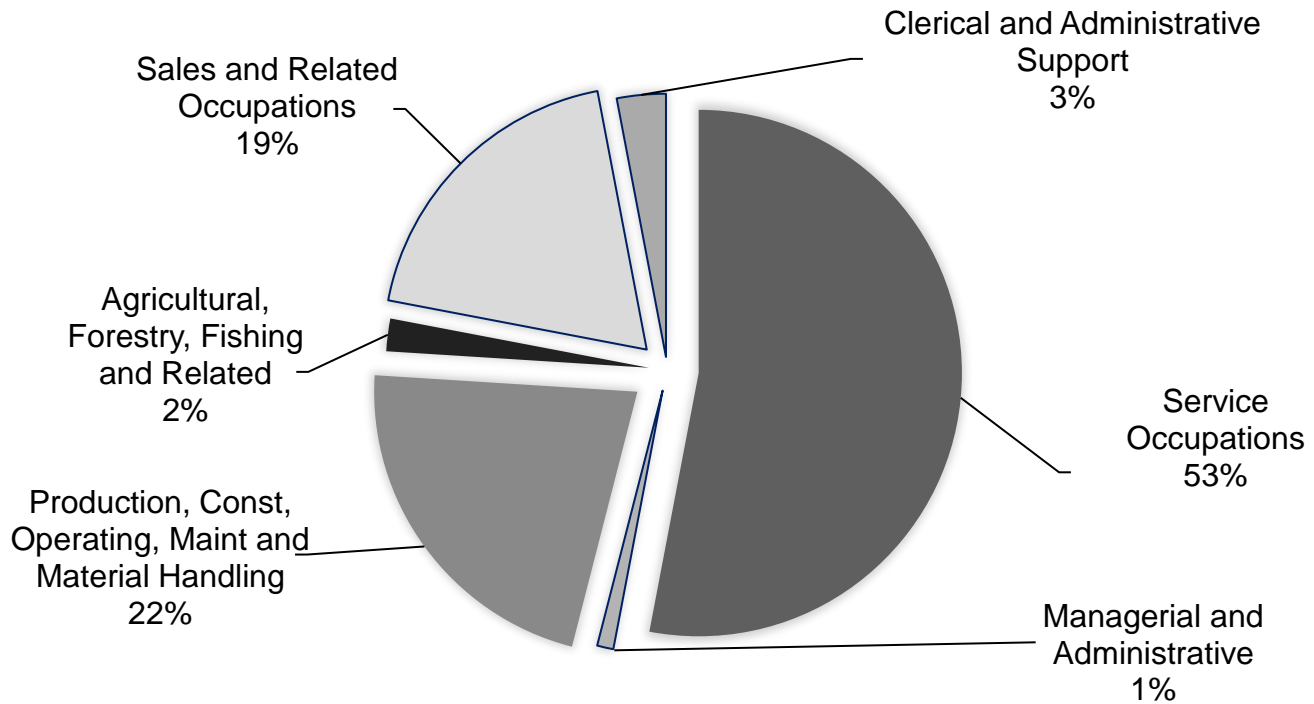
Race/Ethnicity of VR Applicants	Percent of Applicants
White	72%
American Indian or Alaska Native	14%
Black or African American	4%
White & American Indian or Alaska Native	3%
White & Hispanic	2%
No race marked & Hispanic	2%
Asian	1%
American Indian or Alaska Native & Hispanic	1%
White & Black or African American	1%
Black or African American & American Indian or Alaska Native	<1%

Medical Insurance - Another 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 16%. This was reduced to 10% at the time of closure.**
- ✓ **Approximately 4% 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 21%.**

Types of Employment Occupations Chosen by Vocational Rehabilitation Consumers

TYPES OF EMPLOYMENT OCCUPATIONS CHOSEN BY VR CONSUMERS



Ashley applied for VR services almost 7 years ago. She knew she wanted to work and found the assistance she needed with finding employment.

She started working at Walgreens over 6 years ago with assistance provided through VR. She started working part-time. She stocked shelves, worked in the photo department, and as a cashier. A few months ago, she became a Pharmacy Tech in Training, and now she is a full-time employee.

Ashley loves working with her coworkers and learning new things about pharmacy all while earning a paycheck allowing her to be independent!

How to Provide 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/>

You may also access additional Board information such as member listing, past meeting minutes and agendas on the portal.