Working together ...
Building solutions that work!

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome	2
2022 Highlights	3
Mission	4
Customer Service Delivery	5
Vocational Rehabilitation Process	6
Available Services	7
Fiscal Year 2022 Program Data	8
Performance Standards and Evaluation Indicators	11
Programs and Services	12
Disability Determination Section	19
Partnerships	20
Success Stories	24
Financial Report	31
Contact Information	32

WELCOME

James Bailey
Cabinet Secretary
Department of Commerce

Pisnu Bua-Iam
Director
Division of Rehabilitation Services

Dear Colleagues and Friends:

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services' (DRS) 2022 Annual Report, *Working together… Building Solutions that Work!*, illustrates the successful results for our many consumers served throughout the year, which are generated by the efforts of DRS staff and strong collaboration with our partners.

Essential partnerships including those with WorkForce West Virginia, West Virginia Adult Education, West Virginia Department of Education, local schools, postsecondary education, Community Rehabilitation Programs, the State Rehabilitation Council, the Statewide Independent Living Council and West Virginia businesses and employers help DRS to meet the vocational rehabilitation program –

Together, we enable and empower individuals with disabilities to work and to live independently by providing individualized services to consumers and employers.

For DRS, our top priority is always the consumers who benefit from the key programs and services we provide, whether it be assisting people with disabilities in meeting their employment goals, helping West Virginia's businesses and employers to include or to retain people with disabilities in their workforce, or ensuring a smooth adjudication process through the Disability Determination Section for the Social Security Administration for those with disabilities who are unable to work.

In fiscal year 2022, DRS provided vocational rehabilitation services to 8,821 West Virginians with disabilities. Those services play a vital role in empowering individuals with disabilities in their pursuit to work and succeed as productive, self-sufficient community members. We proudly acknowledge the 970 determined individuals who, after receiving services from DRS, obtained employment during the past year.

During fiscal year 2022, the Disability Determination Section cleared more than 28,500 Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income claims for the Social Security Administration, which has a significant economic impact for West Virginians with disabilities and their families.

DRS consistently invests our resources in positive change to directly benefit our consumers, which dramatically contributes to West Virginia's economy and to improving the lives of West Virginians with disabilities.

This report introduces you to six hard-working DRS consumers. Their stories illustrate how DRS solutions bring about successful employment outcomes for West Virginians with disabilities who want to work.

Thank you for your continued support of DRS and West Virginians with disabilities!

2022 HIGHLIGHTS

- DRS served **8,821** West Virginians with disabilities through the vocational rehabilitation program, with **5,735** being transition-aged youth.
- DRS helped **970** vocational rehabilitation consumers obtain or retain employment.
- The estimated annual earnings of vocational rehabilitation consumers at application were **$17,991,721**. After receiving vocational rehabilitation services, their total estimated earnings rose to **$31,203,952**, which amounts to a **73%** increase in the total estimated earned income of these hard-working West Virginians, which demonstrates a significant return on investment.
- DRS spent more than **$19 million** to purchase necessary vocational rehabilitation services for its consumers, which dramatically contributes to West Virginia's economy.
- **87.7%** of vocational rehabilitation consumers had significant disabilities.
- Through strong collaboration and cooperation, the WIOA core partners – DRS, WorkForce West Virginia, WV Adult Education and newly added partner agencies and programs – successfully submitted the *WV Combined State Plan* for Program Years 2022-2023 (effective July 1, 2022).
- DRS employment specialists made over **850** employer visits (either in person or virtually), where they provided employers with solutions in the areas of staffing, job retention of employees who have developed a disability, education, technical consultation on the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, and tax credit information for hiring individuals with disabilities.
- DRS' Disability Determination Section processed **28,536** Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income claims.
- DRS' Disability Determination Section has maintained an accuracy rate of more than **95%** over the past year.

Together, we enable and empower individuals with disabilities to work and to live independently by providing individualized services to consumers and employers.

CUSTOMER SERVICE DELIVERY

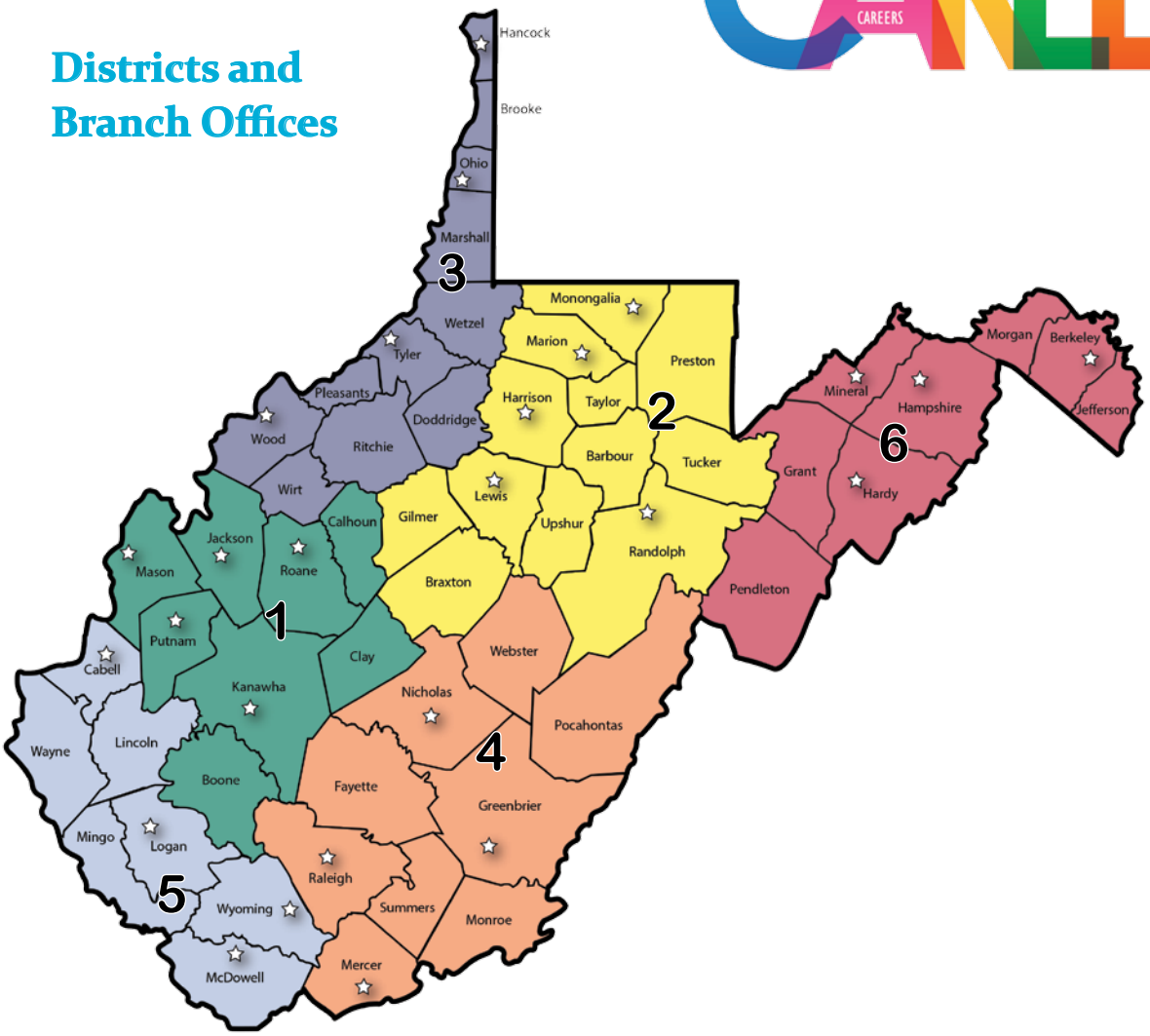
Through our statewide field services program, consumers receive effective one-on-one, personal service from DRS. Throughout the state, DRS vocational rehabilitation counselors carefully evaluate consumers' skills, abilities and interests. Vocational success is achieved by providing the services and comprehensive support each consumer needs to meet his or her employment goal.

DRS employs extensively trained vocational rehabilitation counselors who work directly with individuals with disabilities throughout the vocational rehabilitation process. Vocational rehabilitation counselors are required to meet a stringent certification criterion.

Each of the DRS field offices has a supervisor who provides leadership and guidance to employees and takes the lead in developing partnerships with area employers, workforce centers, schools and other public and private service agencies within the community.

Through our statewide quality assurance program, DRS strives to ensure that the same level of high-quality services is delivered to individuals with disabilities throughout West Virginia. Quality assurance specialists work in each DRS district, and as a team, to develop client services policy, review casework practices, assure consistent interpretation of policy throughout the state and provide training on policy and casework.

Districts and Branch Offices



VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROCESS

The vocational rehabilitation process begins when an individual applies for DRS services. An application is completed, and an intake interview is held to explore the individual's medical, social, financial, educational and vocational experiences. This is an opportunity to explore the applicant's skills, abilities and interests and to understand his or her specific vocational rehabilitation needs. Further assessment of the individual's employment barriers is conducted, when necessary, to establish eligibility for services.

Once eligibility is established, the consumer and his or her vocational rehabilitation counselor work together to develop an individualized plan for employment (IPE). This plan describes the services that will be needed for the consumer to reach his or her employment goal.

The anticipated outcome of the individual's vocational rehabilitation program is competitive, integrated employment in a career of the consumer's choice.

Depending on the services needed, the consumer's involvement with DRS can last anywhere from a few months to several years.

Follow-up services are provided by the vocational rehabilitation counselor to assure that the consumer's employment is stable and satisfactory. Advocacy and support services are available through the Client Assistance Program throughout the term of an individual's involvement with DRS.

AVAILABLE SERVICES

To help people with disabilities, ages 14 and up, achieve their employment goals, DRS is able to provide a variety of services to eligible individuals. DRS consumers and vocational rehabilitation counselors work together to determine the necessary and appropriate services to enable each consumer to meet his or her identified employment goal. The services provided to each DRS consumer are determined by his or her unique employment barriers, chosen employment goal and individual circumstances.

DRS services include:

- **Evaluation and diagnostic services** may be provided to determine eligibility and the services needed for the consumer to become employed.
- **Vocational counseling and guidance** are provided directly by a vocational rehabilitation counselor during the consumer's plan of services to accomplish a variety of objectives leading to successful employment.
- **Pre-employment transition services** may be provided to students with disabilities and can include job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling for postsecondary education, workplace readiness training and instruction in self-advocacy.
- **Training services** may be provided and may include vocational training, college or other academic training, personal and vocational adjustment training, job coaching, on-the-job training, job-seeking skills training, as well as books, tools and other training materials.
- **Rehabilitation technology services** may include assistive technology devices, driver evaluation and education services, assistive technology services and rehabilitation engineering services to address barriers encountered by a consumer in obtaining or retaining employment.
- **Physical and mental therapeutic services** may be provided to correct or substantially modify a consumer's physical or mental condition.
- **Specialized services** for consumers who are blind, deaf and deaf-blind may include orientation and mobility training, interpreter services, note-taking services and reader services.
- **Placement services** may be provided to assist a consumer with a disability to find adequate and suitable employment in his or her chosen field.
- **Support services** such as maintenance, transportation assistance, personal care assistance and services to family members may be provided, if necessary.
- **Post-employment services** may be provided to previously rehabilitated consumers when needed to maintain or regain suitable employment.

FISCAL YEAR 2022 PROGRAM DATA

Economic Impact of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

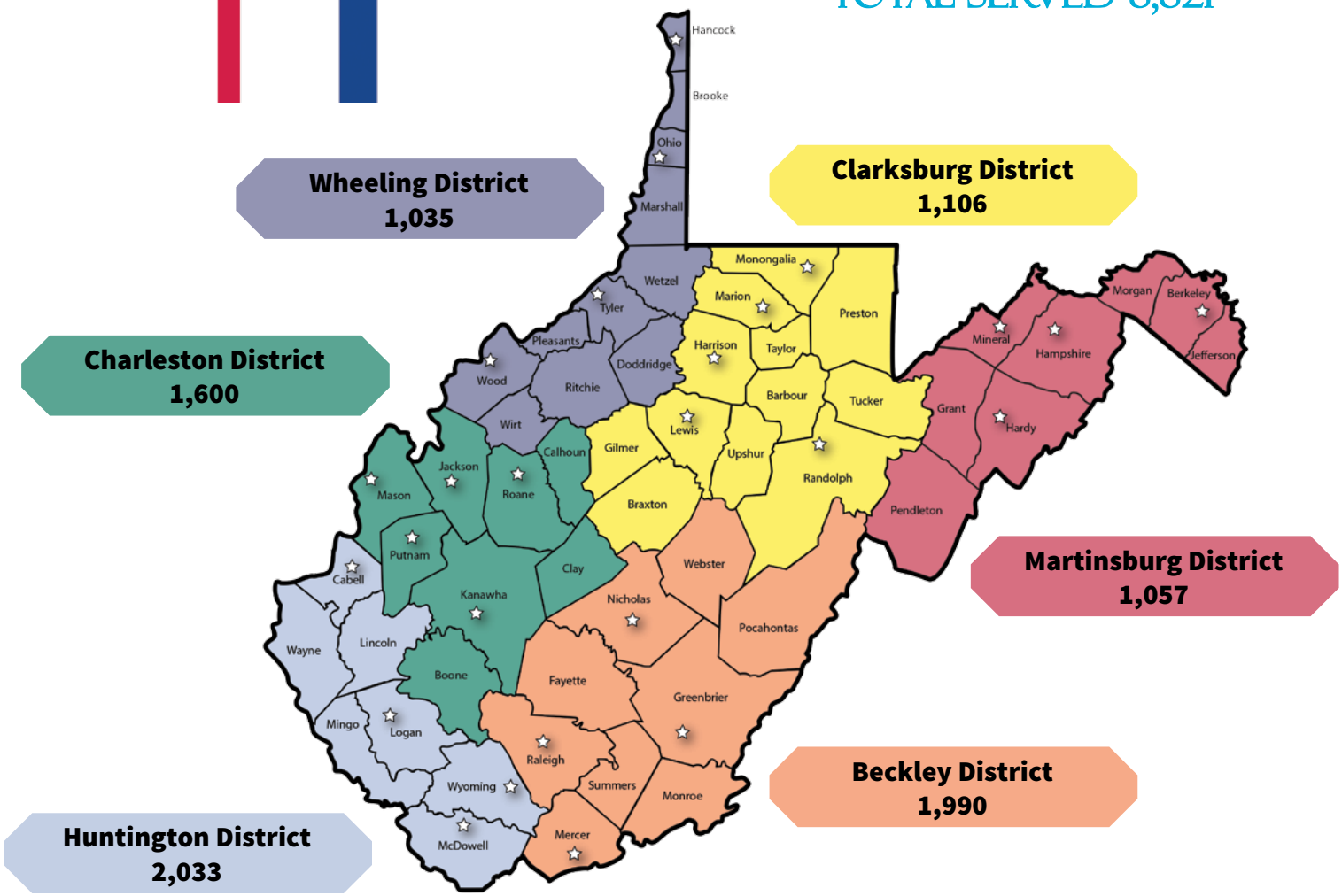
73% increase in total estimated annual earnings

$17,991,721
At referral

$31,203,952
After rehabilitation

West Virginians Served by District

TOTAL SERVED 8,821



Wheeling District
1,035

Clarksburg District
1,106

Charleston District
1,600

Martinsburg District
1,057

Beckley District
1,990

Huntington District
2,033

Occupations of Individuals Vocationally Rehabilitated

Type of Occupation	
Architecture and Engineering	24
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports and Media	15
Building and Grounds, Cleaning and Maintenance	52
Business and Financial Operations	31
Community and Social Services	45
Computer and Mathematical	13
Construction and Extraction	33
Education, Training and Library	77
Farming, Fishing and Forestry	5
Food Preparation and Serving Related	34
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	105
Healthcare Support	39
Installation, Maintenance and Repair	34
Legal	8
Life, Physical and Social Science	21
Management	61
Military Specific	1
Office and Administrative Support	93
Personal Care and Service	36
Production	63
Protective Service	13
Randolph-Sheppard Vending Facility Operator	4
Sales and Related	57
Transportation and Material Moving	106
Total rehabilitated into competitive, integrated employment	*970*

Education at Time of Individualized Plan for Employment of Individuals Vocationally Rehabilitated

Education	*At IPE*
High school diploma, equivalency or special education certificate	427
Enrolled in high school	38
Less than high school diploma, not attending at time of IPE	322
One or more years of postsecondary education	53
Postsecondary certification, license or educational certificate	17
Associate degree	38
Bachelor's degree	40
Degree beyond a bachelor's degree	35

Primary Disability of Individuals Vocationally Rehabilitated

Type of Disability	
Cognitive Impairments	197
Hearing/Communicative Impairments	445
Physical Impairments	134
Psychological Impairments	161
Visual Impairments	33

Age, Gender and Race of Individuals Vocationally Rehabilitated

Age at application	
Under 20	298
20 - 34	147
35 - 44	97
45 - 64	293
65+	135
Race	
American Indian or Alaska Native	8
Asian	8
Black or African American	48
Hispanic or Latino	4
Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander	1
Other	2
White	899
Gender	
Female	484
Male	486

Referral Sources of Individuals Vocationally Rehabilitated

Referral Source	
Adult Education and Literacy	3
Community Rehabilitation Programs	10
Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation	1
Educational Institutions (Elementary/Secondary)	210
Educational Institutions (Postsecondary)	36
Employers	19
Family/Friends	111
Medical Health Providers	161
Mental Health Providers	23
One-Stop Partner	2
Other Sources	32
Self-Referral	362

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND EVALUATION INDICATORS

During program year 2022 (July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023), DRS continues to transition to the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act Common Performance Measures. These measures include:

- Employment 2nd quarter, after exit
- Employment 4th quarter, after exit
- Median earnings 2nd quarter, after exit
- Credential attainment rate
- Measurable skills gain rate
- Effectiveness in serving employers

During program year 2022, DRS has a measurable skills gain rate benchmark of 44.2%, and baseline data will continue to be collected for the remaining performance measures during the year.

While the transition to new performance measures occurs, DRS has chosen to continue measuring performance based on program evaluation standards and performance indicators previously established by the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration. Fiscal year 2022 data show that DRS exceeded the federal benchmarks on four out of the seven measures.

Evaluation Standard 1 – Employment Outcomes. DRS assists eligible individuals to obtain, maintain or regain high-quality employment.

Performance Indicator 1.1 — Change in Employment Outcomes

The number of individuals who achieved an employment outcome in the current year must equal or exceed the number from the previous year. (Federal Requirement – equal to or greater than prior year)

FY 2022 – 968
FY 2021 – 833
FY 2020 – 824
FY 2019 – 868

Performance Indicator 1.2 — Percent of Employment Outcomes

The percentage of individuals exiting the program during the current year who have achieved an employment outcome after receiving services. (Federal Requirement – 55.8%)

FY 2022 – 54.6%
FY 2021 – 52.3%
FY 2020 – 42.6%
FY 2019 – 33.8%

Performance Indicator 1.3 — Competitive Employment Outcomes

The percentage of individuals who achieved an employment outcome and are earning at least minimum wage. (Federal Requirement – 72.6%)

FY 2022 – 100%
FY 2021 – 100%
FY 2020 – 100%
FY 2019 – 100%

Performance Indicator 1.4 — Significance of Disability

Of those earning at least the minimum wage, the percentage who have significant disabilities. (Federal Requirement – 62.4%)

FY 2022 – 57.7%
FY 2021 – 73.2%
FY 2020 – 64.2%
FY 2019 – 99.4%

Performance Indicator 1.5 — Earnings Ratio

The ratio of the average hourly earnings of all individuals earning at least minimum wage to the average hourly earnings of all employed individuals in the state. (Federal Requirement – Ratio of .52)

FY 2022 – .86
FY 2021 – .80
FY 2020 – .76
FY 2019 – .72

Performance Indicator 1.6 — Self-Support

Of those earning at least minimum wage, the difference in the percentage of individuals who at program entry reported their income as the largest single source of support, and the percentage that reported their personal income as the largest single source of support at program exit. (Federal Requirement – 53% mathematical differences)

FY 2022 – 37.5%
FY 2021 – 46.7%
FY 2020 – 41.6%
FY 2019 – 62.9%

Evaluation Standard 2 – Equal Access to Services. DRS must ensure that individuals from minority backgrounds have equal access to services.

Performance Indicator 2.1 — Minority Background Service Rate

The service rate for individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio to the service rate for all non-minorities with disabilities. (Federal Requirement – Ratio of .80)

FY 2022 – .894
FY 2021 – .909
FY 2020 – .915
FY 2019 – .981

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Transition Program

A successful and seamless transition from high school into appropriate vocational training, postsecondary education or employment is the goal of the transition program.

DRS maintains cooperative agreements with the West Virginia Department of Education, each of the 55 county school systems and the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind to ensure effective collaboration for school-aged youth with disabilities.

Pre-Employment Transition Services

Since the enactment of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), DRS has focused on expanding its transition program by providing pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities from ages 14 to 21. There are 56 counselors assigned to work with students with disabilities throughout the state.

Pre-ETS are mandated under WIOA and include the following five required activities:

- **Job exploration counseling –** to help students identify potential occupations and career paths
- **Work-based learning experiences –** to help students gain information about occupations in the workplace
- **Postsecondary education counseling –** to help students understand postsecondary options and plan training
- **Workplace readiness training –** to help students develop social and independent living skills
- **Self-advocacy instruction –** to enable students to learn how to represent themselves, their views or interests

During fiscal year 2022, **1,204** students with disabilities participated in **1,987** Pre-ETS, including Career Exploration Opportunity (CEO) 2.0 workshops, Work-Based Learning experiences and Instruction in Self-Advocacy training.

Pathways to the Future

DRS maintains the Pathways to the Future website (pathwayswv.org), which is a self-guided resource center that provides direct information and services to students with disabilities, parents, educators and vocational rehabilitation counselors regarding all five required Pre-ETS in order to help students transition from school and prepare for employment. Outreach activities promote this self-guided resource in high schools throughout the state.

The online resource center focuses on transition planning:

- **Career Planning**
- **Education Planning**
- **Independent Living**
- **Work-Based Learning Experiences**
- **Self-Determination/Self-Advocacy**

PATHWAYS to the FUTURE
Presented By
WEST VIRGINIA DIVISION OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

Fiscal Year 2022 Results

Comprehensive vocational rehabilitation services and careful planning that involved students, their families and school personnel garnered the following results:

- **5,735** students (ages 14 to 21) with disabilities were served, which is **65%** of the total number of individuals served by DRS.
- **3,672** transition students (**64%** of all transition students) were referred directly from schools to DRS.
- **2,248** students with disabilities (**39%** of all transition students) developed individualized plans for employment.
- **328** transition clients gained employment, which is **34%** of the total number of rehabilitation closures.

College Education Services

A college education provides increased opportunities for vocational success and independent living. DRS counselors are assigned liaison responsibilities with public and private colleges and universities throughout West Virginia.

- Assisted **1,431** students (**24%**) with college education services they needed to meet their work-related educational goals.

DRS hosted first-ever statewide transition fair

During fiscal year 2022, DRS focused on working harder with our partners to increase coordination and cooperation to expand opportunities for students with disabilities to participate and succeed in education and training programs that will lead to high-quality employment outcomes.

Throughout this initiative, DRS has encouraged awareness of how jobs in science, technology, engineering and math, or STEM occupations, are growing industries in West Virginia. And if students with disabilities choose to consider these fields, DRS can provide services and support to assist those who are interested to access education, training and other support to succeed in these high-demand careers.

As part of these efforts, DRS held its first-ever statewide virtual transition fair on March 17, 2022. This was an opportunity for high school students, their families and teachers to learn more about many programs and services that can help students transition from being in high school to adulthood and the world of work.

DRS can help students with disabilities make informed choices during their transition and assist them with future career plans. Students, ages 14 and up, who have limitations and need assistance with learning, seeing, hearing, communicating, coping with stress or participating in physical activities may be eligible for transition services from DRS.

During the statewide virtual transition fair, students learned how DRS can begin working with them while they are in high school and can continue to help after graduation and throughout their work life to empower them to maintain employment and thrive on the job.

As part of this event, DRS also collaborated with many partners to provide students with information on additional employment-related resources and services to help them through their transition. Topics included information on how to apply for jobs, how to request accommodations for higher education, how to get a driver's license, how to manage money, how to apply for financial aid, and much more.

The fair also hosted virtual exhibit booths, which showcased additional resources available to students through our partners. More than 900 people registered for the virtual event.

Employment Services Program

DRS' team of employment specialists work closely with West Virginia employers to help them determine their workforce needs, and then they relay current and future job openings to our vocational rehabilitation counselors and DRS consumers seeking employment.

DRS employment specialists routinely communicate with employers throughout the state. As a result, DRS consumers seeking employment have real-time labor market information to assist them in planning their careers and in reaching their vocational goals. Employers share information about current and future job openings, which allows DRS counselors to better inform job seekers about occupations that are currently in demand and the necessary skills to obtain jobs in those fields.

In fiscal year 2022, DRS employment specialists made over 850 employer visits (either in person or virtually), where they provided employers with solutions in the areas of staffing, job retention of employees who have developed a disability, education, technical consultation on the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, and tax credit information for hiring individuals with disabilities.

Through continuing education and training, DRS employment specialists are able to provide quality services to West Virginia employers and DRS consumers seeking employment. By staying current on national recruiting and hiring trends, employment specialists assist DRS consumers seeking employment to compete in the job market, boost their visibility to maximize their career opportunities and increase their competitive advantage, all of which improves their chances of finding a job.

Employment specialists help prepare youth and students with disabilities for the workplace by providing various work readiness workshops and one-on-one activities such as:

- understanding the importance of and how to make a good first impression,
- concepts relating to interpersonal skills and
- awareness of qualities employers look for when they hire and promote employees.

DRS employment specialists also work to recruit local employers to provide job shadowing experiences for students with disabilities.

2022 Accomplishments

In fiscal year 2022, the Employment Services Unit completed the following activities to increase opportunities for DRS consumers seeking employment:

- Helped secure 226 successful job placements for DRS consumers seeking employment.
- Increased business engagement strategies by promoting the On-the-Job Training (OJT) program throughout the state. The employment specialists received training on how to approach businesses, discussed ways on making stronger job matches between consumers and employers, and were encouraged to go out in the community to create a larger network by joining a local Chamber of Commerce. This concerted effort resulted in an increase in OJT services from 16 to 35, which more than doubled employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.
- Implemented an Employer Recognition Program, where awards were presented to an employer in each of DRS' six districts. The awards were designed to show appreciation for the employers' efforts in creating a diverse workforce and for collaborating with DRS to create additional employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Awards were presented to: Asplundh Tree Service (Beckley), Appalachian Botanical Company (Foster), Home Depot (Ranson), WVU Medicine (Morgantown), Oglebay Resort (Wheeling) and Alcon (Huntington).
- Provided a comprehensive two-day disability inclusion training from WINDMILLS to Highline-Warren, a manufacturing company in Wheeling, West Virginia, which focused on reducing stigma surrounding disability and addressing barriers in the workplace. This provided hands-on disability inclusion training to 10-12 managerial staff and affected more than 200 employees who work under these managers.
- Provided virtual Job Club training to DRS consumers seeking employment, which delivered training on work readiness topics to help job seekers learn skills and prepare to enter the workforce. Topics included positive attitude, skill assessment, interviews, résumé development, job search process, self-advocacy, transportation, social media and maintaining a job.

Community Rehabilitation Programs

The state network of Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) is critical to the effective and efficient delivery of vocational rehabilitation services to West Virginians with significant disabilities.

DRS maintains strong working relationships with CRPs in West Virginia that provide supported and direct employment, community-based assessment, work skills assessment, job coach training, work adjustment and/or life skills training. These services are commonly purchased by DRS to assist individuals with significant disabilities to achieve successful employment outcomes.

There are 62 DRS-acknowledged CRPs with 68 total service locations throughout West Virginia.

To better meet the needs of DRS and its clients during the COVID-19 pandemic, DRS worked closely with the CRPs and other local community providers to develop and expand into virtual versions of services, such as life skills training, work adjustment training and job coaching.

DRS has ongoing collaboration with the CRPs and other local community providers to identify needs, available resources, training opportunities and best practices to enable positive changes to assist West Virginians with disabilities to achieve successful, competitive, integrated employment outcomes.

Two specially trained employees, one in northern West Virginia and the other in the southern region, generate ongoing communication between DRS and CRPs. They also address training needs for new CRPs and existing CRP staff.

2022 Accomplishments

- More than **1,800** clients and potentially eligible students received one or more CRP services, with payments to CRPs totaling over **$6 million**.
- In order to meet the needs of underserved areas and rural communities, DRS has encouraged CRPs to offer and provide services on a statewide basis. Any CRP, acknowledged by DRS as a vendor, can provide services to consumers anywhere in West Virginia, if they so choose.
- As required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, DRS continued a training program for individuals with disabilities who work in programs covered under the U.S. Department of Labor's Sub-Minimum Wage Certificate program. The training focuses on ensuring that these individuals are aware of the employment-related services and supports that are available to enable individuals with disabilities to explore, discover, experience and attain competitive, integrated employment. In 2022, the number of individuals working in these programs continued to decrease. CRP staff coordinated and delivered the training to fewer than 60 employees with disabilities at four different programs throughout the state.
- DRS continued to cultivate and expand the Student Transition to Employment Program (STEP) to directly assist transitioning youth with obtaining needed employment services. STEP is designed to train special education teachers, school transition teachers and/or teacher's aides to provide job placement skills to participating high school students. A DRS employee exclusively recruits and trains school system employees to become new STEP vendors throughout the state. There are currently 50 approved STEP service vendors.
- DRS continued to encourage CRPs to develop Pre-ETS projects that would differ from current program offerings. Over 40 new service projects were approved and initiated during 2022. In addition, the existing Pre-ETS services of Work-Based Learning experiences, Career Exploration Opportunity workshops and Instruction in Self-Advocacy training were also offered. A number of special Pre-ETS programs were also developed specifically for populations with sensory impairments. Other new initiatives include STEM/STEAM programs and financial literacy programs.

Sensory Specialty Unit Programs

Blind and Visually Impaired Services

DRS has specially trained rehabilitation counselors to meet the vocational rehabilitation needs of people with blindness and significant vision impairments.

- Served **299** people with blindness or significant vision impairments.
- **35** individuals obtained or retained employment after completing their vocational rehabilitation programs.
- Spent $1,066,589 on blind and visually impaired services.

DRS offers individualized and intensive training to those clients who need to learn skills to effectively compensate and live independently with blindness or limited vision. This training may include orientation and mobility, computer literacy, assistive technology, Braille, individual counseling and career development.

In addition to compensatory skills training, blind and visually impaired clients may receive job training, job placement or access technology to assist in training or to help them function on the job.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services

DRS has specially trained rehabilitation counselors to meet the vocational rehabilitation needs of people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

- Served **1,172** clients who listed hearing impairments as their primary or secondary disability, which included people who are deaf or deaf-blind.
- **452** clients with hearing impairments achieved their employment goals.
- Spent **$2,062,466** on deaf and hard of hearing services.

2022 Accomplishments

- DRS collaborated with the Children's Vision Rehabilitation Project for a sixth straight year on three summer Pre-ETS camps for West Virginia high school and college students who are blind or visually impaired.
- DRS played an integral role in the establishment of the WV Technical Assistance Center on the campus of the WV Schools for the Deaf and Blind to provide improved educational equity for students with sensory impairments and serve as a statewide resource for those who work with these students with disabilities.
- DRS is a co-leader for the National Deaf Center's WV State Team and is working with the WV Department of Education on a new five-year project, "Collaboration: Better Together."
- DRS collaborated with the 360 Degree Academy to offer deaf and hard of hearing students and teachers across the state a comprehensive online curriculum for Pre-ETS.

Rehabilitation Technology Services

The Rehabilitation Technology Unit travels statewide to provide services to improve DRS consumers' independence in the workplace, home and community. This unit consists of a group of experienced engineers, computer specialists, driving instructors and technicians who specialize in job accommodations, custom-designed assistive technology, product fabrication and driver education. Rehabilitation Technology staff also assist DRS with inventory, surplus property, and records retention services.

- Served **335** people, providing **367** services, which included **91** rehabilitation engineering services, **86** assistive technology services, **176** driver rehabilitation services and **14** environmental modification services.
- Continued to provide training in the areas of job exploration, self-advocacy, workplace readiness, job shadowing, money management and transportation training (learner's permit, biking, ride sharing, all-terrain vehicles, public transportation and pre-driving readiness).

Behavioral Health, Corrections and Community Assets Program

The Behavioral Health and Corrections program facilitates a coordinated approach to serving individuals with behavioral health conditions, as well as people with criminal histories who have disabilities. Community Assets involves working with various partners, including the State Rehabilitation Council, the Statewide Independent Living Council and the Center for Independent Living Corporations in the state. Each of these valuable partners help support the vocational rehabilitation mission.

The program focuses on collaborating with other agencies in order to:

- provide information about DRS services to those who may make new client referrals to DRS and to those who may be eligible for services through DRS,
- obtain information and resources that DRS counselors can use to assist individuals with mental health conditions and substance related disorders, as well as people with disabilities who are involved in the criminal justice system, to achieve their employment goals and
- promote self-sufficiency for West Virginians with disabilities.

DRS maintains active participation on the state Behavioral Health Planning Council, the West Virginia Olmsted Council and the West Virginia Achieving a Better Life Experience (WVABLE) Advisory Committee, the Developmental Disabilities Council, the Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board, the Fair Shake Network, the Dangerous Assessment Advisory Board, the Bridging Resources West Virginia Advisory Committee, the Creating Opportunities for Recovery Employment (CORE) Regional Advisory Council and Jobs and Hope. These programs work to promote wellness, recovery, resiliency and financial security for West Virginians with disabilities.

DRS continued its work with the Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation and, in partnership with the WV Bureau of Behavioral Health, is implementing a pilot project for Enhancing Employment Services for People with Mental Illness.

DRS continued collaboration with the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation and other organizations that serve justice impacted individuals. In fiscal year 2022, DRS served approximately **164** individuals with disabilities and criminal histories.

DRS maintains active participation in the various reentry councils across the state and was actively involved in the planning and implementation of the 2022 WV Reentry and Recovery Works Conference, where both employers and job seekers got to learn about reentry and recovery employment opportunities and the incentives associated with second chance hiring.

In fiscal year 2022, DRS continued our efforts to reach at-risk youth and those already involved in the justice system by coordinating visits and providing information about the availability of services to each of the Youth Reporting Centers across the state.

Randolph-Sheppard Program

DRS serves as the State Licensing Agency for the Randolph-Sheppard program in West Virginia. The purpose of the federal Randolph-Sheppard Act and West Virginia state law (WVC §18-10G) is to provide gainful employment for individuals who are legally blind. In carrying out the intent of Congress and the West Virginia Legislature, the Randolph-Sheppard program promotes economic opportunity and profitability through self-employment for people who are legally blind.

The Randolph-Sheppard program provides training in food service management to DRS clients who are blind and who meet eligibility requirements under the Randolph-Sheppard Act. These individuals are referred to the Randolph-Sheppard training program by DRS rehabilitation counselors. Other services include upward mobility training, in-service training, food service training, maintenance of equipment and inventory management.

Randolph-Sheppard vendors are self-employed and must possess the aptitude and abilities required to function as a business owner and manager.

The program provides services to **five** licensed, self-employed blind vendors, providing concession services to **230** governmental facilities throughout the state. Average income for vendors in West Virginia for fiscal year 2022 was **$46,297** with gross sales of **$969,933**.

During fiscal year 2022, the program successfully transitioned two licensed blind vendors into operations at the Morgantown Welcome Center, I-79 North and South-bound rest areas, and the I-68 rest area at Hazleton. Additionally, a licensed blind vendor and their teaming partner, Blackstone Consulting, Inc., transitioned into the operation of the U.S. Army National Guard Food Service Cafeteria at Camp Dawson in Kingwood, WV.

VISIONS

DRS administers and operates the Visually Impaired Seniors In-home Outreach and Networking Services (VISIONS) program, through an independent living grant from the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration.

The VISIONS program serves individuals ages 55 and older with permanent vision loss. The program uses skills trainers to provide services that enable individuals to live as independently as possible within their home and community.

Training focuses on activities of daily living such as identifying money, using large print, utilizing community resources, and using low-vision adaptive aids, including magnifiers, writing equipment, talking watches and large-button telephones. Services are provided both in person and virtually. Referrals to the Talking Book library for audio books and to other sources may also be made to maximize self-sufficiency and independence.

In fiscal year 2022, **455** consumers were served statewide through the VISIONS program.

DISABILITY DETERMINATION SECTION

Disability Determination Section Mission

To process Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income Disability claims in a manner that is accurate, timely, compassionate and cost-effective.

Under contract with the Social Security Administration (SSA), Disability Determination Section (DDS) makes eligibility determinations on disability claims filed by West Virginians for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). SSA fully funds DDS.

DDS processed **28,536** claims in fiscal year 2022. DDS has maintained an accuracy rate, as determined by regular case reviews by SSA, of more than **95%** over the past year. DDS' accuracy rate was the highest in the Philadelphia Region, which includes the state of West Virginia.

After several years of declining SSI/SSDI applications, in fiscal year 2022, DDS received approximately 2,400 additional new claims, which brought the agency to more than 29,000 new applications for the year. This was roughly an 8% increase, and SSA predicts further growth of 20-28% in claims in fiscal year 2023.

In fiscal year 2022, DDS continued to face high attrition due to retirements and resignations. While the agency works diligently to replace lost employees, the process is extremely difficult. The average processing time for claims was 203.7 days in fiscal year 2022 compared to 124.2 days in fiscal year 2021. This increased processing time can be attributed to the upsurge in claims and ongoing staffing concerns.

SSDI and SSI disability benefits have a significant economic impact for West Virginians with disabilities and their families. In 2018, an estimated 155,588 disabled West Virginians and 24,626 spouses and 37,649 dependent children of disabled workers received over $1.7 billion in Social Security and/or Supplemental Security Income payments based on disability or blindness.

Individuals eligible for SSI disability payments also receive Medicaid, and those eligible for Social Security disability payments for more than 24 months receive Medicare. The $1.7 billion in cash payments and the health insurance entitlement significantly affect the state's economy and the quality of life for recipients.

PARTNERSHIPS

West Virginia Combined State Plan Partners

In 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law and established the formation of a coordinated workforce development system, which consists of three core partners: WorkForce West Virginia, West Virginia Adult Education and DRS. The workforce development system is responsible for the integration of employment services to West Virginians, particularly those with barriers to employment, to increase their access to and opportunities for the employment, education, training and support services they need to succeed in the labor market.

In 2022, as part of the two-year modification of the *WV Unified State Plan*, Governor Justice added additional programs to what is now the *WV Combined State Plan. The Combined State Plan* delineates the road ahead for West Virginia's workforce development system under WIOA, and how the partnering agencies will navigate that road to ensure that West Virginians, particularly those with barriers to employment, are ready and able to enter and remain in gainful employment.

The *WV Combined State Plan* partner agencies and programs are as follows:

- **WV Division of Rehabilitation Services**
  - » Vocational Rehabilitation program under Title IV of WIOA
- **WorkForce WV**
  - » Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs under Title I of WIOA
  - » Jobs for Veterans State Grants programs
  - » Trade Adjustment Assistances for Workers programs
  - » Unemployment Insurance programs
  - » Wagener-Peyser Employment Service program under Title III of WIOA
- **WV Bureau of Senior Services**
  - » Senior Community Service Employment Program
- **WV Community and Technical College System/Higher Education Policy Commission**
  - » Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act Career and Technical Education programs
- **WV Department of Education**
  - » Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program under Title II of WIOA
- **WV Department of Health and Human Services**
  - » Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training programs
  - » Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program
- **WV Development Office**
  - » Community Services Block Grant

As part of the *Combined State Plan*, the existing six statewide goals were renewed and are as follows:

- Maximize efficiency of the workforce development system.
- Strengthen relationships with employers.
- Overcome employment barriers of individuals.
- Promote career pathways.
- Identify and maximize postsecondary and employment opportunities for youth.
- Align West Virginia's Labor Force Participation Rate with the National Labor Force Participation Rate.

DRS also continues to work toward five auxiliary goals in the *Unified State Plan* designed specifically to improve the employability of individuals with disabilities:

- Provide integrated vocational rehabilitation services to West Virginians with disabilities to promote attainment of a high school education or greater in order to increase their ability to move through meaningful career pathways.
- Provide pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities.
- Provide integrated vocational rehabilitation services to West Virginians with disabilities, committing to the use of the Employment First framework, to enable them to obtain competitive, integrated employment, especially in occupations and careers within emerging industries statewide.
- Improve access and availability of transportation options for DRS consumers who need transportation assistance to achieve or maintain competitive, integrated employment.
- Continue to build collaborative relationships with community providers (including CRPs, Independent Living, and other community providers) to enhance the availability of services to DRS consumers. Vocational rehabilitation consumers require specialized services provided by CRPs statewide to achieve an integrated, competitive employment outcome.

DRS is also one of eight state agencies represented on the Interagency Collaborative Team (ICT). As the ICT identifies ways to more effectively serve citizens seeking employment and employers who need trained and qualified workers, DRS involvement ensures that people with disabilities are given due consideration.

The ICT continued its focus on expanding business services teams so that all seven workforce regions can better serve employers by coordinating visits and sharing resources. All DRS employment specialists are members of those teams, and they offer their unique abilities and expertise in helping individuals with disabilities to become employed and self-sufficient.

DRS actively supports and assists WorkForce West Virginia in honoring the commitment of seamless access to employment services for all citizens. Formal agreements among DRS and its WorkForce partners specify how DRS will contribute needed expertise, share costs and otherwise support the WorkForce West Virginia infrastructure.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Partners Conference

DRS, in collaboration with core WIOA partners, hosted the first-ever WIOA Partners Conference June 21-22, 2022, in Morgantown. The purpose of the conference was to further enhance collaboration and coordination among WIOA partners and stakeholders. Weekly planning meetings were held with DRS staff and other workforce partner representatives to plan and prepare for the event.

The conference was a success. There were 173 in-person attendees and 43 virtual participants, representing 80 agencies, programs and organizations. There were also 33 exhibit booths at the conference. The involvement of so many agencies demonstrated the commitment of all involved to the mission of creating a coordinated workforce system in West Virginia.

The conference offered many sessions and opportunities to discuss and address problems with West Virginia's current workforce development system, including ways to streamline communication between state agencies to reduce current complexities, increase productivity and reduce confusion among participants. Other areas of concern relating to duplication of services, more efficient management and sharing of funding resources and engaging employers were discussed.

Below are just a few of the comments received:

- "There are so many great resources."
- "Just a lot of good information about various agencies."
- "An in-person gathering that allowed us to learn how our agencies can work together to improve lives in WV."
- "Learning so much about the great work being done by passionate people all across the state."
- "Partners sharing information in a better way than in the past."

WIOA Partners Conference

State Rehabilitation Council

The West Virginia State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is a federally mandated partner with DRS and assists in the development of goals and priorities, programs and policies. The SRC also contributes toward the development of DRS' portion of the *WV Combined State Plan*.

The SRC is responsible for reviewing and analyzing the effectiveness and satisfaction of rehabilitation services provided by DRS from information gathered from DRS clients. The SRC conducts two consumer satisfaction surveys, one of which targets youth with disabilities who are transitioning from high school to postsecondary education or employment and another that targets the remaining client population, asking consumers to rate the effectiveness of services received through DRS. This information is evaluated by an independent consultant, who prepares a summary report that is disseminated to the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), the SRC and DRS staff.

Keeping abreast of national trends, trainings, legislative agendas and innovative networking is vital to the success of the SRC. To assure this aspect is met, the SRC participates in the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC).

SRC members are appointed by the governor, according to the provisions of the federal Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 and are dedicated to helping ensure that people with disabilities identify and achieve their individual vocational rehabilitation goals.

Statewide Independent Living Council

In partnership with DRS, the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) is responsible for jointly planning and submitting the *State Plan for Independent Living* (SPIL) every three years. The council also monitors and evaluates the implementation and effectiveness of the plan.

The council's mission is to ensure that people with disabilities have access to community-based resources that promote personal choice and facilitate the fulfillment of their independent living goals.

The council, in cooperation with DRS and the centers for independent living, coordinates an annual survey of consumer satisfaction of all individuals who receive independent living services. Through collaboration and systems advocacy, the council works to ensure the development of appropriate services and public policies affecting people with disabilities.

DRS contracts with the council to administer the Ron Yost Personal Assistance Services Program, which reimburses West Virginians with various disabilities an hourly rate to hire personal assistants to help them with everyday tasks they cannot perform on their own.

In fiscal year 2022, DRS contracted with the SILC to coordinate the Disability History Essay Contest, an event that coincides with West Virginia Disability History Week and is open to all high school seniors throughout West Virginia. This contest is designed to provide these individuals with an opportunity to showcase their writing skills, share what they have learned about disability issues in their community, use their ability to form and express opinions and perhaps to earn some money.

The governor appoints council members in accordance with provisions of the federal Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 and the West Virginia Independent Living Act of 2001.

Centers for Independent Living

The Centers for Independent Living also operate the Community Living Services Program (CLSP), which assists eligible individuals with disabilities to return to or remain in their homes and communities by enabling them to function more independently.

As provided in the West Virginia State Plan for Independent Living, state and federal funds for this program provide services such as home modifications, assistive devices and equipment, vehicle modifications and durable medical equipment.

Under administrative oversight by DRS, in partnership with the West Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council, CLSP services are provided statewide through the three West Virginia CIL corporations: Appalachian Center for Independent Living, Mountain State Center for Independent Living and Northern West Virginia Center for Independent Living.

When requests are received for services, CIL employees make every effort to locate needed resources, including donations by third parties. If the necessary funds are not available, applicants are prioritized in order of request and are served as funds are received.

In fiscal year 2022, a total of 193 consumers completed CLSP services and were successfully enabled to remain in their own homes. The average cost per consumer to complete their goals was $3,394. According to Genworth 2021 Cost of Care Survey, the cost for a semi-private room in a nursing home has a median annual rate of $139,430 in the state of West Virginia. Therefore, the diversion or transition of 193 consumers from nursing home care through CLSP is estimated to have created a net annual savings of nearly $27 million in fiscal year 2022.

As of June 30, 2022, 415 consumers were on the waiting list to receive services.

success
stories

James Sparks – Huntington District

James Sparks teaches social studies at River View High School in McDowell County, which is also the school he attended and graduated from in 2016.

While playing football in high school, James dislocated his knee a couple of times, causing permanent damage. Those injuries pushed him to reach out to the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) to help him plan and prepare for his future.

James knew he wanted to be a teacher, but growing up in Squire, his life had not been easy. His grandparents raised him because his parents had substance use issues. He was a junior in high school when his grandmother passed away.

Despite those difficulties, James went on to pursue his bachelor's degree in secondary education from Concord University. He faced another setback when his grandfather passed away as he was starting his student teaching requirement.

However, the additional emotional stress did not stop James from succeeding. He earned his degree in 2021.

According to James, DRS Rehabilitation Counselor Holly Estep was very good at providing him with information and assistance beginning when he was in high school.

James received financial support from DRS to attend college, as well as a laptop and other supplies to help him with school. DRS also helped James with the financial costs of taking the required examinations to become certified as a teacher.

River View High School Principal Frazier McGuire explained that James teaches social studies to students in grades nine through 12. McGuire believes James holds a special place in his heart for the school because he grew up there.

In addition to being a teacher, James assists with coaching the high school and middle school football teams, and he keeps stats for the girls' basketball and softball teams.

In his role as teacher, James admits that he is trying to do his best and he is learning every day, especially about how kids behave and react in different situations.

For James, his favorite part of working is interacting with his students and the athletes.

According to McGuire, James has a lot of compassion for his students and is a good fit for the school.

While he does not envision himself ever leaving McDowell County, James is currently pursuing a master's degree in athletic coaching and leadership from West Virginia University. He believes furthering his education will help him be a better coach and educator.

Estep feels James' perseverance enabled him to succeed.

"He's had so many obstacles in his life with his family, in school with people telling him he's not going to be able to reach his goals," said Estep. "He could have stopped, but every single time, he kept going."

James admits there were times when he didn't think he would make it through school, but he is proud of the accomplishment.

Estep believes James is kindhearted and caring, and those characteristics lead him to give back to his community.

James believes that a lot of people look down on McDowell County because of the poverty and drugs, but he feels the county has a lot of positive things to offer and those attributes begin with the elementary, middle and high school students. It makes him proud to try to be a positive role model for his students and the athletes with whom he works.

Ashley Higginbotham – Charleston District

Ashley Higginbotham works as a care teacher at Sacred Heart Early Learning Center in Charleston. At her job, she gets to take care of kids, and that has been her goal since she was in middle school.

Ashley grew up in Hurricane and attended St. Albans High School, graduating in 2017. Through her school, she connected with the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) for assistance to help her prepare for employment after graduating.

Ashley has a learning disability and a speech impediment, and according to DRS Senior Rehabilitation Counselor Veronica Bunch, work-based training helped Ashley to learn more about jobs in her chosen field and life skills training helped her to grow in her self-confidence.

Ashley participated in the early childhood development training program at Ben Franklin Career Center and went on to attend BridgeValley Community and Technical College, where she majored in early childhood education.

While Ashley is independent and hard-working, when it came time to look for a job, she was intimidated by the interview process because of her speech impediment. Ashley was afraid that employers would not be able to understand what she was saying. Assistance provided through DRS helped Ashley to improve her interviewing skills.

After applying at Sacred Heart, Ashley's hard work paid off, and she was so excited when she learned that she had gotten the job because it was what she had always wanted to do.

According to Assistant Director Andrea Bias, care teachers at the Sacred Heart Early Learning Center are responsible for providing a safe, clean and predictable learning environment for children from six weeks old to 2.5 years old.

Bias explained that Ashley is a care teacher in an infant room where two teachers are assigned eight children, and Ashley is the primary caretaker of four of those children that range in age from six weeks to 14 months.

Her responsibilities include all aspects of taking care of those four children, including feeding them and changing diapers, throughout the workday, which can run from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Ashley describes herself as a caring person, a characteristic that is essential for her job because of the amount of patience it can take to manage the day-to-day needs of four infant children.

For Ashley, her job is extremely rewarding. She thoroughly enjoys watching the children grow and develop, and she celebrates their milestones, like sitting up and crawling, with them.

Bias feels that Sacred Heart is lucky to have Ashley as an employee. She's a hard worker who is very responsible. She is also a team player and does not complain.

Bias also gives Ashley credit for being able to set and reach her goals.

So far, Ashley is most proud of completing her degree at BridgeValley, and she would like to eventually further her education so she can advance in her field.

Bunch is proud of how much Ashley has grown since she began working with her as a high school student. She believes her positive attitude and passion for working with children will continue to help her move forward in the profession.

For Ashley, her road was not always easy. She is grateful to her family for supporting her through her challenges, and she is happy that she's been able to accomplish such a big goal.

"I did face a lot of challenges, but now I have a career that I love and enjoy," said Ashley.

Jayla Williams – Clarksburg District

Jayla Williams works at Old Navy as a brand associate, a job that is perfectly suited for someone with the character traits of being nice, funny, creative and fashionable.

Jayla grew up in West Milford, where she attended and graduated from South Harrison High School in 2018.

While in high school, Jayla was referred to the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) for assistance with her transition from school to work. Jayla has Down syndrome, a genetic disorder that causes developmental delays. She was extremely shy and insecure, and she needed help with acquiring independent living and life skills and with learning more about work and job options.

According to DRS Branch Office Manager Lori Cumberledge, who was also Jayla's vocational rehabilita-tion counselor, DRS contracted with the ARC of Harrison County, a community rehabilitation provider, so Jayla could participate in life skills training and a community-based assessment, where she got to visit work sites to learn more about herself and the types of jobs she might like or dislike.

One of the job sites Jayla got to try was Old Navy, which she liked best, and the store's management was interested in hiring Jayla. So, DRS contracted with the ARC to provide a work skills assessment and job coaching services to help Jayla learn the type of job tasks she would be required to perform at the store. Unfortunately, the pandemic put things on hold for Jayla for a little while, but ultimately her training got back on track, and she began working at Old Navy.

Cumberledge explained how well Jayla progressed with the help of her first job coach. She learned how to clean the fitting rooms and to sort and place stock appropriately. This assistance has also helped her to overcome some of her shyness and insecurity.

Senior Lead Maddie Lipscomb, store manager, describes Old Navy as a company of style, where the goal is to find a fit and style for everyone. Lipscomb explained that Jayla's responsibilities include main-taining and cleaning the fitting rooms, and she helps with whatever they need her to do. She credits her with being kind and friendly to everyone, and she believes Jayla has grown and become more out-going since she first started working there.

For Jayla, one of her favorite tasks so far has been preparing and displaying the flip flops when they came into the store for the summer season. She loved the vibrant colors of this variety of shoe.

For Jayla, getting a job was important so she could make some money, make some friends and be around people. She's very proud of becoming more independent and accomplishing her goals. But the best part of her job is her coworkers. She enjoys working with them.

Jayla continues to have a job coach to help her as needed on her job to maintain skills or learn new tasks. Her current job coach is through Job Squad, Inc., and the service cost is covered by the Intellec-tual/Developmental Disability (I/DD) waiver. With this service, Jayla continues to move forward with her skills in the workplace, including greeting customers, something she was not comfortable with in the beginning due to her shyness and insecurities.

According to Kristi Belt, a career counselor with Job Squad, Jayla continuously brings a positive pres-ence into the store. She wants to do a good job and enjoys learning new things. And she really likes putting outfits together and playing the role of fashionista.

Cumberledge believes Jayla makes a positive impression on everyone who comes into the store and empowers others who may be doubtful of their capabilities to work. Holding a job is important to Jay-la. It makes her feel valued. She is contributing to the community, and it gives her a sense of inde-pendence and fulfillment.

Ismael Calzada – Wheeling District

Ismael Calzada works as a dishwasher at Perkins Restaurant in Moundsville. This is his first real job, and he is happy to have the opportunity and loves working there.

Originally from Pennsylvania, Ismael and his family relocated, and he has spent most of his life growing up in Moundsville. He graduated from John Marshall High School in 2020.

While in school, Ismael was referred to the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) for transition services to help him prepare for life after graduating.

Ismael has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). DRS Certified Rehabilitation Counselor Debbie Moore explained that Ismael had trouble concentrating and was easily distracted from staying on task, which could hinder his ability to succeed in the workplace.

While still in high school, Moore got Ismael involved in life skills training through the local Goodwill Industries, a community rehabilitation provider DRS frequently utilizes to provide one-on-one services.

Through community-based assessment services, Ismael was able to participate in some hands-on work experience at four different job sites. One of those was Perkins Restaurant, which he liked the best.

DRS continued to contract with Goodwill to provide Ismael with services to help him learn specific responsibilities for this work site. A job coach from Goodwill worked with him, teaching required tasks and appropriate workplace behavior.

Ismael admits that before he started working with his job coach, he was “like an uncaged tornado running rampant.” However, with the help he received from DRS and Goodwill and with the support from his mother and family, he is in a much better place, and he found a job that suits him.

Perkins Restaurant General Manager Tom Smith ultimately hired Ismael, and he feels the partnership to bring him on board with the restaurant was a win-win for everyone.

Smith explained that Ismael’s responsibilities include doing dishes, taking out trash, sweeping and mopping floors, but he is willing to do anything asked of him.

Moore describes Ismael as outgoing, flexible, likable and determined, and he puts those traits forward at his job.

According to Smith, Ismael is a go-getter, and he wants to please everyone, and he does that, which makes him an asset to the restaurant.

Ismael was voted homecoming king during his senior year of high school, something for which he is very proud.

He is also proud of getting the job at Perkins. Meeting that goal was important to him so he could help other people, get out of his house and earn some money.

Ismael is grateful for the opportunity to work at Perkins, and he appreciates the help he received along the way.

In the future, he may go back to school. His interests are vast and range from teaching special education to practicing cosmetology.

Right now, Ismael chooses to not let his disability get to him and to focus on his abilities, and he encourages others to do the same.

“This is to anybody else who has ADD, OCD, ADHD, any learning or physical disability. Don’t let your critics, don’t let your haters get to you,” said Ismael. “Your biggest source of motivation is yourself because you can be your own hero, but sometimes you can be your own villain ... be the hero you need to be.”

Joseph Chericozzi – Beckley District

Joseph Chericozzi is employed as a janitor by Mercer County Opportunity Industries (MCOI).

Joseph grew up in Princeton. While attending Princeton Senior High School, he became a client of the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) for assistance with transitioning from school to employment.

Joseph has Asperger's syndrome, which caused him to have difficulty with focus, as well as with com-munication, organizational, socialization and interpersonal skills.

According to DRS Rehabilitation Counselor Margie Cordle, after graduating in 2020, Joseph wanted to pursue a degree in business administration from Concord University. But that was during the height of the pandemic when most classes were online, and Joseph didn't do so well in that environment.

However, DRS helped Joseph look at other vocational options.

MCOI is a community rehabilitation provider that DRS frequently utilizes to provide one-on-one train-ing services to consumers. Through job coaching and work adjustment training provided by MCOI, Jo-seph learned specific job requirements to do janitorial work, as well as skills to help him stay focused and organized on the job.

Joseph was hired by MCOI, but he does janitorial work at the West Virginia Tourist Information Center in Princeton.

MCOI Executive Director Jamie Hall clarified that Joseph helps to keep the Tourist Information Center clean, including the restrooms, the gift shop and the grounds.

According to Joseph, his training taught him to be more open-minded and helped him to become more comfortable with things like interacting with people. He explained that working at the Tourist Information Center puts him in a position to meet a lot of people, and whether he likes it or not, that involves social interaction.

His favorite thing about his job is his boss, Jamie Hall, or Miss Jamie as he calls her. He likes her because she makes the job seem so easy, and she doesn't get upset when he messes up. She helps him to learn from his mistakes.

Hall believes Joseph's best personal attribute is his positive attitude. He is very genuine towards peo-ple, greeting them with a smile and by name, if he knows it.

She considers him a team player because he helps his coworkers and will cover shifts whenever it's possible for him to do so.

While Cordle credits Joseph with being optimistic and humble, she sees personal determination as his strongest characteristic.

That determination is pushing Joseph to continue with his dream of pursuing postsecondary educa-tion. He is currently enrolled at New River Community and Technical College.

MCOI has been able to accommodate Joseph's work schedule so he can attend classes.

Once he has completed his program at New River, Joseph hopes to work towards his bachelor's de-gree in business administration.

Joseph is most proud of going back to school and for holding onto his job for so long. Working at MCOI is his first real employment experience, and he is really enjoying the environment.

Joseph is very grateful to his family for inspiring and supporting him and to DRS and MCOI for the guid-ance and training that led him to accomplish one of his life goals.

Michael Moore – Martinsburg District

Michael Moore works as an Information Technology Client Analyst 1 for the West Virginia Office of Technology, a state agency responsible for maintenance, software and hardware installations and up-grades to computers and other technology for executive branch agencies of state government.

At age 55, Michael has worked for the Office of Technology for nearly 10 years. At his job, Michael troubleshoots problems to fix computers. He also installs and replaces computer software and hard-ware and works on cell phones and tablets.

Michael approached DRS several years ago be-cause he was having trouble at his job, and he hoped DRS could help.

Michael has been deaf since birth, a condition that resulted after his mother was infected with Ger-man measles during her pregnancy.

As a child, Michael learned to communicate using American Sign Language. He began his education at a school for the deaf but later transitioned to the "hearing world," where sign language interpreters as-sisted in his classrooms. He considers himself lucky that his parents also learned this distinctive lan-guage, and they were able to help him with homework and his classes at school.

Michael could easily have learned to pity himself, but he chose to face the problems associated with being deaf and to deal with them directly.

After high school, Michael earned an associate degree in computer technology from Prince George's Community College.

One of the biggest challenges Michael faced was when he was applying for jobs. Unfortunately, many employers did not consider him a viable candidate because of concerns relating to communication bar-riers.

However, at his current job, communication barriers do not prevent Michael from performing his work tasks.

DRS Rehabilitation Counselor Monty Hogbin explained that Michael was having difficulty hearing and identifying specific sounds that were necessary for him to troubleshoot problems in his work. There-fore, DRS purchased hearing aids for Michael so he could hear certain sounds, including specific noises a computer makes when it is malfunctioning and a cell phone ringtone, so he knows it is working.

According to Office of Technology Field Tech Manager Deidre Rainwater, a big part of Michael's job is customer service, and he handles it very well. Michael's responsibilities require him to cover seven counties in West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle. Many of Michael's job duties are performed remotely, which allows this in-demand agency to save on travel costs and provide more efficient services to its customers.

When it comes to communicating with customers and coworkers, Michael uses a variety of methods, including text messages, email, virtual media platforms, chat programs and video relay services.

Rainwater credits Michael with being dependable and eager to work, with having a fantastic attitude and with being a team player.

Hogbin believes Michael's tenacity and patience have helped him to achieve his work goals, and he feels that Michael will continue to have a bright and busy future with the Office of Technology.

Michael considers himself a "computer geek," and he truly loves his job. When he isn't working, he enjoys spending time with his family, including his wife and their two daughters, who are in college.

Michael has a message to share with other people who are deaf, and that is to not give up. He wants to encourage others to seek out resources available from DRS and through the Americans with Disabili-ties Act to help them in their job search.

To those who are having a difficult time, Michael's best advice is "Don't worry about the past; just keep looking forward."

FINANCIAL REPORT

Source of Funds

State Appropriations	14,796,560
Federal Grants	49,013,654
Program Income	399,127
Special Revenue	136,778
Total Funds	**$64,346,119**

Expenditures by Program Category

Administration	11,553,134
Vocational Rehabilitation Program:	
Case Services	11,896,075
Counseling, Guidance and Placement	9,699,809
Disability Determination Services	15,703,173
Other:	
Employment Attendant Care Program	101,172
Independent Living	1,185,256
Older Blind (VISIONS)	186,463
Pre-Employment Transition Services	10,411,519
Randolph-Sheppard Program	1,114,646
Ron Yost Personal Assistance Services Fund	333,828
Supported Employment	275,157
Supported Employment Extended Care	68,460
Workshop Development	1,817,427
Total Expenditures	**$64,346,119**

Classification of Expenditures

Personal Services	24,649,020
Current Expense	13,794,274
Repairs and Alterations	2,586
Equipment	428,750
Grants	2,617,836
Purchased Case Services	22,853,653
Total	**$64,346,119**

Statement of Funds and Expenses for the year ended June 30, 2022

CONTACT INFORMATION

DRS Administrative Offices
State Capitol
P.O. Box 50890
Charleston, WV 25305
304-356-2060

Beckley
800 New River Town Center
Beckley, WV 25801
304-256-6900

Charleston
601 57th Street, SE
Charleston, WV 25304
304-356-2371

Clarksburg
153 West Main Street, Suite F
Clarksburg, WV 26301
304-625-6044

Elkins
1025 North Randolph Avenue
Elkins, WV 26241
304-637-0205

Fairmont
WV State Office Building
416 Adams Street, Suite 240
Fairmont, WV 26554
304-367-2714

Huntington
2699 Park Avenue, Suite 200
Huntington, WV 25704
304-528-5585

Keyser
67 North Tornado Way
Keyser, WV 26726
304-788-2313

Lewisburg
3293 Jefferson Street North, Suite 105
Lewisburg, WV 24901
304-647-7515

Logan
P.O. Box 896
Logan, WV 25601
304-792-7060

Martinsburg
489 Mid-Atlantic Parkway, Suite 2
Martinsburg, WV 25404
304-267-0005

Moorefield
151 Robert C. Byrd Industrial Park Road
Suite 3
Moorefield, WV 26836
304-538-2701

Morgantown
1415 Earl Core Road
Morgantown, WV 26505
304-285-3155

Mullens
316 Howard Avenue
Mullens, WV 25882
304-294-5653

New Martinsville
WV Northern Community College
Itinerant Office
141 Main Street
New Martinsville, WV 26155
304-455-4688

Parkersburg
State Office Building
400 5th Street
Parkersburg, WV 26101
304-420-4580

Point Pleasant
2807 Jackson Avenue
Suite 200
Point Pleasant, WV 25550
304-675-0867

Princeton
195 Davis Street
Princeton, WV 24739
304-425-1256

Rehabilitation Programs
10 McJunkin Road
Nitro, WV 25143
304-760-7166

Ripley
206 Stone Drive
Ripley, WV 25271
304-373-0313

Romney
WV Schools for the Deaf and
Blind
Information Resource Center
301 E. Main Street
Romney, WV 26757
304-822-4806

Spencer
321 Market Street
Spencer, WV 25276
304-927-0954

Summersville
830 Northside Drive
Suite 113
Summersville, WV 26651
304-872-0813

Teays Valley
115 Liberty Square
Hurricane, WV 25526
304-760-7082

Weirton
100 Municipal Plaza
Suite 200
Weirton, WV 26062
304-723-5311

Welch
110 Park Avenue
Suite 200
Welch, WV 24801
304-436-3175

Weston
306 Market Place Mall
Weston, WV 26452
304-269-0547

Wheeling
1324 Chapline Street
Suite 200
Wheeling, WV 26003
304-238-1092

Disability Determination Section

Charleston
500 Quarrier Street
Suite 500
Charleston, WV 25301
304-343-5055

Clarksburg Federal Center
320 West Pike Street
Suite 120
Clarksburg, WV 26301
304-624-0200

West Virginia Department of Commerce
West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services
Administrative Offices
State Capitol
P.O. Box 50890
Charleston, WV 25305-0890
304-356-2060 • 1-800-642-8207
DRSQuestions@wv.gov
www.wvdrs.org

Follow us on Facebook: facebook.com/wvdrs

Follow us on Twitter: @teamWVDRS