



**COLORADO**  
Department of  
Labor and Employment

COLORADO STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

# 2021 Annual Report

## The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

DECEMBER 2021

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01

# Letters to the Governor & Colorado Stakeholders



# Dear Stakeholders and Partners,

I am proud to lead an agency that empowers prosperity for people with disabilities. Individual lives are changed and the whole state of Colorado is made better when people with disabilities are empowered to be employed and independent. Our dream goal is that DVR working together with partners and stakeholders will close the prosperity gap for people with disabilities by 10 percent in 10 years.

We believe that anyone with a disability who wants to work, can work, regardless of the type or severity of their disability. We also believe in equity, diversity and inclusion, and work to ensure non-discriminatory practices and equitable opportunities in all of our programs. DVR is working to make the state of Colorado a model employer for people with disabilities.

Achieving our mission and vision requires us to work closely with our partners and stakeholders to provide high quality customer service, operate with fiscal responsibility, and continuously improve the ways we do our work.

A few highlights from the past year include:

- 14,694 individuals accessed DVR (including pre-employment transition services)
- 1,517 individuals had successful employment outcomes at an average wage of \$16.68
- 245 Employment First trainings were facilitated to a variety of stakeholders
- 62 skills-based hiring trainings were given to employers across CO and our Business Relations Team is now considered Train-the-Trainer certified in Skills-Based Hiring concepts via Skillful.
- We exceeded our 4DX goal with 619 new employment goals developed in opportunity occupations. In April, our new 4DX goal is focused on increasing the percentage of individuals we serve who sign an IPE. This goal relates to our agency's priority of improving our customer service, both internally and externally.
- Our Business Relations Unit and staff from Competitive Integrated Employment were honored with the CO APSE Best Practice Award.

DVR has created and implemented policy and procedure guidance since COVID-19, changing our business practices to mostly all virtual. These guidance documents are focused on creating procedures to allow our staff to work flexibly and successfully in a virtual and in-person environment. This hybrid environment allows us to meet the people we serve where they are, whether online or in person, in the office or a library, school, mental health center, a partner's location or some other convenient place.

We have teams working on various priorities as they relate to hybrid services. These include:

- **E-Signatures:** fully Implemented, using Adobe Sign
- **Paperless:** we are implementing a document management system called Box
- **New Procedures** to engage the people we serve at the initial engagement meeting, including training for all staff and full implementation
- **Developing procedures** for when it is appropriate and best practice to meet in person vs virtually or in the community with the people we serve

# 01 LETTERS TO THE GOVERNOR & COLORADO STAKEHOLDERS

## LEGISLATION:

We are excited about two new signed bills in CO.

- [SB 21-039](#) eliminates subminimum wage payments in CO
- [SB 21-095](#) continues the Employment First Advisory Partnership and allows for a new pilot program that will implement a hiring preference system for people with disabilities when they apply to work in state government - CDLE will be the first to implement this pilot. The legislation requires implementation by January 2023, but we are hoping to implement the hiring preference in January 2022 within CDLE.

## OTHER SUCCESSES:

**Accommodation Policy:** We've developed a new accommodation policy specifically for our staff to more efficiently and effectively implement and evaluate the success of those accommodations.

**Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI):** Our Department has a strong focus on creating affinity groups (including one for people with lived experience of disability), education on EDI and developing fun activities. Some of these include an EDI Art Project, Cultural Recipes, and posters featuring the diversity of the Executive Team. We also have an Equity Task Force in our Division that will make recommendations to senior leadership on EDI for DVR.

**Race Equity Report:** To explore the current level of access to and outcomes achieved following receipt of our services among various racial groups, DVR considered self-reported demographic information of applicants for vocational rehabilitation services (VR cases), as well as potentially eligible students seeking pre-employment transition services only (pre-ETS). DVR compared demographic information against the US Census Bureau's 2019 1-year American Community Survey (ACS) in order to understand how those receiving services from DVR may differ from the overall population of individuals with disabilities in Colorado. The report also provides information about the racial make-up of DVR staff and leadership, providing an opportunity to explore whether there are areas in which DVR would benefit from a more diverse workforce.

**National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM):** We had a very successful celebration in October, presenting awards to four individuals/employers who are doing exemplary work in creating and implementing programs that result in people with disabilities being employed. The Lieutenant Governor presented the awards virtually. DVR's Business Relations Unit sponsored our first Employer Week during the last week of October 2020, featuring seven employers who shared information about their business, what they look for in employees, and more - all virtually.

**Wellness Initiatives:** DVR has an employee group, Great Outcomes Team, which is focused on developing and implementing projects to create a fun and healthy culture in DVR and to increase the retention of our staff.

## STRENGTHENING COLLABORATION WITH SRC

We have a strong focus on increasing our collaboration with our State Rehabilitation Council. We successfully finalized our 2021 Annual Report and look forward to this next year. The Council contracted with a vendor to conduct and then analyze the results of a customer satisfaction survey which we sent to all currently participating individuals and those who were closed in the previous 6 months - around 10,000 individuals, with over 900 responding. This information will help guide us as we look for ways to improve our customer service. In addition, we have created and hired a new position - the SRC Program Manager, who supports the SRC full time.

## 01 LETTERS TO THE GOVERNOR & COLORADO STAKEHOLDERS

### ADDRESSING HUMAN RESOURCE NEEDS

We continue to identify areas of improvement and need within our agency in how we can better serve and support our staff and the individuals we serve and have created 3 new positions:

**Accessibility Technician:** a new position focusing on ensuring all our documents are accessible, working with staff who have particular accessibility needs, and more.

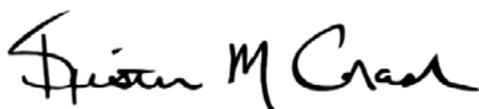
**Employment First Youth Manager:** this position is focusing on Project SEARCH, Pre-ETS and working with those youth with the most significant disabilities.

**Business Outreach Lead:** a new position to provide mentoring and guidance to the 9 Business Outreach Specialists in CO, with other duties focused on working with Government and Corporate Employers, and supporting the Business Relations Manager.

### UPCOMING GOALS:

- DVR will increase quality employment outcomes measured by increasing the number of successful employment outcomes from 1,517 to 1,740 and increase the average wage from \$16.68 to \$17.40 by June 30, 2022.
- DVR and CDLE will work to implement the pilot preference for hiring people with disabilities in CDLE by June 30, 2022, with a goal that other agencies will follow.
- Increase skills-based practices by employer partners by providing 108 skills-based practices employer services by June 30, 2022.
- Fully implement our paperless document management system by January, 2022.

Regards,



Kristin Corash

Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

# Dear Mr. Governor, Ms. Acting Commissioner, and Key Stakeholders:

By way of unanimous agreement, 2021 has been an innovative year, as Colorado's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Colorado's State Rehabilitation Council have demonstrated an unrelenting commitment to building an inclusive workforce in the state of Colorado. In the era of COVID-19, Colorado's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has continued to accommodate the disabled community by refining its hybrid approach, allowing clientele to meet with DVR counselors in-person or virtually.

As for the State Rehabilitation Council, members were still able to meet remotely in order to satisfy the council's mandated functions in an attempt to ensure that DVR clients were well serviced to the best of DVR's ability. This year, the essential focus was on the advocacy for organizational policy that ensured DVR clientele would be provided services on the basis of individual preference. In terms of meeting structure, many participants thrived in the virtual environment while other councilmembers preferred in-person meetings.

The council has continued to provide support for the state of Colorado to enhance the progress of Employment First through the advocacy of two legislative measures, including the continuation of the Employment First Advisory Partnership (EFAP), and the creation of pilot programs, which focus on hiring preferences for the disabled community in the public sector of the state. The second piece of legislation that was supported by the SRC and EFAP was the effort to abolish subminimum wage in Colorado.

Moreover, the SRC additionally partnered with DVR to complete the CSNA. This included conducting surveys to collect data from those who are homeless and those who have criminal backgrounds as a way of assessing rehabilitative needs. The council has also solidified its focus on EDI. This element has been incorporated into SRC's plan for 2022. On an internal level, SRC strives to keep its members apprised when it comes to key DVR programs, the council's need to include more business representation, and the needs of members of the disabled community in the context of employment. These dynamics assist the SRC in terms of enhancing its ability to provide effective recommendations and leadership to DVR.

The SRC continues to be committed when it comes to being a proactive partner to DVR, aiming to perfect the rehabilitative services offered to disabled Coloradans.

Sincerely,

Timothy Postlewaite

Chair, Colorado State Rehabilitation Council



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## **DVR & SRC Leadership**



# DVR & SRC Leadership and Contact Information

## Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Colorado Department of Labor & Employment

633 17th Street, Suite 1501

Denver, CO 80202

Phone: 303.318.8571

Toll Free: 866.870.4595

Fax: 303.318.8569

Email: [cdle\\_voc.rehab@state.co.us](mailto:cdle_voc.rehab@state.co.us)

[www.colorado.gov/dvr](http://www.colorado.gov/dvr)

## Executive Leadership Team:

**Kristin Corash**

Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

**Stacy Evans**

Deputy, Field Services

**Vacant**

Deputy, Finance & Operations

## State Rehabilitation Council Officers:

**Timothy Postlewaite**

Chair

[t.writer90@gmail.com](mailto:t.writer90@gmail.com)

**Sherrell Bethel**

Chair Elect

[sbethel@peakparent.org](mailto:sbethel@peakparent.org)

**Mark Kollasch**

Vice Chair

[mkollasch@disabilitylawco.org](mailto:mkollasch@disabilitylawco.org)



03

**State  
Rehabilitation  
Council**



# State Rehabilitation Council

## State Rehabilitation Council Vision Statement

The Colorado State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) envisions a day when Coloradans with and without disabilities have the necessary resources to fully participate in all aspects of life; and when rates of employment and economic advancement are comparable regardless of perceived or confirmed disability.

## SRC Mission Statement

The SRC increases opportunities for Coloradans with disabilities to pursue success as they define it. Our members work in service of equity and access to full participation in all aspects of life, by advocating for the budgetary and programmatic integrity of the vocational rehabilitation program in the Centennial State, a resource for increasing employment and economic advancement.

## Purpose of the Council

The Colorado State Rehabilitation Council is established under the authority of Section 105 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended.

The SRC provides guidance at the systemic and policy level that assures the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation assists Coloradans with disabilities to achieve meaningful employment and maximize individual independence goals. The Council provides DVR with an external, consumer-oriented perspective and advises DVR on the vocational programs, policies, services and other issues that affect Coloradans with disabilities. The SRC provides individuals with disabilities, business representatives, service providers and other citizens with a formal mechanism to influence the direction of rehabilitation services in Colorado.

# SRC Responsibilities

The overall purpose of the council is to work in collaboration and partnership with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to review, analyze, and advise the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) regarding the performance of the agency.

The Council shall:

- Review, analyze, and advise DVR regarding the performance of the responsibilities of DVR, particularly responsibilities relating to eligibility (including order of selection)
- In Partnership with DVR, develop, agree to and review state goals and priorities as well as evaluate the effectiveness of the DVR and submit reports of progress to the commissioner
- Assist with the creation of the State Plan
- When feasible, conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of, and consumer satisfaction with
  - the functions performed by DVR
  - vocational rehabilitation services provided by DVR and other public and private entities responsible for providing vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities
  - employment outcomes achieved by eligible individuals receiving services under this title, including the availability of health and other employment benefits in connection with such employment outcomes
- Prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor and Commissioner on the status of DVR programs within Colorado and make it available to the public
- Coordinate activities with the activities of other councils within the State,
  - including the Statewide Independent Living Council;
  - the advisory panel established under section 612(a)(20) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
  - the State Council on Developmental Disabilities;
  - State mental health planning council;
  - the State workforce development board; and
  - the activities of entities carrying out programs under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998
- Provide for coordination and the establishment of working relationships between the DVR and the Statewide Independent Living Council and centers for independent living within the State
- The Council shall prepare, in conjunction with DVR, a plan for the provision of such resources, including such staff and other personnel
- Perform other functions the SRC determines to be appropriate

## 03 STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

### 2021 SRC Members and Membership Categories

NAME	STATUS		OFFICERS DURING SFY21	MEMBERSHIP TYPE
Benjamin Wankel	Former	Voting member during SFY20201	1st Vice Chair	Business, Industry, & Labor
Brenda Mosby	Active	Voting member	Chair Customer Satisfaction Committee	Business Industry & Labor (Through SFY21) Current or Former Recipient of Services
David Noftsker	Former	Voting member throughout SFY2021		Current or Former Recipient of VR Services
Jennifer Mendenhall	Active	Voting member		Parent or Guardian of a Person with a Disability
Joan LaBelle	Active	Voting member		Statewide Independent Living Council
Joelle Brouner	Active	Voting member		Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council
Katherine Carol	Former	Voting member throughout SFY 2021	Chair, Co-chair SRC EF committee	Parent or Guardian of a Person with a Disability
Katie Oliver	Active	Voting member		Advisory Panel established under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
Kristin Corash	Active	Non-voting		Director of DVR
Lee Wheeler-Berliner	Former	Voting member throughout SFY2021		Colorado Workforce Development Council
Lisa Taylor	Active	Voting member		Colorado Workforce Development Council
Lorraine Hull	Active	Voting member		Behavioral Health Planning Council
Marilee Boylan	Active	Voting member	Interim Chair, Co-chair SRC EF committee	At-Large Representative
Mark Kollasch	Active	Voting member	Co-chair Policy Committee	Client Assistance Program
Naomi Gonzales	Active	Voting member		Business, Industry, & Labor
Ricky Wade	Active	Non-voting		Qualified Rehabilitation Counselor
Robert Lawhead	Former	Voting member	Co-chair SRC EF committee	Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council
Sherrell Bethel	Active	Voting member		Parent Training & Information Center
Stephen Heidenreich	Former	Voting member throughout SFY2021	Chair Membership committee	State Independent Living Council
Susan Richardson	Active	Voting member		Community Rehabilitation Program
Bobbie Rosa	Active	Voting member		Tribal VR
Timothy Postlewaite	Active	Voting member	Co-chair Policy Committee	Disability Advocacy Group
Yolanda Webb	Active	Voting member		Business, Industry, & Labor
	Vacant			Business, Industry, & Labor
	Vacant			Business, Industry, & Labor

# Standing Committees

## Employment First Committee

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Senate Bill 16-077 “Employment First for persons with Disabilities” made the SRC lead agency in coordinating Employment First-related collaboration within Colorado Department of Labor and Employment and among additional state agencies (the Colorado Departments of Education, Higher Education, Healthcare Policy and Financing, and Human Services). These efforts were to result in recommendations to CDLE and the other state agencies, as well as to the Colorado General Assembly, to implement Employment First policies and practices. Further, the outcome of these activities to expand employment opportunities for Colorado citizens with disabilities, including individuals with significant disabilities who may have previously not been considered for competitive integrated employment. The SRC Employment First Committee leads Colorado’s Employment First efforts through administration of the Employment First Advisory Partnership (EFAP), also created through Senate Bill 16-077. The Employment First Committee determines EFAP membership, develops monthly EFAP meeting agendas and assures EFAP has adequate resources to fulfill its mission.

### CURRENT MEMBERS

- Marilee Boylan - Co-Chair
- Katherine Carol - Co-Chair
- Bob Lawhead - Co-Chair
- Katie Oliver

### 2021 LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENTS

During the 2021 Colorado legislative session, SB 21-095 *Sunset Employment First Advisory Partnership* was passed into law continuing the EFAP indefinitely and also created a hiring preference pilot program for people with disabilities within State Government hiring, which was Recommendation #8 from the original EFAP recommendations.

SB21-039 Elimination of Subminimum Wage Employment was passed concerning the elimination of subminimum wage employment. The act requires the employment first advisory partnership to: Develop actionable recommendations to address structural and fiscal barriers to phasing out subminimum wage employment and successfully implementing competitive integrated employment; and report the recommendations to specified committees of the general assembly.

# Standing Committees

## Employment First Committee (CONTINUED)

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### THE SRC EMPLOYMENT FIRST COMMITTEE 2021 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Drafted language for the SRC Bylaws to include the EF Committee
- Drafted and passed Bylaws for the EFAP
- Collaborated with the Customer Satisfaction/Program Evaluation Committee in hosting a group of business panelists to gather input on their partnership experience with DVR and their opinions on ways to enable the SRC to attract and gain business representation on the SRC
- Reviewed and provided feedback regarding the DVR website in marketing to the business community
- Brainstormed with the DVR Business Outreach Specialists (BOS) to understand current training of the BOS positions and ways to further connect to the business community.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Colorado is entering into an Employment Provider shortage crisis as a result and impact from the COVID-19 pandemic. We recommend DVR actively partner with the Workforce Centers to attract potential professionals to create a pipeline of new employment providers. In addition, it may be helpful to create a how to video or mentoring program for potential DVR Employment vendors. Many people may be interested in this type of flexible and meaningful work, but do not know that it either exists as a potential type of work or how to work through the logistics of becoming a vendor.

# Standing Committees

## Customer Satisfaction and Program Evaluation Committee

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The Customer Satisfaction Committee is the lead workgroup for the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) and partners with DVR to complete CSNA activities. This committee is responsible for reviewing, analyzing and bringing forward recommendations related to the overall customer experience. The committee evaluates program and performance data to evaluate the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program, advising the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation on service improvement to adequately meet the needs of Coloradoans with disabilities in achieving their employment goals.

### **CURRENT MEMBERS:**

- Brenda Mosby - Chair
- Sue Richardson
- Timothy Postlewaite
- Bobbie Rosa

### **2021 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND PROGRAM EVALUATION COMMITTEE WORK SUMMARY**

#### **Customer Satisfaction Survey**

This is the Committee's second year completing an Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey. The Committee works with a consultant to evaluate survey responses and identify gaps in service needs and customer experience. In 2020, the Committee had a sample of 919 respondents. The survey included both closed and open ended questions. In 2021, 919 individuals who participated with DVR in the past year responded to the survey. The Committee will be able to compare results year over year and incorporate the findings into recommendations for DVR as well as the Committee's strategic focus for 2022.

#### **Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment**

As DVR planned to complete the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment in 2021, the SRC's Customer Satisfaction committee assisted DVR in identifying key areas of consideration and areas of focus for the SRC to be involved. The committee had an interest in exploring the needs of unserved or underserved populations and identified a number of groups to survey, ultimately focusing this year on individuals who do not have safe and stable housing and those who are involved with the criminal justice system, partnering with organizations serving these populations to gather information. As the comprehensive statewide needs assessment is completed, results will be discussed with the committee and the SRC will use this information to help inform recommendations for DVR moving forward.

## Standing Committees

### Customer Satisfaction and Program Evaluation Committee (CONTINUED)

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#### Equity and Diversity

In 2021, the Committee continues to focus on equitable service delivery with regard to access to services, outcomes of services and staffing within DVR. In December of 2020 at the request of the Customer Satisfaction Committee a comprehensive report was provided to the SRC, analyzing DVR case service data to determine the prevalence of disparities among DVR participants based on factors such as race, ethnicity and justice involvement. Moving forward, the SRC will continue to discuss these findings with DVR and work to find actionable recommendations that support all communities of Colorado, specifically those experiencing multiple barriers to employment. The Committee is committed to ensuring DVR staff have the resources and knowledge to address intersectionality in the workplace and use evidence-based strategies to close racial economic disparities amongst people with disabilities.

The Committee also believes this work needs to be done within the Council itself. This year the Customer Satisfaction committee obtained the services of an Equity Diversity and Inclusion trainer to support the Councils continued efforts towards an inclusive and diverse SRC; forging and sustaining inclusive board leadership and building awareness of the impact of invisible and unintentional expressions of bias, privilege and the systemic patterns of oppression.

# Standing Committees

## Planning, Policy, and Education Committee

This committee is responsible for assisting in the development of Colorado's combined State Plan, working with DVR to set up public meetings, analyzing bills presented in the General Assembly which directly relate to the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, and advising on policy and procedure.

### **CURRENT MEMBERS:**

- Timothy Postlewaite - Co-Chair
- Mark Kollasch - Co-Chair
- Sherrell Bethel

### **2021 PLANNING, POLICY, AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE WORK SUMMARY:**

In 2021, the committee convened to review and analyze draft policy changes related to DVR's practices regarding evaluation of background checks for vendors and vendors' employees. In an effort to continue education on matters related to DVR and disabilities in the workplace, the committee organized educational speakers to present on a variety of topics. These topics included the future of work, youth and transition services, competitive integrated employment, and assistive technology.

The committee also reviewed bills throughout the legislative session, and a response letter was developed to address inclusion of people with disabilities in a specific bill. House Bill 21-1010 implemented a workforce to investigate the educator workforce in Colorado and investigate barriers to diversity. While the general definition of a "diverse workforce" included people with disabilities, the specific population mandated to be on the workforce did not specifically mention people with disabilities. As a result, the Policy Committee created a letter that demonstrated the proportion of Colorado residents who have a disability, and the letter recommended specifically including people with disabilities on the workforce.

The committee has undertaken recommending updates and changes to the SRC website, which are in the process of being implemented. These include adding member biographies, more readable information on the SRC's goals, and a contact form for people who are interested in the work done by the SRC.

DVR policies regarding technology and access to training for technology skills have been a specific point of interest for the SRC, and the Policy Committee has been reviewing and commenting on these policies throughout the year. As DVR adapts to the continuing changes since COVID-19's initial impact, developing greater resources for individuals who may not be able to access or use technology has become a priority for the SRC. The Policy Committee is continuing to review the new developments, and the committee plans to make specific recommendations on how to address this growing need.



04

## DVR By the Numbers



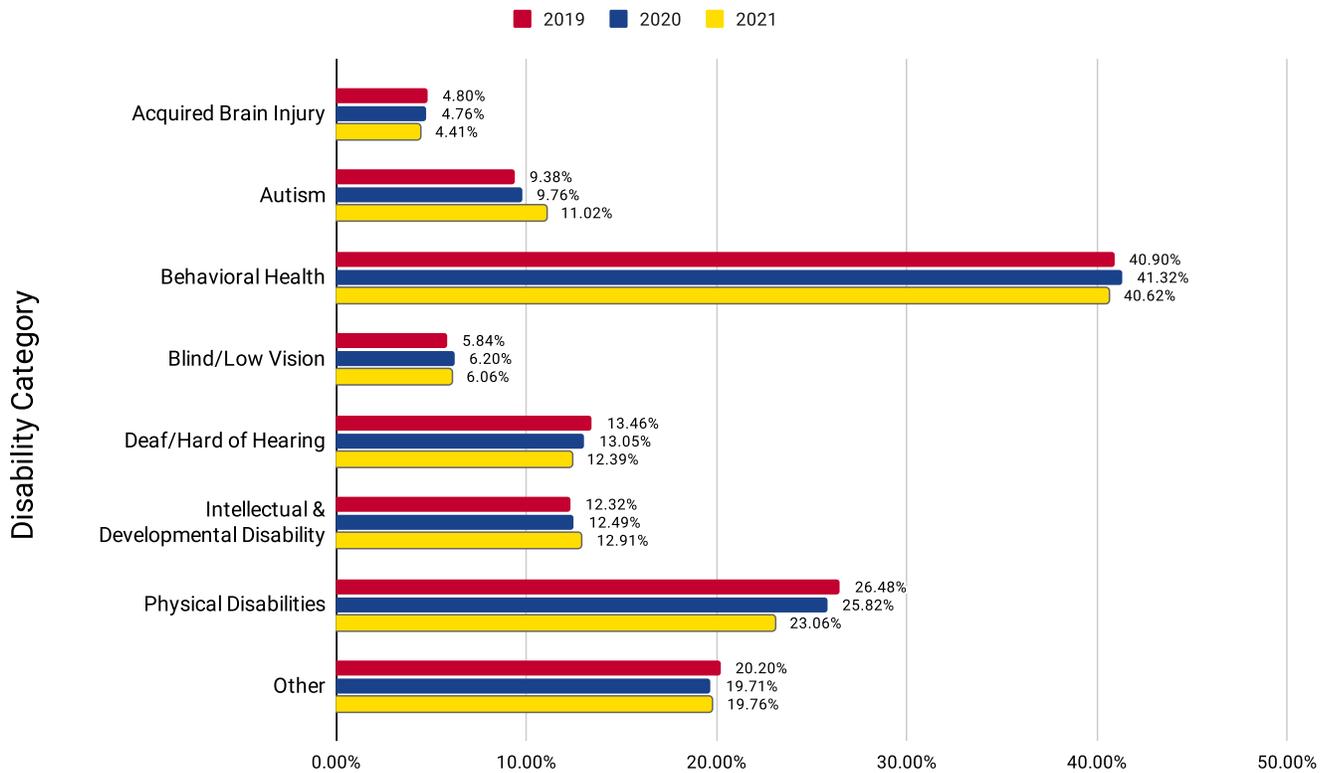
## DVR By the Numbers

INDICATOR	SFY19/PY18	SFY20/PY19	SFY21/PY20
Total Individuals Served (both VR and YP)	16,246	15,806	15,230
VR Individuals Served	14,424	13,702	12,776
New Applications (VR)	6,122	5,293	4,776
Successful Employment Outcomes (VR)	2,009	1,946	1,515
Rehabilitation Rate (VR)*	55.51%	53.54%	47.87%
Average Wages From Employment outcomes (VR)	\$14.66	\$15.61	\$16.65
SSI/SSDI at Application	2,410	2,054	1,695
SSI/SSDI at Successful Close	737	679	469
Potentially Eligible (YP) Individuals Served	1,822	2,104	2,454

\* Percentage of individuals closed after receiving services under an IPE who achieved a successful employment outcome.

COLORADO LABOR MARKET INFO	JUN 2019	JUN 2020	JUN 2021
Private Nonfarm Payroll Average Hourly Wage	\$30.22	\$30.34	\$31.58
Private Nonfarm Payroll Average Hours Per Week	34.3	33.7	33.9

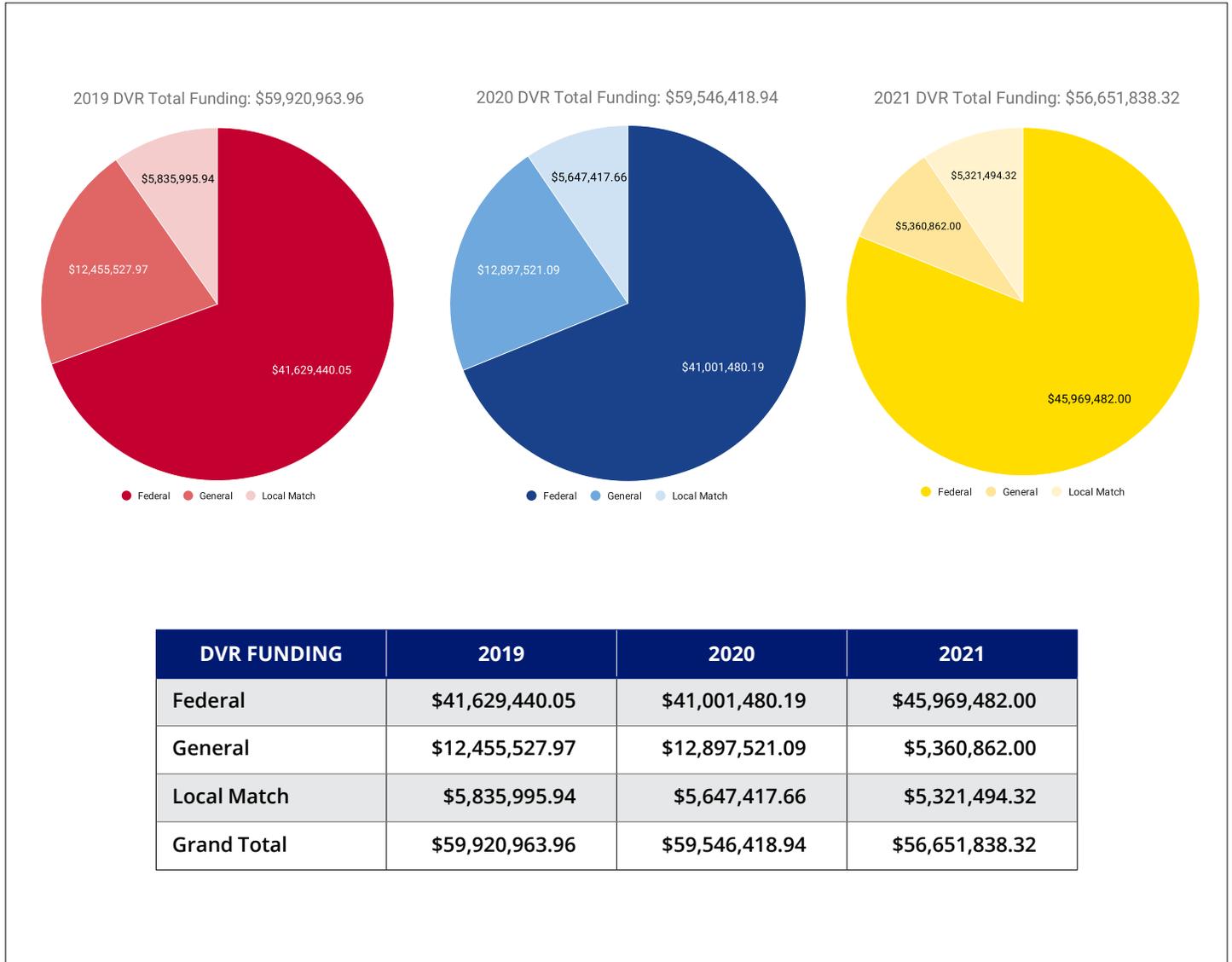
## Disability Category



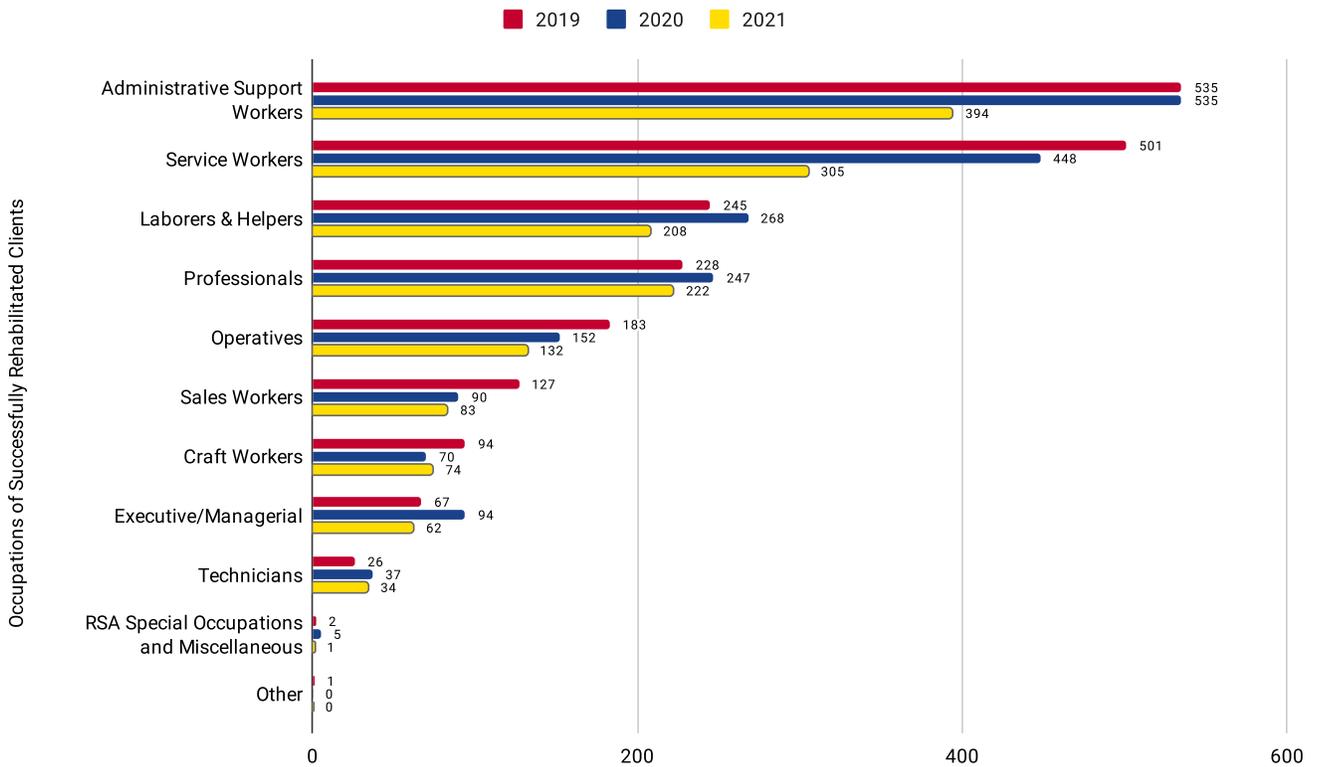
DISABILITY CATEGORY	2019	2020	2021
Acquired Brain Injury	4.80%	4.76%	4.41%
Autism	9.38%	9.76%	11.02%
Behavioral Health	40.90%	41.32%	40.62%
Blind/Low Vision	5.84%	6.20%	6.06%
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	13.46%	13.05%	12.39%
Intellectual & Developmental Disability	12.32%	12.49%	12.91%
Physical Disabilities	26.48%	25.82%	23.06%
Other	20.20%	19.71%	19.76%

## 04 DVR BY THE NUMBERS

### DVR Funding



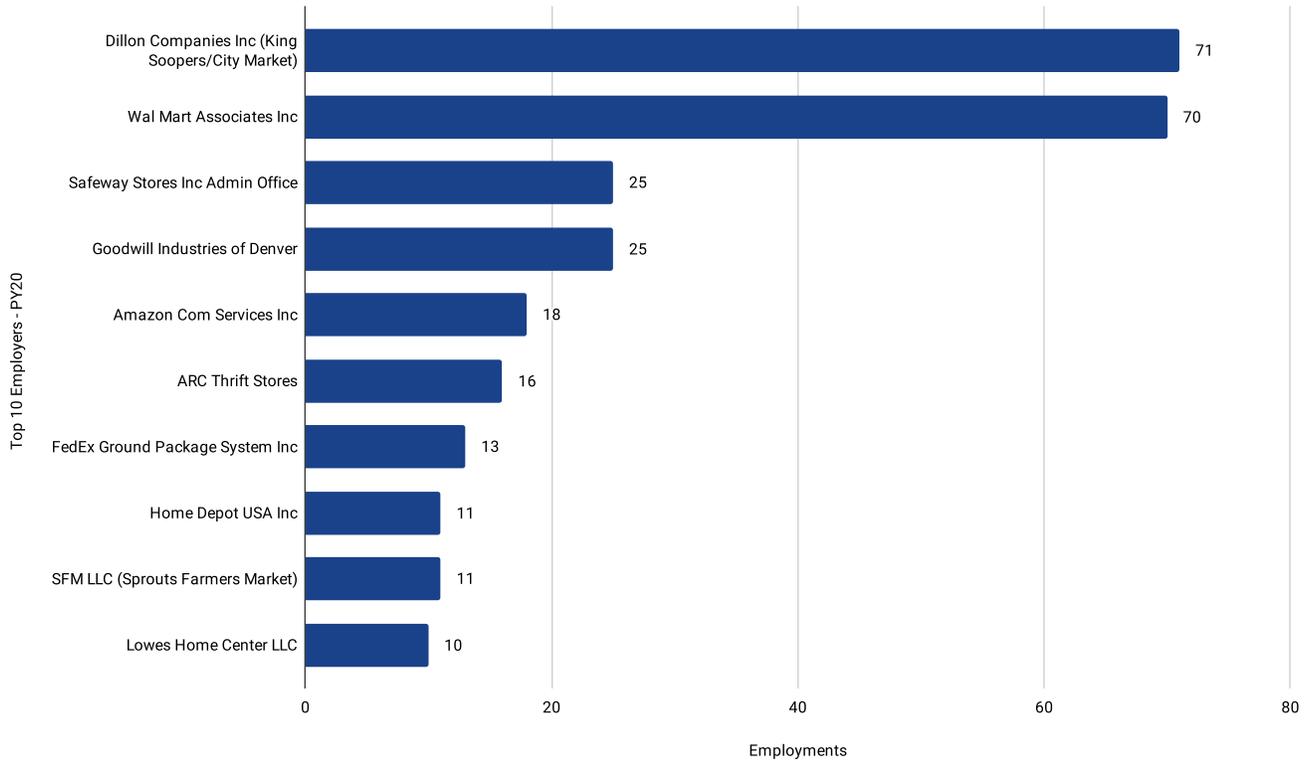
## Occupations of Successfully Rehabilitated Clients



OCCUPATIONS OF SUCCESSFULLY REHABILITATED CLIENTS	2019	2020	2021
Administrative Support Workers	535	535	394
Service Workers	501	448	305
Laborers & Helpers	245	268	208
Professionals	228	247	222
Operatives	183	152	132
Sales Workers	127	90	83
Craft Workers	94	70	74
Executive/Managerial	67	94	62
Technicians	26	37	34
RSA Special Occupations and Miscellaneous	2	5	1
Other	1	0	0

## 04 DVR BY THE NUMBERS

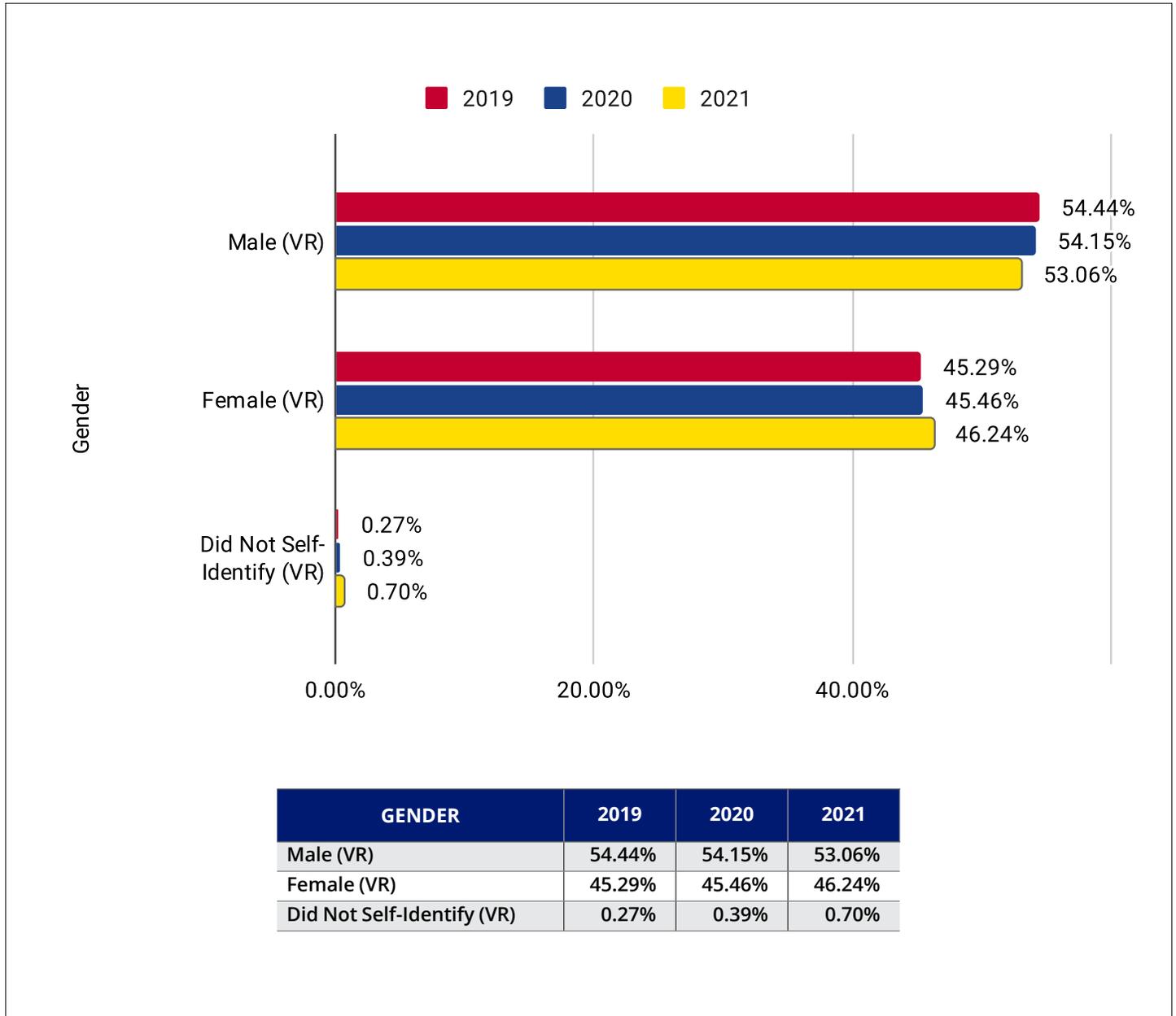
### Top 10 Employers - PY20



TOP 10 EMPLOYERS - PY20	EMPLOYMENTS
Dillon Companies Inc (King Soopers/City Market)	71
Wal Mart Associates Inc	70
Safeway Stores Inc Admin Office	25
Goodwill Industries of Denver	25
Amazon Com Services Inc	18
ARC Thrift Stores	16
FedEx Ground Package System Inc	13
Home Depot USA Inc	11
SFM LLC (Sprouts Farmers Market)	11
Lowes Home Center LLC	10
Other	1

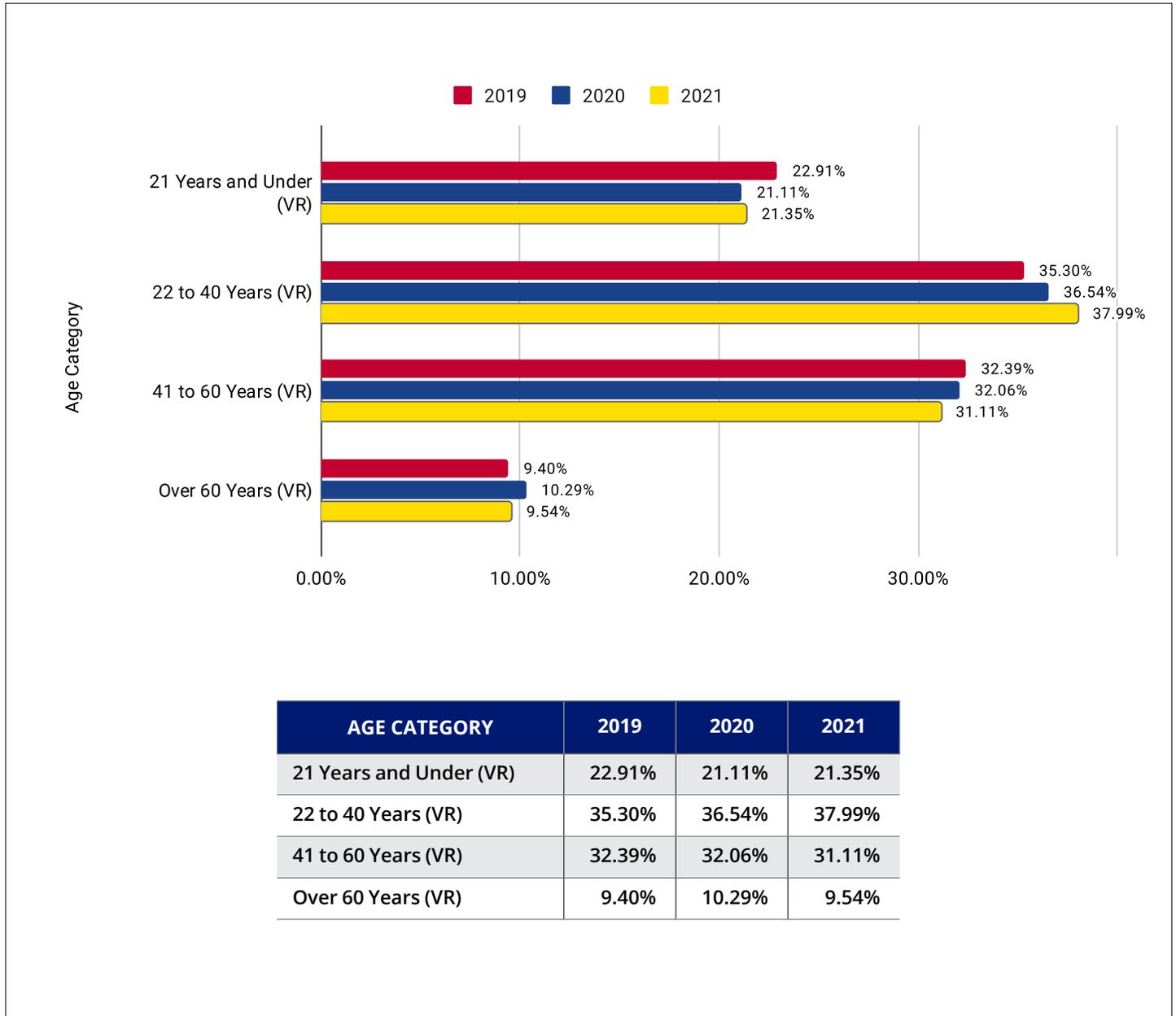
## 04 DVR BY THE NUMBERS

### Gender



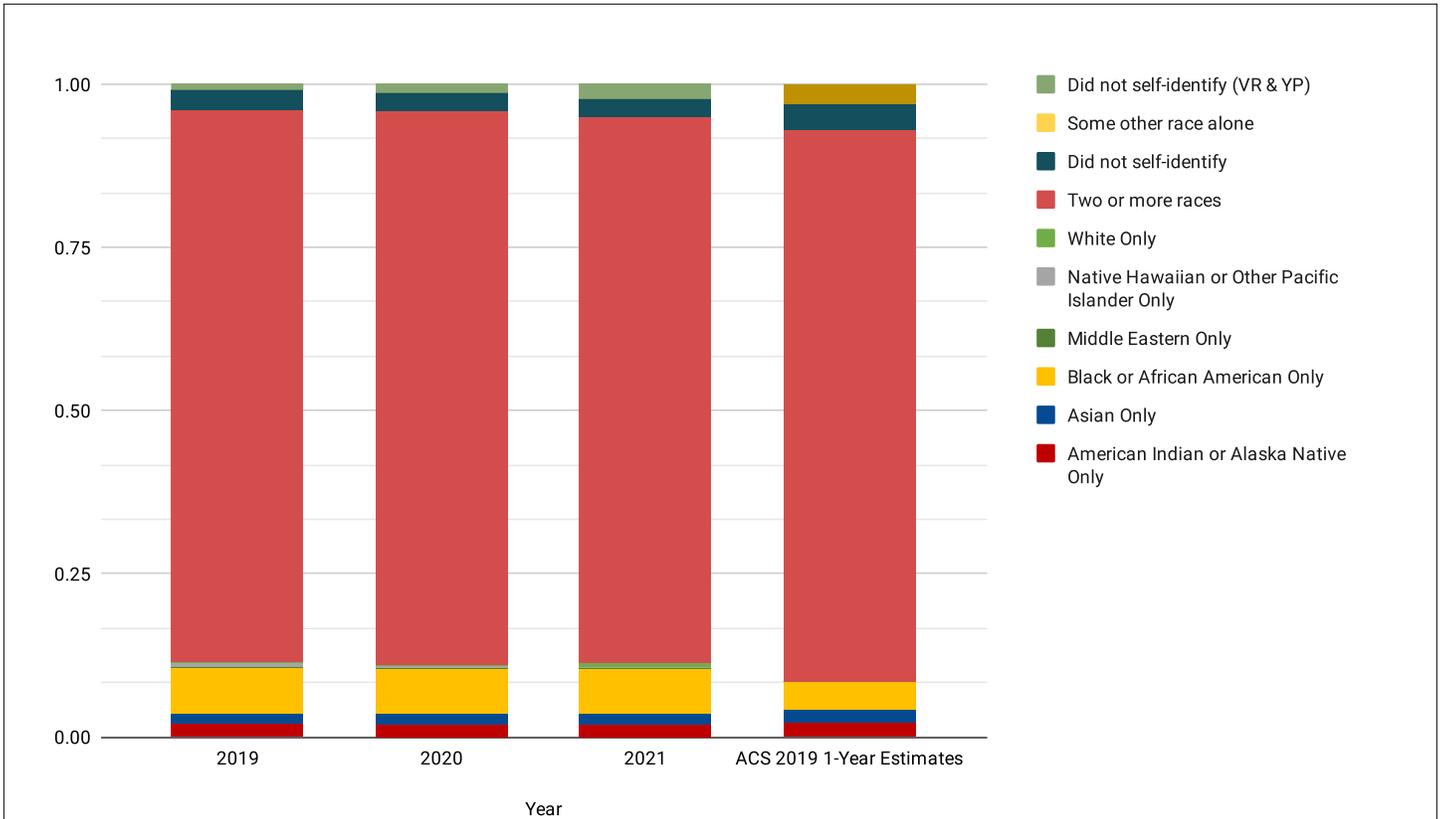
## 04 DVR BY THE NUMBERS

### Age Category



AGE CATEGORY	2019	2020	2021
21 Years and Under (VR)	22.91%	21.11%	21.35%
22 to 40 Years (VR)	35.30%	36.54%	37.99%
41 to 60 Years (VR)	32.39%	32.06%	31.11%
Over 60 Years (VR)	9.40%	10.29%	9.54%

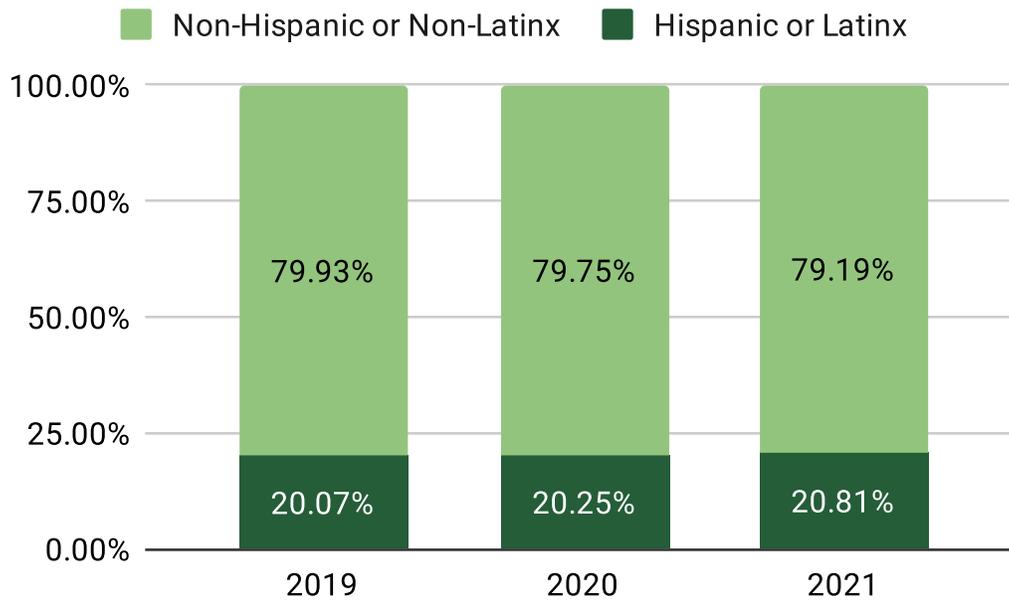
## Racial Identities of People Served



RACE	2019	2020	2021	ACS 2019 1-YEAR ESTIMATES
American Indian or Alaska Native Only	2.07%	1.89%	1.84%	2.04%
Asian Only	1.51%	1.56%	1.78%	2.25%
Black or African American Only	6.96%	6.83%	6.74%	4.12%
Middle Eastern Only	0.29%	0.22%	0.21%	0.00%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Only	0.39%	0.34%	0.34%	0.05%
White Only	84.55%	84.58%	83.60%	84.64%
Two or more races	3.01%	2.94%	3.01%	3.98%
Some other race alone	0	0	0.00%	2.93%
Did not self-identify	1.22%	1.63%	2.48%	0.00%

## 04 DVR BY THE NUMBERS

### Ethnicities of People Served



ETHNICITY	2019	2020	2021
Hispanic or Latinx	20.07%	20.25%	20.81%
Non-Hispanic or Non-Latinx	79.93%	79.75%	79.19%

## Successful Closures

SUCCESSFUL CLOSURES	2019	2020	2021
Individuals Closed Successfully Rehabilitated	2009	1946	1515
% Working at Plan	37.88%	40.70%	43.43%
% Not Working at Plan	62.12%	59.30%	56.57%
Ave Hourly Wage at Successful Closure	\$14.66	\$15.61	\$16.65
Ave Hours Worked Per Week at Successful Closure	28.3	28.1	29.2
Estimated Total Earnings	\$45.61MM	\$46.67MM	\$40.23MM
Average Weekly Salary	\$436.56	\$461.23	\$510.69
Estimated Average Annual Salary	\$22,701.11	\$23,984	\$26,556

## Earnings For Those Working at Plan

EARNINGS FOR THOSE WORKING AT PLAN	AT PLAN 2021	AT CLOSE 2021	CHANGE
Ave Hourly Wage	\$17.94	\$18.64	3.9% Increase
Ave Hours Worked Per Week	28.90	31.58	9.3% Increase
Estimated Total Earnings	\$18.90MM	\$20.90MM	10.6% Increase
Average Weekly Salary	\$552.39	\$610.90	10.6% Increase
Estimated Average Annual Salary	\$28,724	\$31,767	10.6% Increase

## Earnings For Those Not Working at Plan

EARNINGS AT CLOSURE FOR THOSE NOT WORKING AT PLAN	2021
Ave Hourly Wage	\$15.13
Ave Hours Worked Per Week	27.4
Estimated Total Earnings	\$19.33MM
Average Weekly Salary	\$433.75
Estimated Average Annual Salary	\$22,555

## 04 DVR BY THE NUMBERS

### Outcomes by Disability Category - PY20

DISABILITY CATEGORY STATS - PY20	SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES	REHAB RATE	AVE WAGE	AVE HOURS PER WEEK	TOTAL YEARLY EARNINGS	AVE WEEKLY SALARY	AVE ANNUAL SALARY
Acquired Brain Injury	3.89%	41.26%	\$19.46	28.32	\$1.82MM	\$592.31	\$30,800
Autism	9.24%	44.73%	\$14.15	26.05	\$2.77MM	\$381.01	\$19,813
Behavioral Health	31.35%	37.34%	\$15.25	28.26	\$11.11MM	\$449.77	\$23,388
Blind/Low Vision	5.54%	44.44%	\$20.88	30.08	\$3.01MM	\$688.72	\$35,813
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	27.46%	72.73%	\$19.22	32.44	\$13.72MM	\$634.21	\$32,979
Intellectual & Developmental Disability	11.68%	45.62%	\$12.87	20.5	\$2.47MM	\$268.39	\$13,956
Physical Disabilities	20.33%	41.73%	\$16.45	27.71	\$7.79MM	\$486.51	\$25,298
Other	21.91%	51.16%	\$14.56	30.03	\$7.74MM	\$448.40	\$23,317

### Outcomes by Racial Identity - PY20

RACE STATS - PY20	SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES	REHAB RATE	AVE WAGE	AVE HOURS PER WEEK	TOTAL YEARLY EARNINGS	AVE WEEKLY SALARY	AVE ANNUAL SALARY
American Indian or Alaskan Native only	1.58%	38.71%	\$15.20	31.33	\$.61MM	\$491.76	\$25,572
Asian only	1.72%	54.17%	\$18.24	28.12	\$.76MM	\$563.63	\$29,309
Black or African American only	6.20%	43.32%	\$16.34	29.05	\$2.43MM	\$496.66	\$25,826
Middle Eastern or Arab only	0.13%	50.00%	\$15.15	30	\$.05MM	\$466.00	\$24,232
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander only	0.07%	33.33%	\$16.00	40	\$.03MM	\$640.00	\$33,280
White only	86.47%	48.70%	\$16.73	29.15	\$34.89MM	\$512.17	\$26,633
Two or More Races	2.24%	40.48%	\$14.82	31.74	\$.86MM	\$484.30	\$25,184
Did not self-identify	1.58%	42.11%	\$16.16	28.54	\$.60MM	\$482.48	\$25,089

## 04 DVR BY THE NUMBERS

### Outcomes by Ethnicity - PY20

ETHNICITY STATS - PY20	SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES	REHAB RATE	AVE WAGE	AVE HOURS PER WEEK	TOTAL YEARLY EARNINGS	AVE WEEKLY SALARY	AVE ANNUAL SALARY
Hispanic or Latino	20.73%	51.06%	\$15.39	29.89	\$7.83MM	\$479.79	\$24,949
Non-Hispanic and Non-Latino	79.27%	47.10%	\$16.99	29.04	\$32.40MM	\$518.77	\$26,976

### Outcomes by DVR Service Region - PY20

REGION STATS - PY20	SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES	REHAB RATE	AVE WAGE	AVE HOURS PER WEEK	TOTAL YEARLY EARNINGS	AVE WEEKLY SALARY	AVE ANNUAL SALARY
BLVS Region (Blind and Low Vision Services - Statewide)	2.64%	36.04%	\$25.92	33.65	\$1.98MM	\$952.43	\$49,526
REGION 1 (Eastern Plains, Colorado Springs, Pueblo)	16.90%	43.99%	\$15.41	29.2	\$6.23MM	\$467.80	\$24,326
REGION 2 (Denver Metropolitan Area)	33.86%	54.57%	\$17.48	29.03	\$14.18MM	\$531.62	\$27,644
REGION 3 (North Denver Metro and Northern Colorado)	28.25%	44.17%	\$15.65	29.27	\$10.72MM	\$481.74	\$25,051
REGION 4 (Western Slope)	18.35%	49.38%	\$16.48	28.87	\$7.12MM	\$492.58	\$25,614

## 04 DVR BY THE NUMBERS

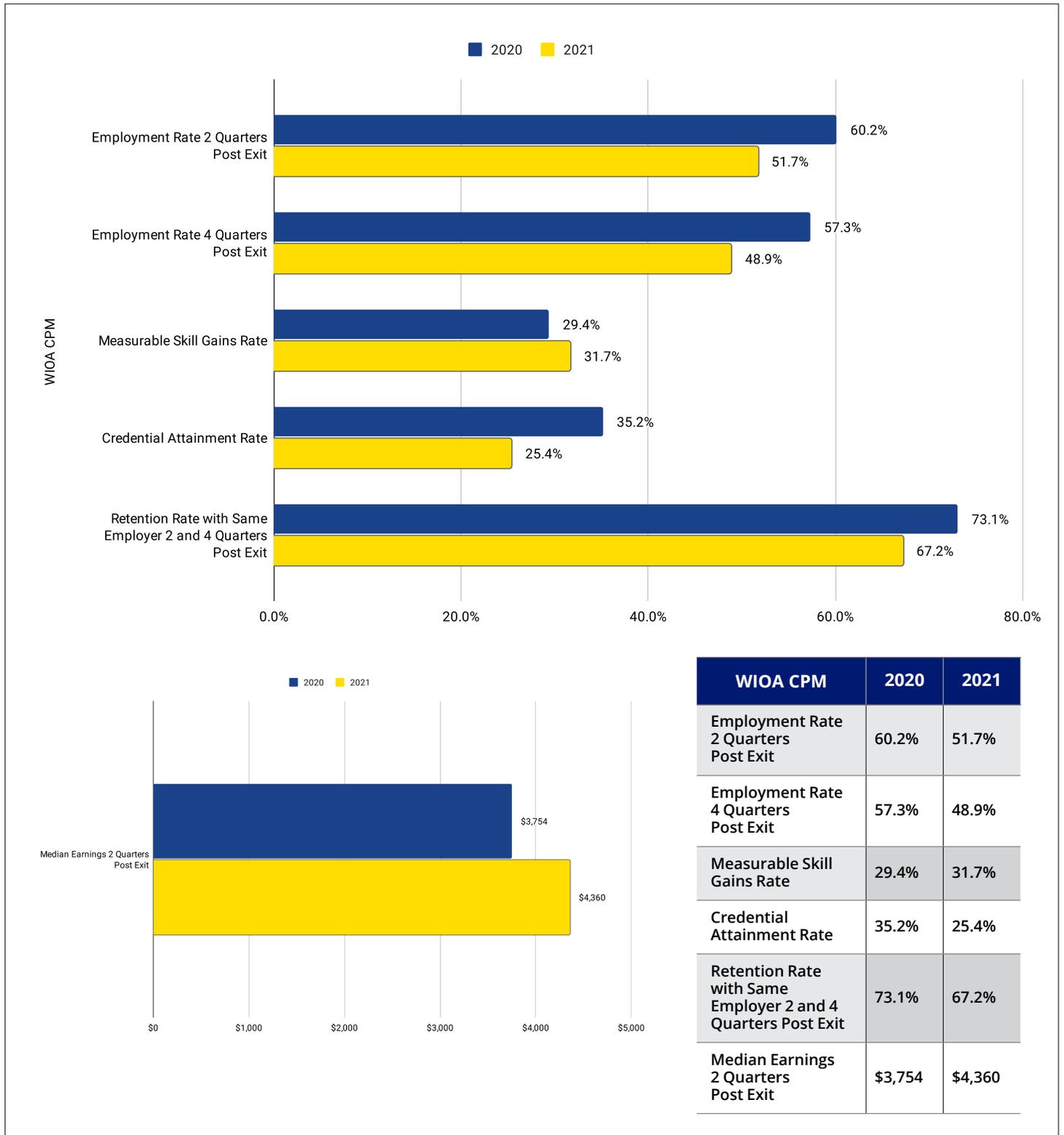
### Outcomes of Individuals Reporting Homelessness - PY20

	SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES	REHAB RATE	AVE WAGE	AVE HOURS PER WEEK	TOTAL YEARLY EARNINGS	AVE WEEKLY SALARY	AVE ANNUAL SALARY
Did not self-identify	0.00%						
Is homeless	2.97%	40.54%	\$15.40	28.73	\$1.05MM	\$449.64	\$23,381
Is not homeless	97.03%	48.13%	\$16.69	29.23	\$39.18MM	\$512.56	\$26,653

### Outcomes of Individuals Reporting Exoffender - PY20

	SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES	REHAB RATE	AVE WAGE	AVE HOURS PER WEEK	TOTAL YEARLY EARNINGS	AVE WEEKLY SALARY	AVE ANNUAL SALARY
Did not self-identify	3.89%	42.14%	\$16.02	27.76	\$1.46MM	\$476.49	\$24,778
Has a criminal offense history	12.67%	36.92%	\$15.30	30.79	\$4.84MM	\$484.76	\$25,207
No criminal offense history	83.43%	50.46%	\$16.89	29.05	\$33.93MM	\$516.23	\$26,844

## Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act Common Performance Measures





05

## DVR Services



# The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Services

DVR supports individuals with disabilities to prepare for, obtain, advance in, and maintain employment by providing a range of services based on individual employment needs and goals.

Rehabilitation Counselors work closely with each person to determine an employment goal and identify and arrange for the services that will be needed to achieve this goal.

### Services that may be provided to youth and adults through DVR:

- One-on-one vocational rehabilitation counseling and guidance
- Pre-employment Transition Services to students with disabilities
- Physical and mental restoration services
- Training services, including vocational, academic, and personal adjustment
- Job related services, including, job-seeking skills training, job placement, and job coaching
- Specialized services for individuals who are blind, deaf, and deaf-blind, including interpreter services, note-taking services, and reader services
- Rehabilitation technology services, including assistive technology devices, assistive technology services, and rehabilitation engineering services to address barriers encountered with employment
- Supportive services, such as maintenance, transportation, personal assistance services, and services to family members may also be provided if necessary.

# DVR Goals and Strategies

Colorado's 2020-2023 Combined State Plan was approved in June 2020, taking effect July 1, 2020. In the VR Services Portion of the Plan, DVR identified the following goals:

**1. DVR will work with partners and stakeholders to reduce the prosperity gap for people with disabilities by increasing quality employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The following priorities and strategies will support this goal to reduce the prosperity gap for people with disabilities by increasing the employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.**

- a) DVR will promote the rapid engagement of job seekers.
- b) DVR will explore innovative opportunities to ensure continuous operation at full counselor capacity, despite inevitable situations of staff turnover, in order to improve the customer experience and support achievement of quality employment outcomes.
- c) DVR will improve vocational counseling and guidance efforts to assist job seekers to develop goals that will lead to quality employment outcomes within key industries.
- d) DVR will work with the State Rehabilitation Council to identify key data points, segmented at the appropriate levels, to monitor and track progress of all eligible individuals, including those with the most significant disabilities.
- e) DVR will explore opportunities to develop a baseline measure of the overall customer experience and use this information to consider actions that will improve the customer experience.
- f) DVR will develop and engage in outreach and awareness campaigns to improve access to the vocational rehabilitation program by individuals who are currently unserved or underserved.

**2. DVR will create a culture of growth and development to support staff retention and high quality service delivery to individuals with disabilities. The following priorities and strategies will support the goal to create a culture of growth and development to support staff retention and high quality service delivery to individuals with disabilities.**

- a) DVR supervisors will assist staff to develop actionable and individualized growth and development goals, demonstrating commitment to highly skilled and engaged staff.
- b) DVR will pilot State as Model Employer strategies, building a more diverse and effective workforce, improving overall program quality and developing internal expertise, enabling DVR to provide technical assistance and support to other businesses regarding inclusive hiring practices.
- c) DVR will coordinate an internal staff committee to advise leadership on opportunities to improve the organizational culture, leading to the growth, development, and engagement of staff at all levels.

## 05 DVR SERVICES

**3. DVR will support the implementation of Employment First in Colorado, through the Office of Employment First and DVR's Employment First Initiatives. The following priorities and strategies will support the implementation of Employment First in Colorado, through the Office of Employment First and DVR's Employment First Initiatives.**

a) DVR will monitor and support the ongoing development of the Office of Employment First, in partnership with the University of Colorado Medical School, JFK Partners; the Colorado Office of Employment First; the Office of Employment First Advisory Committee; and the Employment First Advisory Partnership (EFAP).

b) DVR will effectively utilize Employment First staff positions, including the State Advisory on Disability Employment, I/DD Supported Employment Trainer/Coordinator, Behavioral Health Supported Employment Trainer/Coordinator, and Benefits Planning Coordinator.

c) DVR will support the State Rehabilitation Council to effectively coordinate the EFAP and support Colorado's progress on EFAP priorities and recommendations.

*“Colorado’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) works in partnership with Coloradans to provide individualized services leading to sustained employment for people with various types and degrees of physical and mental disabilities.”*



# Field Services

Colorado's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) works in partnership with Coloradans to provide individualized services leading to sustained employment for people with various types and degrees of physical and mental disabilities. Professional staff and extensively trained Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselors are strategically located in offices and local communities throughout Colorado, travelling when necessary to serve the entire state.

DVR's staff is highly committed to excellent customer service and assists individuals with disabilities to obtain vocational success and increased self-sufficiency through individual assessment & evaluation, vocational counseling and guidance, holistic planning, and provision of many other services necessary to become successful in employment. Approximately 123 VR Counselors across the state provide individualized vocational rehabilitation services during this process and assist customers to address employment barriers and realize their career goals. To meet the needs of a diverse population, DVR has ensured that there are VR Counselors who are knowledgeable about a variety of disabilities and employment industries throughout the state. All VR Counselors hold a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or a closely related field, participate in an extensive DVR Training Academy upon hire, and have opportunities for a variety of continuing education necessary to ensure their ongoing professional development. DVR also has several staff around the state who are fluent in American Sign Language and Spanish; other language needs are met through the use of interpreting services to ensure effective communication.

Each of DVR's field offices has a supervisor who, in addition to providing leadership, coaching and guidance to the staff, takes the lead in cultivating partnerships with area employers, workforce centers, schools, and other public and private service agencies within the community. DVR works in partnership with the business community to provide services to employers such as disability awareness training, on-site job assessments, referral and support of qualified employees, and professional consultation.

When working with customers across the state who are seeking successful employment, DVR staff continually strive to provide an environment that is welcoming, respectful, and responsive to the needs of Colorado's citizens. DVR recently adopted a hybrid approach to service delivery to best meet the needs of individuals by providing services virtually, in the community or in person.

### Youth Services and Transition

The Youth Services and Transition Unit (YSTU) leads DVR to coordinate effective and efficient pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) and transition services for students and youth with disabilities. The unit consists of two Youth Services and Transition managers each managing the youth programs and services to include transition services, the School to Work Alliance Program (SWAP), Pre-Employment Transition Services and Employment First for young adults. Additionally, Regional Lead Counselors serve as trainers and mentors for all counselors providing services to students and youth with disabilities. These Lead Counselors provide training regarding policies, procedures, and processes around transition. This team also ensures community partners and other relevant audiences have access to necessary training and information about the transition services available to students and youth through DVR.

In 2021, the YSTU team expanded to include a second youth services manager whose focus is ensuring Pre-ETS are available to all youth statewide and promoting access for youth with significant disabilities, ensuring their right to engage in employment in an integrated environment. This position is responsible for developing and maintaining collaborative working partnerships with community intermediaries that result in enhanced and increased PreETS to students with disabilities and promoting Employment First initiatives.

DVR continues to be open to new and innovative partnerships with local education agencies as well as service providers who have expressed a desire to contribute to the development of career pathways for students with disabilities. Service providers have demonstrated great resiliency under COVID and a willingness to identify safe and effective ways to move forward with activities including business enterprises, work readiness boot camps, youth leadership forums and more. All the while, continuing to coordinate with each student's Individual Education Program and/or Individual Career and Academic Planning.

Over the past year, DVR has rolled out the Emerging Youth Model as a tool for both internal and external partners to use. The Emerging Youth Model is an online guide to assist DVR staff with navigating services by identifying skills to develop and providing outcomes, goals and steps to reach them, along with connecting curriculum, activities, resources, fee schedule and collaboration opportunities to each skill area. This tool will be located on My Colorado Journey ([www.mycoloradojourney.com](http://www.mycoloradojourney.com)), a free, statewide platform that connects job seekers to work, education, support services and action planning.

This year the YSTU completed a restructuring and fee increase within the Fee Schedule to include modernized rates and structures for the provision of Pre-ETS. A tiered structure for most rates was implemented to not only account for the increased cost of the provision of quality services, but to also recognize and appropriately compensate service providers for the provision of skilled and/or specialized services to students with more significant and/or specialized needs.

In an effort to provide further support to the service providers that provide Pre-ETS, YSTU has implemented a Community of Practice (CoP). The CoP will provide service providers with an opportunity to receive technical assistance and guidance as well as network and collaborate with fellow providers.

Lastly, to further support the capacity needs for services to potentially eligible students with disabilities, YSTU will be implementing a new role of Pre-ETS Technician within our field offices. These new positions will coordinate and provide direct Pre-ETS to potentially eligible students with disabilities within their assigned community.

### Youth Services and Transition **CONTINUED**

#### **PROJECT SEARCH**

The Project SEARCH High School Transition Program is a unique business-led school-to-work program that takes place entirely at the workplace, facilitating a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and job-skills training. At the completion of the program, students with significant intellectual disabilities are employed in complex and rewarding jobs with a 75% success rate. Moreover, the program has brought about changes in business culture that have far-reaching positive effects on attitudes about hiring people with disabilities and the range of jobs in which they can be successful. This multi-agency partnership includes local employers, school districts, and community service providers, including community centered boards, along with YSTU. This year we have expanded from 3 to 5 sites with support from the Colorado Office of Employment First and we continue to explore growing these partnerships.

#### **SCHOOL TO WORK ALLIANCE PROGRAM**

The School to Work Alliance Program (SWAP) is a collaborative partnership between DVR and local school districts or Boards of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES), with support from CDE and administered by YSTU. SWAP assists young adults in making the transition from school to work, through increased community linkages and new patterns of service leading to successful employment outcomes. SWAP served 3,258 young adults with disabilities experiencing mild to moderate barriers to employment between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021. These youth improved work skills, explored their career interests, and obtained work experience leading to competitive integrated employment.

Colorado YSTU is excited to introduce a new Framework to support families, educators and services providers working with students and youth with disabilities developed by a state level Interagency Transition Team. The Sequencing of Services Framework was developed to increase collaboration among schools and various entities to support students and youth with disabilities move toward their post-secondary visions for life after high school. It is designed to assist local interagency transition teams in identifying what programming and services across a continuum of ages are available to students and youth as well as roles and responsibilities of agencies in providing these services. The Sequencing of Services Framework has 6 Core Student and Youth Outcomes that outline skills to develop, services to access, and agencies/partners to connect with for students less than 14 up to age 24. Within each Core Outcome, there are state-level expected services and agencies/partners involved. Our next steps are to train and implement locally by piloting in 4 locations.

YSTU in conjunction with CDE and COEF published five work elevated youth brochures. Each brochure was introduced with a webinar and copies printed for special education's administrative units.

### Youth Services and Transition **CONTINUED**

#### **CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION**

Efforts to implement an accessible Career Technical Education (CTE) pilot in the school year 2021-22 were thwarted by COVID. Instead, the current year will focus on cross system training about CTE/Alternative Cooperative Education(ACE) for education and DVR. During this time DVR, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), Community College System (CCS) and the National Alliance for Partnership in Equity (NAPE) will prepare to launch the pilot once again for school year 2022-23. The pilot will be modeled after Delaware’s program designed to close the gap in CTE career pathways for students with disabilities. Through curriculum modification and tool development we hope to make CTE programs accessible to students with disabilities, provide necessary support to educators and increase post-secondary outcomes through industry recognized certifications.

#### **TRADITIONALLY UNDERSERVED**

The YSTU is also pursuing alternative service delivery models to ensure availability of services to traditionally underserved populations statewide including justice-involved youth, youth with significant employment needs, youth with specialized employment needs and youth that reside in rural areas of Colorado.

Utilizing the School to Work Alliance Program (SWAP) model as a mechanism to develop a sustainable partnership, we are partnering with the Department of Youth Service (DYS) facilities to bring Pre-ETS to their students. Programming is focused on the delivery of skills attainment through Pre-ETS allowing for students who come and go to develop necessary skills when they are available to participate. Included in the programming is a focus on cross system training to better understand each system and improve collaboration and ensure students stay connected with DVR when they return to their home districts or exit out.

The model of SWAP is also the foundation of a program being piloted in seven districts this year to bring services to those who are underserved with the most significant disabilities. This “Enhanced Services” approach is responsible for the delivery of Pre-ETS in addition to working through the Discovery Process and providing benefits counseling. The goal is a customized work-based learning experience using information gathered during the Discovery Process that will result in greater success after exiting out of secondary education. Other benefits, that we hope to see include better informed individualized education programs (IEP), greater understanding of the impact of employment on benefits by students and their family members and linkages to long term support providers who can also rely on information gathered as part of the Discovery Process while moving towards customized employment with the individual.

While these models address individualized supports in terms of delivering vocational rehabilitation services to youth with significant disabilities, there is a need to lay a strong foundation. DVR, CDE and OEF have partnered this school year to provide 1:1 intensive district support to ensure there are collaborative efforts focused on serving students with more significant needs by promoting promising practices that are evidence based, assisting in partnership development and providing support and consultation around collaboration.

### Employment First

DVR believes that anyone who wants to work can work, and employment should be the first and preferred service option for individuals with disabilities. DVR has continued to focus on developing a variety of strategic partnerships to build the infrastructure necessary to effectively serve individuals with the most significant disabilities. Colorado's Employment First Advisory Partnership (EFAP) has been instrumental in identifying the gaps within systems, services, and training for partners that make up an individual's service team. DVR had a goal of completing 200 Employment First Trainings and Technical Assistance Activities to support understanding and development of best practices to support all Coloradoans with their competitive integrated employment goals. The Competitive Integrated Employment Unit was able to complete 245 Employment First training and technical activities.

#### **SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PARTNERS & PROGRAMS:**

##### ***OFFICE OF COMMUNITY LIVING (OCL), COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTHCARE POLICY & FINANCING, AND COMMUNITY CENTERED BOARDS (CCB)***

CCBs serving persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) are critical partners in DVR's effort to assure the availability of quality vocational rehabilitation services throughout the state. Many strides have been made to more effectively sequence and coordinate services between DVR and the multiple partners involved in the provision of supported employment services. Continued focus on quality services and outcomes for the people we serve seeking supported employment services has been promoted and assisted by the I/DD Supported Employment Coordinator/Trainer in its second year of being a position available in DVR.

DVR & OCL partner each year providing training and facilitating opportunities for partnership across agencies and community organizations. DVR and OCL completed 20 virtual roundtables with support from The Colorado Office of Employment First between Community Centered Boards and local DVR offices to provide information and updates, foster collaboration, and generate discussion for best practices. Over the past year, DVR also continued to partner closely with OCL on the implementation of Senate Bill 18-145, addressing the minimum qualifications of providers of supported employment services. In addition, DVR created a Customized Employment Performance-Based Certification Guidance Site to guide training entities on what the curriculum must address, as well as guide DVR providers on the qualifications and process of performance-based certification.

DVR has worked closely with the Colorado Office of Employment First to build a Customized Employment Program and implement this needed service delivery model in Colorado. Through partnership with various State agencies, local service providers, and stakeholders, as well as national technical assistance centers, a customized employment services and processes have been developed to serve individuals with the most significant disabilities transition from non-integrated work settings to integrated work settings by identifying specific tasks the individual can perform, allowing one to work within their strengths. A key component of building capacity for a Customized Employment Program is identifying sustainable training approaches for DVR staff and service providers to ensure effective implementation of Customized Employment statewide, and identification of a fidelity checklist to ensure the service is achieving increased competitive and integrated employment outcomes for the people DVR serves who have the most significant disabilities.

### Employment First **CONTINUED**

#### *OFFICE OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH (OBH), COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES*

OBH and DVR has developed the Mental Health Supported Employment Program that operates under a formalized interagency agreement, providing access to supported employment services to individuals with significant behavioral health disorders. This partnership involves local agreements with fourteen Community Mental Health Centers, one non-profit organization, and one private vendor throughout the State to provide supported employment services, including job development, job seeking skills, job coaching, and ongoing support. The program has resulted in increased competitive integrated employment opportunities for these individuals.

OBH and DVR are members of the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) International Learning Community and provide training and support to providers statewide. IPS is the most researched evidence-based practice in the behavioral health industry and leads to higher competitive integrated employment outcomes and is cost effective. The IPS practice principles focus on rapid engagement, integrated team approaches, benefits planning, long term support, and competitive integrated outcomes. IPS also focuses on servicing youth with mental health disabilities in employment and education.

Through this partnership, DVR & OBH facilitate mentoring and training through the Mental Health Consortium Group and DVRs Supported Employment Steering Committee for Mental Health, in addition to hosting an annual IPS conference. DVR also participates in monthly technical assistance calls as part of the International IPS Learning Community and the Colorado IPS Leadership Team.

Continued focus on quality services and outcomes for the people we serve seeking supported employment services has been promoted and assisted by the Behavioral Health Supported Employment Coordinator/Trainer in its second year of being a position available in DVR.

### Self-Employment

Colorado has a thriving entrepreneurial economy, ranked 5th in the country for start-ups, and self-employment can offer a pathway to economic independence and self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities. The Self-Employment Training Guide developed by the Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities (RTC): Rural and the University of Montana has been a helpful resource for Rehabilitation Counselors for Entrepreneurship (RCE) to assist the individuals served in learning about self-employment.

DVR's revision to the Self-Employment Policy and fee schedule as it relates to Self-Employment in February of 2020 has greatly streamlined our processes, including the approval of business plans. The individuals DVR serves are able to present their business concept at all stages in the approval process, allowing for their direct feedback and voice. Our Self-Employment team has been participating in a national community of practice on self-employment, further allowing us to learn and implement best practices from around the country. Five Lead Counselors for Entrepreneurship who have extensive expertise in self-employment assist with training RCEs across the state on topics related to successful entrepreneurship, such as Social Security Administration work incentives, marketing plans, business plan structure, tax requirements, digital and social media presence, and AgrAbility.

DVR served 213 individuals during the reporting period with a self-employment outcome, which is an increase of 24 individuals from the previous year, with 50 individuals having a successful employment outcome in this reporting period. DVR supported individuals in developing successful businesses in a variety of markets, including: hand washing stations for firefighters, rolfing, public speaking & author, auto detailing, musician, life coaching, wealth management and biomedical illustration.

### Business Relations and Outreach Services

DVR's Business Relations Unit (BRU) utilizes a dual customer approach to connect businesses with qualified individuals with a variety of disabilities. The BRU offers a unique set of services for employers at a local, state, and national level; including employee recruitment and candidate screening; comprehensive needs analysis, ADA consultation, disability etiquette and awareness training; retention services for existing employees, as well as the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) compliance.

The BRU also works with employers to arrange internships, paid work experiences, job tours, and informational interviews for both general job seekers as well as transition-age youth. The BRU shares real-time local and national labor market information with DVR counselors and individuals we serve to assist in crafting appropriate employment goals. In addition, the BRU is regularly partnering with community job developers to increase the placement opportunities for the individuals DVR serves. Ongoing engagement with a broad set of community stakeholders is key to ensuring that both the individuals DVR serves and counselors are connected to the most up-to-date career resources possible.

The BRU is active in participating in sector partnerships across the state, and is represented on the Colorado Workforce Development Council's State Technical Assistance Team (STAT) for sector partnerships. The BRU is integrated into local Workforce Center Business Services Teams with the goal of partnering to develop employment opportunities in the community for individuals across the greater workforce development system. The BRU is actively engaged with the Colorado Office of Apprenticeships toward increasing exposure to, development of, and participation in apprenticeship opportunities for individuals with disabilities across the state. The BRU is also represented on the CDLE Business and Career Services Executive Committee with the purpose of cross-system integration and partnership of both Workforce and DVR resources at the state and local levels

The BRU has also implemented a new strategic priority to promote and implement Skills-Based Hiring Practices with businesses statewide. During State Fiscal Year 2021, the BRU participated in the Skillful Talent Series, ultimately receiving certification as Skillful Talent Series Trainers, allowing the Unit to utilize and deliver that content to business customers around the State. As a result, the BRU trained 61 business customers on the Skills-Based Hiring Philosophy by the end of the Fiscal Year. For State Fiscal Year 2022, the BRU has set a goal of training 108 business customers on the Skills-Based Hiring Philosophy statewide.

During State Fiscal year 2021, the BRU served 2460 targeted employers with 520 individuals served by DVR having been hired within these businesses throughout the year. The BRU also provided 575 unique training offerings at no cost to these employers, often helping businesses to meet mandatory diversity requirements. The BRU provided 127 unique retention services in order to ensure individuals with disabilities remained within the workforce. In addition, the BRU is broadening the reach of Colorado DVR by engaging with over 816 partners over the last year, including the School to Work Alliance Program, local community mental health employment specialists, local Workforce Centers, Department of Corrections, sector initiatives, Community Centered Boards, Independent Living Centers, School Districts, Economic Development, Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) members, county commissioners, Chambers of Commerce, and more.

*“DVR’s Business Relations Unit works with employers to arrange internships, paid work experiences, job tours, and informational interviews for both general job seekers as well as transition-age youth.”*



# Blind and Low Vision Services

Blind and Low Vision Services (BLVS) unit manages vocational rehabilitation services for individuals who are blind/low vision; the Business Enterprise Program authorized by the Randolph-Sheppard Act; the Personal Adjustment Training program; the Independent Living for Older Individuals who are Blind services grant for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; and the Howard Fund.

During this time of the pandemic, with many businesses permanently or temporarily closing, 40 individuals who are blind, low vision, or deaf-blind became competitively employed across the state as a result of the services received from DVR. The cumulative average hourly wage at closure was \$25.88. Participants are working in a wide variety of careers including; management; food service; finance; mechanics; sales; massage therapy; construction; education; social services; clerical/office support; engineering; and customer service. In an effort to improve services to individuals who are blind or low vision residing in the southern part of the State, staff from the BLVS Region provided training to the Counselors in this area of the State. The training included topics about the BLVS region, common eye conditions, phases of adjustment, VR counseling considerations when working with individuals who are blind/low vision, the Business Enterprise Program and blindness etiquette. The BLVS continues to work towards increasing the skill set of Rehabilitation Counselors serving the Blind.

## Personal Adjustment Training

The Personal Adjustment Training (PAT) Program teaches individuals who are blind, low vision, and deaf-blind how to travel and live independently, access resources in college, orient to a job site, and use assistive and adaptive technology for success with employment. The PAT Unit continued to be fluid and flexible in service delivery based on COVID-19 restrictions. Remote training was utilized, on some level, with nearly 100% of people PAT served, with a transition back to in-person training becoming more prevalent as the year progressed--in all areas including Orientation & Mobility, Assistive Technology, worksite readiness, and daily living skills. Overall, PAT served more people in the last 12 months than in the previous year. Beyond individual training, virtual support groups were offered to those served throughout the state, highlighted by Employment Matters -- a ten-week intensive group training focused on the specific needs of the blind-low vision community in obtaining and keeping meaningful employment. These groups received high praise and acknowledgement from participants.

In the last year, the PAT unit's Pre-Employment Transition specialists to students who are blind/low vision launched an intensive and comprehensive curriculum developed by Mississippi State University. Putting Your Best Foot Forward: Job Search Skills Training for Youth with Visual Impairments included 30 hours of instruction on topics including identifying personal strengths, developing transferable skills, analyzing job descriptions, creating a resume, acing interview skills, and disclosing a disability. During the summer of 2021, the PAT unit's Pre-Employment Transition specialists offered weekly online workshops for Pre-ETS students. These workshops included discussion, activities, and guest speakers from the Colorado community. Topics included: adaptive recreation, the guide dog lifestyle, pathways to professionalism, self-advocacy, and job seeking resources on the internet.

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### Business Enterprise Program

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) oversees the training and licensing of blind operators and manages the operation of federal, state, and private vending, snack bars, cafeterias, convenience stores, and military dining locations across the state. BEP currently has two individuals participating in training. Throughout the pandemic the number of licensed blind operators has remained at 23 due to the excellent communication and collaboration between the vocational rehabilitation counselors, the BEP trainer, Program Manager, and continued support and active participation provided by the committee of blind vendors.

Due to Covid-19, several of the Federal and State office buildings were either completely closed or operating at reduced staffing level this past year. Because of this, many of the cafes, micro markets and vending machines were shut down. In the last few months as staff have returned to the workplace in limited numbers, the BEP and Operators have started to reopen some of their locations. Most locations continue operating at a limited capacity, but the staff that have returned to the offices are appreciative of the services BEP offers. The financial impact of the shut down on the operators and the program overall has been difficult; however, the Operators and program are starting to see some positive turn around and are looking forward to a much better year ahead.

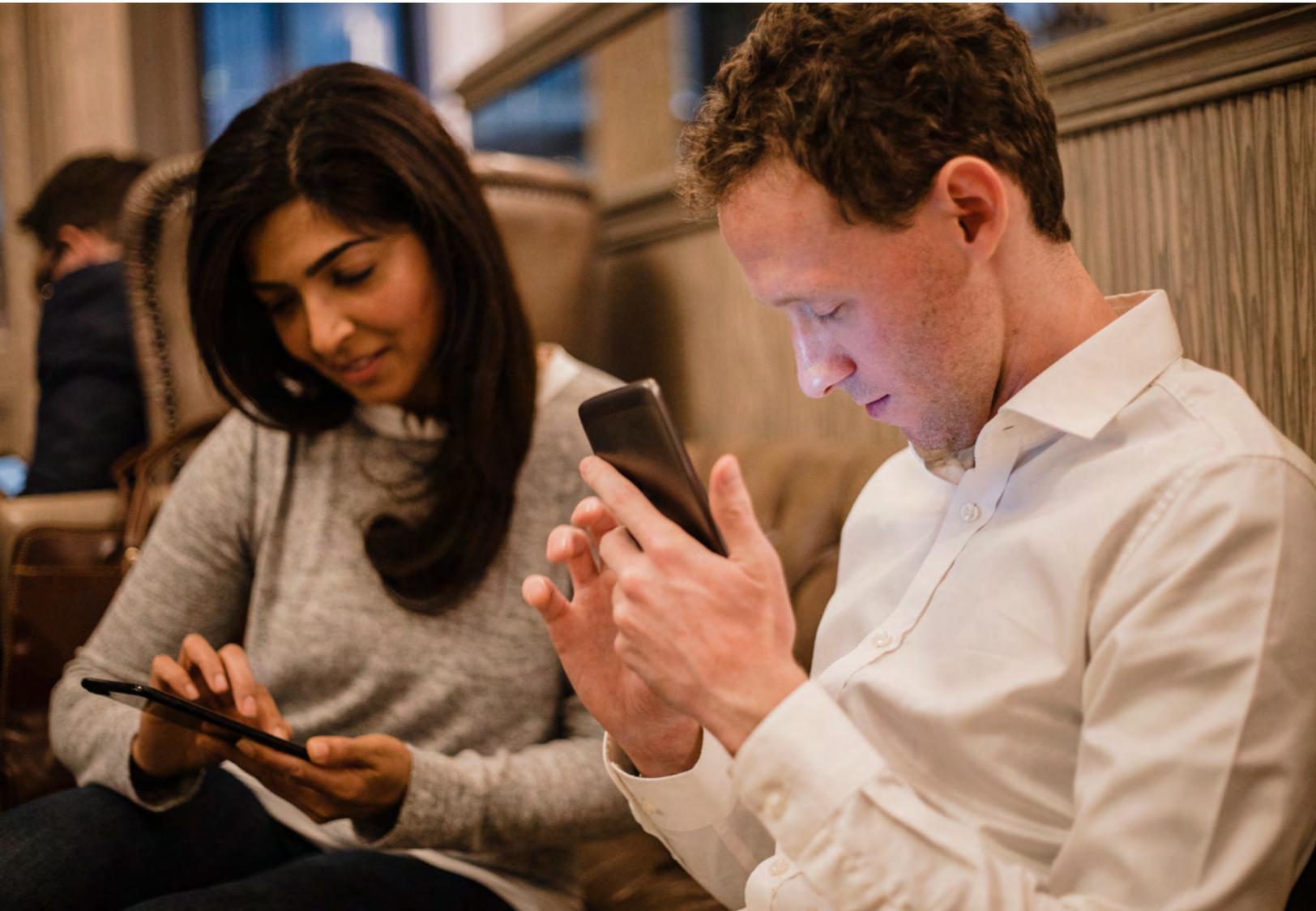
While the past year has been a struggle, the program also experienced some positive growth. BEP created one new opportunity by establishing a new location: vending at the Sterling Correctional facility. BEP expanded the opportunities for four Operators by adding Lathrup State Park, a micromarket at the Federal Center, a micromarket at the Veterans Administration, and the Ft. Collins Parks and Forest Service.

### Independent Living for Older Individuals who are Blind

For blind and low vision Colorado residents who are age 55 or older and whose primary goal is to maintain independence in their own home, BLVS provides services through contracts with seven providers across the state. Consumers received services that include learning how to live with low vision, independent living skills, participating in support groups, accessing and learning how to use assistive technology, and learning how to travel independently. In addition to the individual consumers, the providers have also completed outreach to many more consumers with information and referral resources.

### Howard Fund

Finally, BLVS manages the Howard Fund, a fund that provides grants to individuals and organizations in Colorado to help them acquire equipment and services directly related to blindness and vision loss. This past year, the Howard Fund board approved 17 grants for individuals including two youth. The funds supported individuals in maintaining independence in their home and success in school. Purchases included assistive technology, low vision aids, adaptive equipment and training.



***“The Personal Adjustment Training (PAT) Program teaches individuals who are blind, low vision, and deaf-blind how to travel and live independently, access resources in college, orient to a job site, and use assistive and adaptive technology for success with employment.”***

# Office of Independent Living Services

The Office of Independent Living Services (Office) executes and oversees the nine contracts the State has with non-profit organizations certified as Centers for Independent Living (CIL) serving people with disabilities in all 64 counties. The Office is the fiscal sponsor for the governor-appointed Colorado Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). All three branches: CILs, SILC, and the Office, make up the Colorado CIL network. This network works collaboratively to provide an array of services supporting people with disabilities of all ages and disability types to live independently in their community of choice.

The Office aims to:

- Increase the visibility and understanding of the core services delivered by the Colorado CILs
- Develop partnerships between federal agencies, state agencies, advisory councils, community-based service networks, and CILs
- Partner with the CILs to build service capacity and ensure contract funding follows federal and state fiscal requirements
- Partner to develop and monitor the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL)

The Colorado CIL network is completing year two of a five-year research grant - Securing Employment and Economic Keys to Stability (SEEKS). This research project, through Centers for Independent Living, works with people (ages 18-60) who are applying for SSA disability benefits while concurrently providing services from an employment specialist and a certified benefits counselor. Over 60 participants are enrolled with a target enrollment of over 400. SEEKS aims to increase understanding of what helps individuals with disabilities to

- Improve employment and education outcomes;
- Increase monthly income; and,
- Decrease social isolation.

In State Fiscal Year 2021, the CIL network averaged serving 2250 consumers per month across the state. One of the significant challenges the CILs worked to overcome was maintaining services and outreach to ensure people with disabilities were able to access information and supplies to stay safe and healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic. CILs collectively worked with State and local government and community non-profits in their communities to create accessible vaccination sites and to create and disseminate accessible information about the vaccines based on the unique needs of the people living in their catchment area.

### Colorado Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

The Colorado SILC is a Governor-appointed 15 member council with the majority of members having lived experience as a person with a disability and established under Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The primary function of the SILC is to advance independent living through the development and implementation of a three-year State Plan for Independent Living, commonly referred to as the SPIL. The SPIL guides the CIL network to address the needs of people with disabilities across Colorado. In December 2020, the Federal Government approved the existing SPIL, effective Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2021 through Federal Fiscal Year 2023.

SPIL Goals FFY 2021 - FFY 2023:

- Develop a strong and effective CIL Network;
- Increase the CIL influence in state and national systems advocacy efforts to ensure public policies represent all members of the disability community;
- Increase outreach, community education, and employment efforts; and
- Explore flexibilities within the law that would grant Colorado more authority in following Federal Uniform Guidance due to the ratio of State to Federal funding.

In June 2020, the SILC became a federally recognized 501c3. To help aid in the transition from Governor-appointed Council to Governor-appointed Council/non-profit, the SILC hired an Executive Coordinator.

During State Fiscal Year 2021, the SILC engaged in the following:

- In partnership with CILs and Office staff, members of the Colorado SILC participated in a national presentation at the annual Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living; Colorado CIL Network Resource Development
- The SILC maintained their focus on planning the next Colorado Youth Leadership Forum (YLF). Colorado YLF is an innovative event for Colorado high school juniors, seniors, and young adults under age 26 with disabilities. Despite cancelling the event in 2021 due to the pandemic, the work of the YLF continues, led by YLF alumni.
- The SILC actively participates in the SEEKS federal research project on the advisory team with the Vice Chair of the SILC leading the peer committee on the project.



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**Celebrating Success**



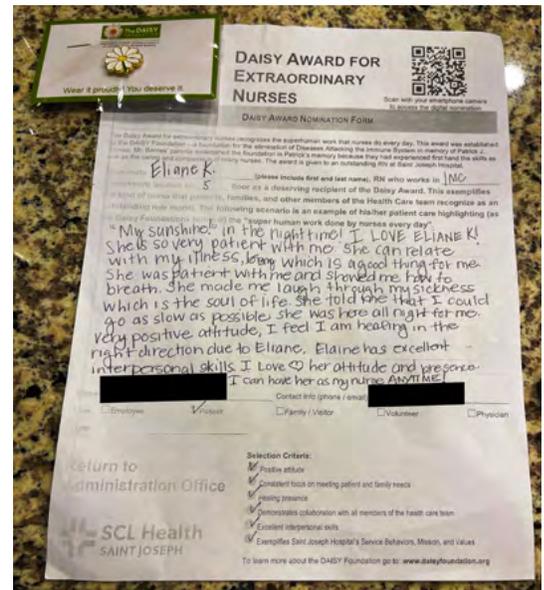
# Celebrating Success

## Eliane

With 47 years of experience as an RN in the ICU, Eliane applied to DVR in February 2020, following a total laryngectomy, removing her voice box and ability to speak. Her goal of returning to her career as a RN presented unique challenges, which she was able to overcome with assistance from DVR. Eliane was referred for an Augmentative Alternative Communication evaluation and training from the Center for Inclusive Design and Engineering (CIDE). After trials with numerous devices and training with their Speech Language Pathologist, Eliane successfully learned to use the Wego 7A communication device by TalkToMe Technologies. Eliane is able to use pre-set word buttons to build novel responses in a conversation, ask and answer questions, and pre-store personal and professional phrases.

DVR arranged a job placement provider that assisted Eliane with creating a professional video of herself utilizing the communication device to eloquently answer common interview questions, and provide a summary of her impressive work skills and experience. The video was used as part of Eliane’s job placement efforts. In August, Eliane was offered a full-time RN position at St. Joseph’s Hospital, earning an exceptional wage, and doing what she loves! She performs all of her job duties independently, while utilizing her communication device. Within her first month, she was nominated for the Daisy Award; a program at the hospital that recognizes clinical skill and compassionate care given by nurses.

Congratulations, Eliane! We wish you ongoing success!!! CIDE has featured her in their recent [Spring](#) and [Summer](#) newsletters. *Photo: The Daisy Award and note.*



## Forrest White

Forrest has been working with both DVR and the SWAP program on and off for about 7 years and he has made such amazing strides in his career goals during this time. Forrest utilizes a wheelchair due to a spinal cord injury from a motor vehicle accident as a teenager. Forrest has explored a number of different career pathways over the years, and discovered that welding was his ultimate goal, so we've spent the past two years or so assisting him in this pursuit. Forrest has been attending AIMS Community College in order to obtain a degree in welding and has done a fantastic job during his program. Prior to even graduating we were able to find a paid work experience at a local custom auto body shop where he could put his welding and mechanics background to use. He became an asset to this company during his PWE, so much so that they hired him as a permanent full-time employee. The employer is thrilled to have Forrest on their team and it has been a great experience so far for everyone. Go Forrest!  
*Photo: The AIMS Community College Welding Technology Facility in Fort Lupton Campus*





### Brad Hughes

Brad has multiple barriers to employment which he has worked hard to accommodate and find success in training and employment. His goal is to work in education, and he is currently working as a Teacher's Assistant in his first position on his career path. He enjoys going to work each day and working with the 3-4 year olds at a brand new pre-school. His supervisor is very supportive and is one of the reasons he likes his job so much. DVR has supported Brad to reach his goals by assisting with his education at Arapahoe Community College and providing needed accommodations, such as ASL interpreters and job coaches. *Photo: Disability Access Services at Arapahoe Community College*



### Carole Billingham

DVR supported Carole in many ways, including helping her to obtain a master's degree so that she can help others, including people with brain injuries, to live happy and fulfilling lives. She is certified in [brainspotting](#) and is a Master Certified Coach. DVR also helped with therapies like occupational therapy to help her be more effective as a businesswoman and clinician. Lastly, Carole shares that her vocational rehabilitation counselor, Belinda Chirinos, was wonderful in helping her to believe in herself when things got challenging. She loves having the knowledge and skills to truly help people. "There is a lot of suffering in our world. Knowing that I am making a difference in the lives of others, makes me very happy and fulfilled. (I could not have gotten here without the help of DVR.)" *Photo: Portrait of Carole Billingham*