

West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services



2007 Annual Report

West Virginia Department of Education and the Arts



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Dear Colleagues:

The Office of the Secretary for West Virginia's Department of Education and the Arts and the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) are pleased to present this 2007 Annual Report. We are proud of the accomplishments reflected herein and the DRS mission of enabling and empowering individuals with disabilities to work and live independently.

The Office of the Secretary and DRS believe in the power of partnerships and collaboration. This report highlights the ongoing associations that assist DRS in better serving West Virginians with disabilities. These alliances include strong relationships with secondary and post-secondary educational institutions, WorkForce West Virginia, Community Rehabilitation Programs, the Statewide Independent Living Council and the State Rehabilitation Council.

Through strong affiliations and hard work, DRS and its employees provided vocational rehabilitation services to nearly 10,000 West Virginians with disabilities in fiscal year 2007. Ninety-eight percent of those served were individuals with significant disabilities, a federally mandated priority of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998.

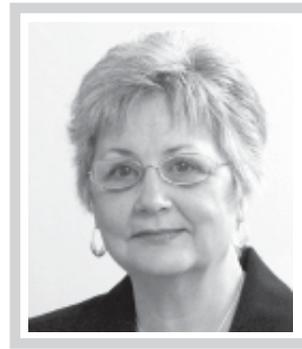
We are extremely proud of the 1,587 individuals who have entered employment during the past year after receiving services from DRS. These newly employed citizens are demonstrating the strong impact of vocational rehabilitation with an average increase in annual earnings of 441 percent!

The possibilities the future holds for our partnerships and for our clients are exciting. By continually dedicating our resources for positive change, we assist West Virginians with disabilities to achieve successful, integrated employment and better lives.

Sincerely,



Kay Goodwin
Cabinet Secretary
Department of Education and the Arts



Deborah Lovely
Director
Division of Rehabilitation Services





Mission and History

The mission of DRS is to enable and empower individuals with disabilities to work and to live independently.

DRS has successfully fulfilled this mission for more than 80 years. During this time, DRS has assisted many thousands of West Virginians with disabilities prepare for, get, keep or advance in jobs in the competitive labor market.

The program began in 1920 with passage of the Smith-Fess Act by the United States Congress. The act offered vocational rehabilitation services to industrially injured workers and other people with disabilities.

Members of the state legislature established the West Virginia Division of Vocational Rehabilitation on April 14, 1921, as part of the Department of Education. In 1987, the agency was renamed the Division of Rehabilitation Services to reflect the wide range of services DRS provides. State legislation transferred DRS to the Department of Education and the Arts in 1994.

Today DRS' primary focus is to provide vocational rehabilitation services designed to assist people with disabilities obtain employment. Through development of an individualized plan for employment, DRS tailors services to meet the specific needs of each client.

In fiscal year 2007, 1,587 individuals with disabilities received vocational rehabilitation services that enabled them to become employed. After receiving vocational rehabilitation services, those individuals increased their average annual earnings by 441 percent. This is an increase of more than 27 percent from fiscal year 2006, when average annual earnings increased by 347 percent.

Since 1921, DRS has implemented numerous program innovations and advances. With help from its many workforce development partners, DRS today delivers the most comprehensive vocational rehabilitation programming available within West Virginia.

This annual report summarizes DRS activities and accomplishments during fiscal year 2007.



FIELD SERVICES

One-to-one effective personal service is what people with disabilities receive from the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services. With 29 field offices across the state, DRS has specially trained rehabilitation counselors who assist clients with evaluating their skills and interests and obtaining vocational success and independence through planning, the provision of services necessary to be successful in employment and comprehensive support during the process.

DRS employs approximately 124 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, which requires a master's level degree in rehabilitation counseling or a related field.

Each of the field offices has a supervisor who, in addition to providing leadership and guidance to employees, 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, located in each DRS district, work in their districts 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.

DRS Field Offices

CHARLESTON DISTRICT

Charleston District and Branch Offices
Spencer Branch Office

CLARKSBURG DISTRICT

Clarksburg District and Branch Offices
Weston Branch Office
Morgantown Branch Office
Fairmont Branch Office
Elkins Branch Office

WHEELING DISTRICT

Wheeling District and Branch Offices
Weirton Branch Office
Parkersburg Branch Office
Parkersburg South High School
Sistersville Branch Office

BECKLEY DISTRICT

Beckley District and Branch Offices
Fayetteville Branch Office
Princeton Branch Office
Mullens Branch Office
Welch Branch Office

HUNTINGTON DISTRICT

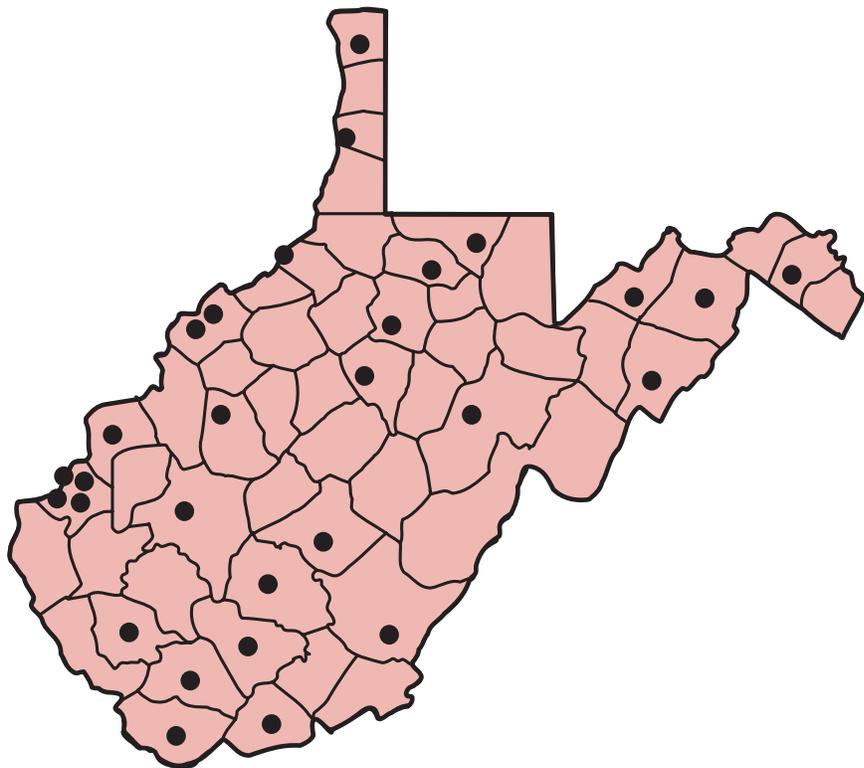
Huntington District and Branch Offices
Marshall University Branch Office
Cabell Midland High School Branch Office
Huntington High School Branch Office
Point Pleasant Branch Office
Logan Branch Office

MARTINSBURG DISTRICT

Martinsburg District and Branch Offices
Romney Branch Office at West Virginia
Schools for the Deaf and Blind
Keyser Branch Office
Moorefield Branch Office

LEWISBURG DISTRICT

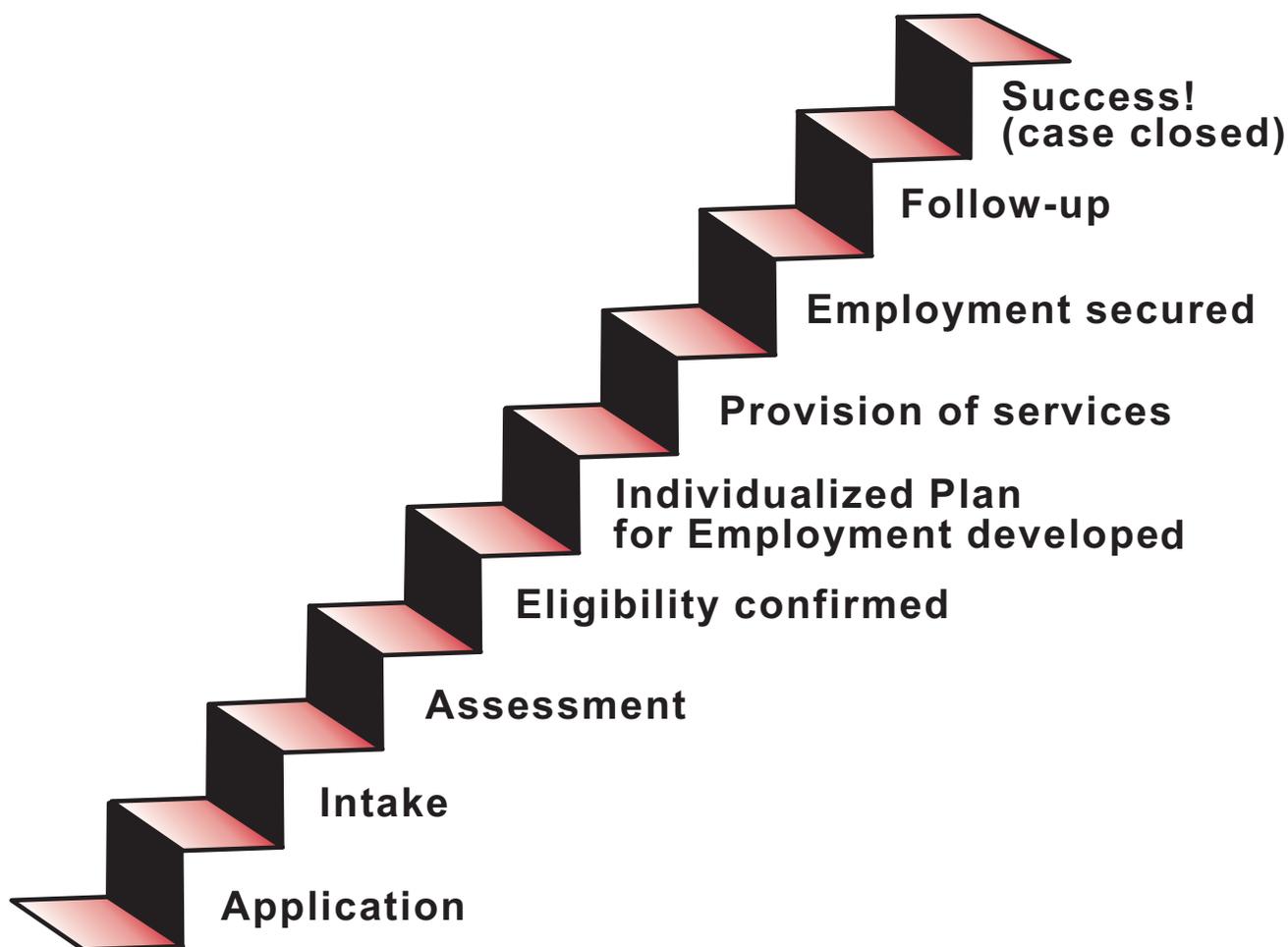
Lewisburg District and Branch Offices
Summersville Branch Office



The Vocational Rehabilitation Process

The vocational rehabilitation process begins when an individual applies for services from DRS. An application form 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/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 client and his/her vocational rehabilitation counselor work together to develop an individualized plan for employment (IPE). This plan describes the services that will be needed so that the individual can reach his/her employment goal. Each client's program is individually tailored to assure that the services necessary to achieve his/her goals are provided. The anticipated outcome of the individual's vocational program is competitive employment in a career of the individual's choice. Depending on the services needed, the program can last anywhere from a few months to several years. Follow-up services are provided by the rehabilitation counselor to assure that the individual's employment is stable and satisfactory. Advocacy and support services are available through the Client Assistance Program throughout the term of the individual's involvement with DRS.

Vocational Rehabilitation Steps



Available Services

DRS is able to provide a variety of services to eligible individuals to help them achieve their employment goals. The eligible individual and the vocational rehabilitation counselor work together to determine which services are necessary and appropriate for the client's identified employment goal. The services provided to any eligible individual are determined by his/her unique employment barriers, his/her chosen employment goal and his/her individual circumstances. Examples of services available from DRS include:

Evaluation and diagnostic services may be provided to determine eligibility and the services needed for the individual to become employed.

Vocational rehabilitation counseling and guidance are provided directly by a vocational rehabilitation counselor during the client's plan of services to accomplish a variety of objectives leading to successful employment.

Physical and mental restoration services may be provided to correct or substantially modify an individual's physical or mental condition.

Training services may be provided when necessary to meet the employment goal and may include vocational training, academic training, personal and vocational adjustment training, job coaching, on-the-job training, job seeking skills training, and books, tools and other training materials.

Specialized services for individuals who are blind, deaf and deaf-blind may include orientation and mobility training, interpreter services, note-taking services and reader services.



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 an individual in obtaining or retaining employment.

Placement services may be provided to assist an individual with a disability to find adequate and suitable employment in his/her chosen field.

Support services such as maintenance, transportation assistance, personal care assistance and services to family members may also be provided if necessary.

Post-employment services may be provided to previously rehabilitated individuals when needed to maintain or regain suitable employment.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

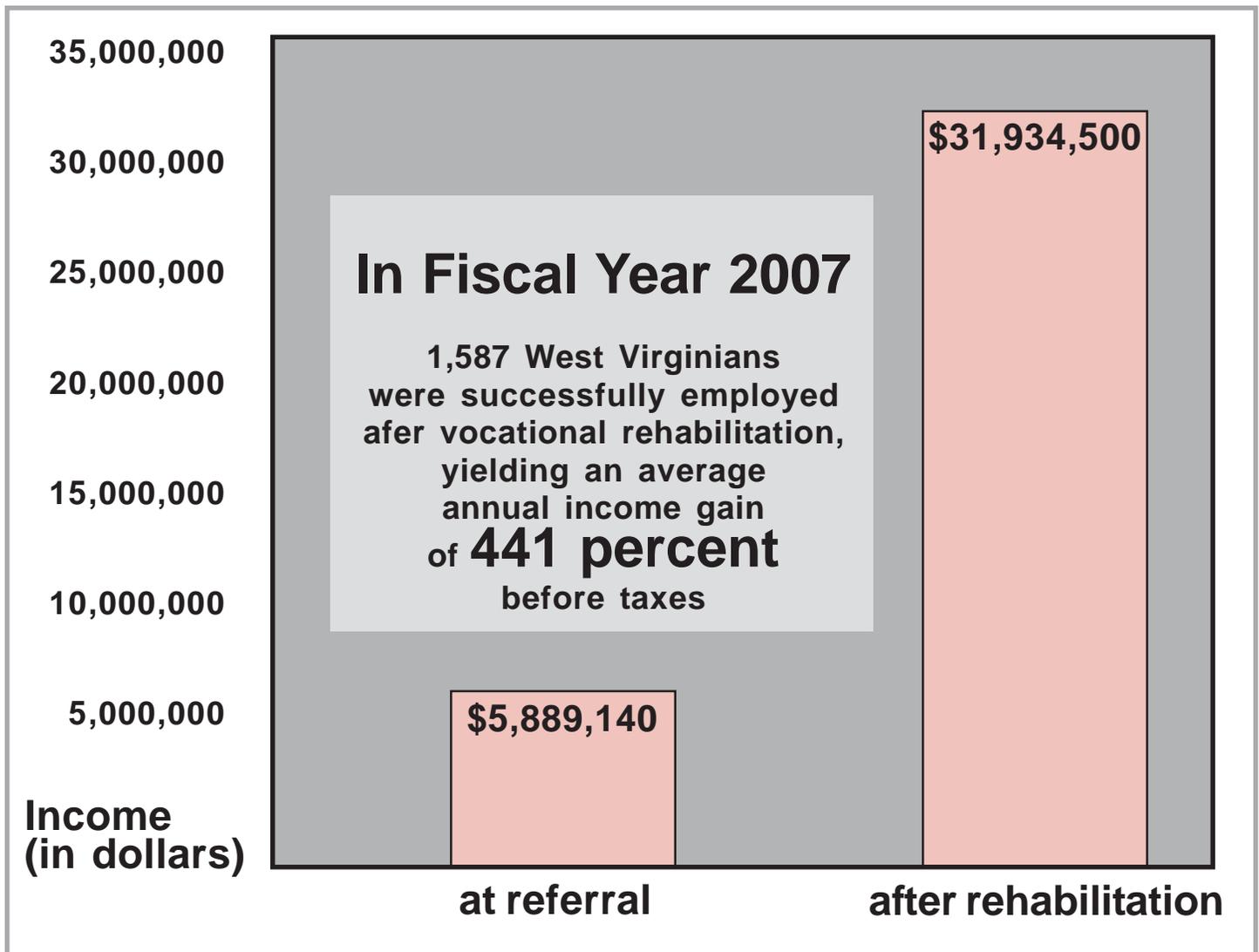
Rehabilitation Services Administration Evaluation Standards and Performance Indicators

Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 requires the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to establish various evaluation standards and performance indicators that the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) is expected to meet.

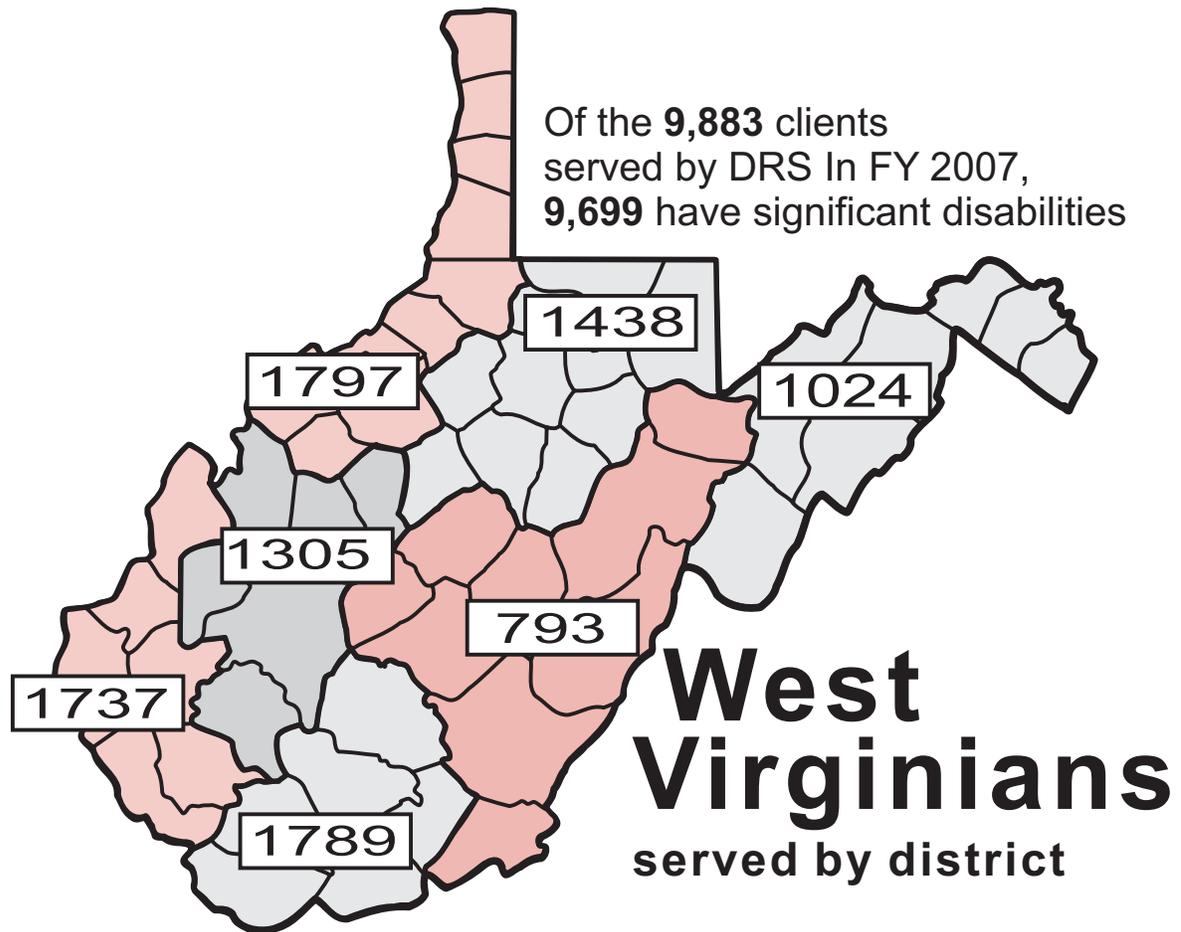
There are currently seven such standards. Individual indicators assess the number of rehabilitants, percentage of rehabilitants earning at least minimum wage, average hourly earnings, percentage of rehabilitants with significant disabilities and service rate for people of minority backgrounds. Poor performance could result in loss or reduction of federal funding.

Fiscal year 2007 data indicates that DRS met federal requirements, especially in terms of the quality standards and indicators. DRS improved over its own fiscal year 2006 performance levels in two employment indicators, as well as meeting the federal requirements of the ratio of minority services to non-minority services.

For taxpayers and rehabilitation clients alike, the standards and indicators assure a quality outcome for the related goals of vocational rehabilitation and competitive job placement.



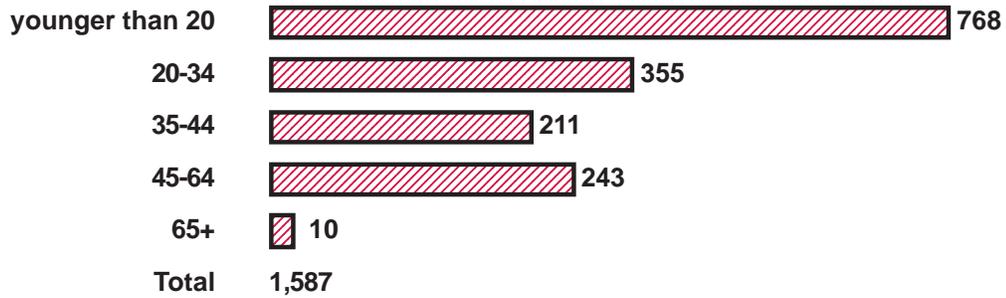
FISCAL YEAR 2007 DATA



Education at Application of Individuals Vocationally Rehabilitated

No formal schooling	3
Elementary education (grades 1-8)	20
Secondary education, no high school diploma (grades 9-12)	691
Special education certificate of completion/attendance	73
High school graduate or equivalency certificate (regular education students)	372
Post-secondary education, no degree	239
Associate degree or Vocational/Technical Certificate	102
Bachelor's degree	67
Master's degree or higher	20
Total	1,587

Age at Application of Individuals Vocationally Rehabilitated



Race of Individuals Vocationally Rehabilitated

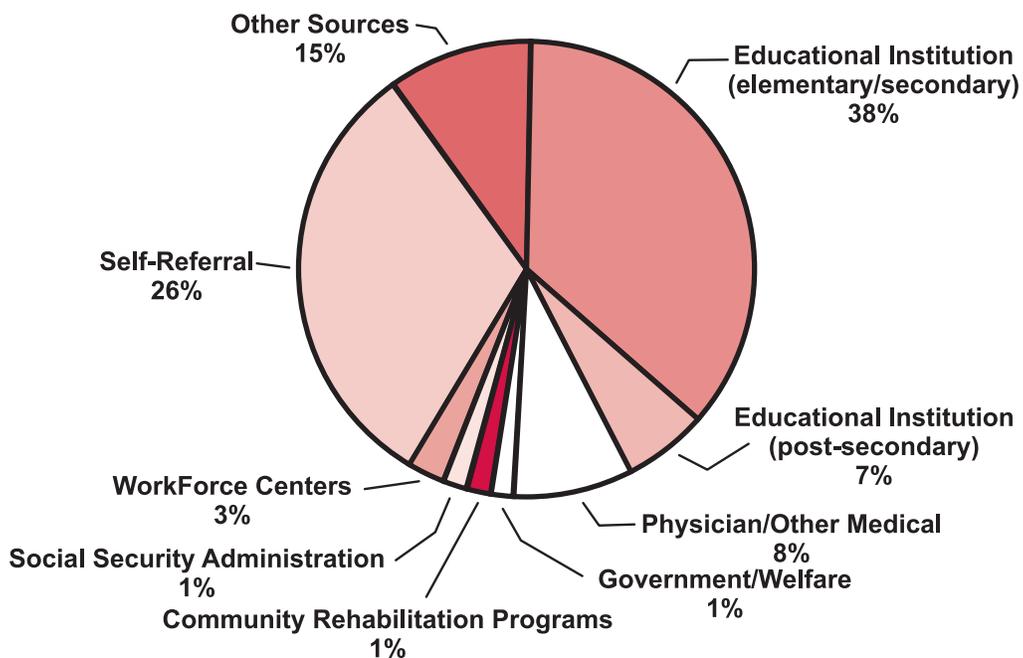
White	1,493
Black or African American	75
American Indian or Alaska Native	10
Asian or Pacific Islander	3
Hispanic or Latino	6
Total	1,587

Gender of Individuals Vocationally Rehabilitated

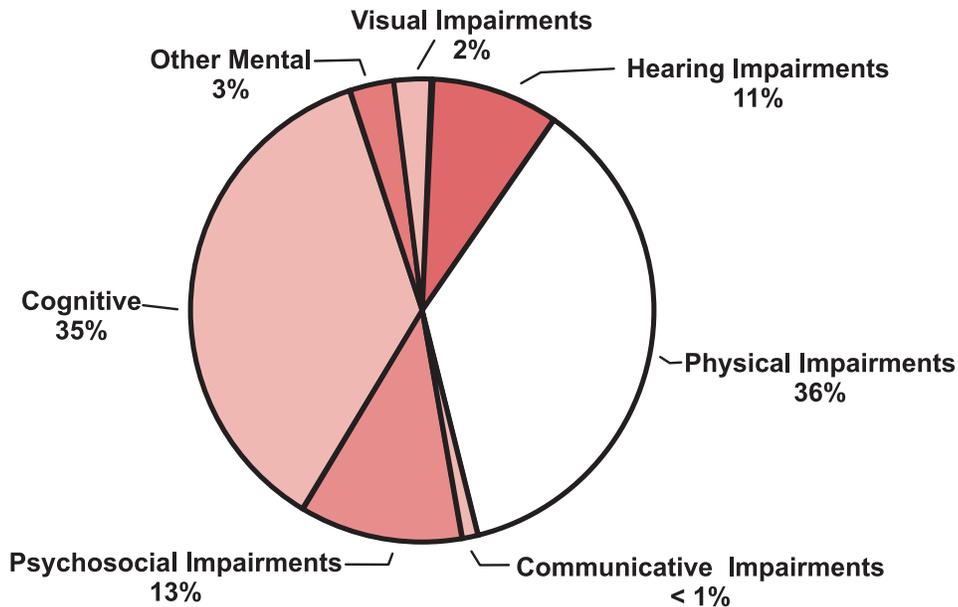
Male	858
Female	729
Total	1,587



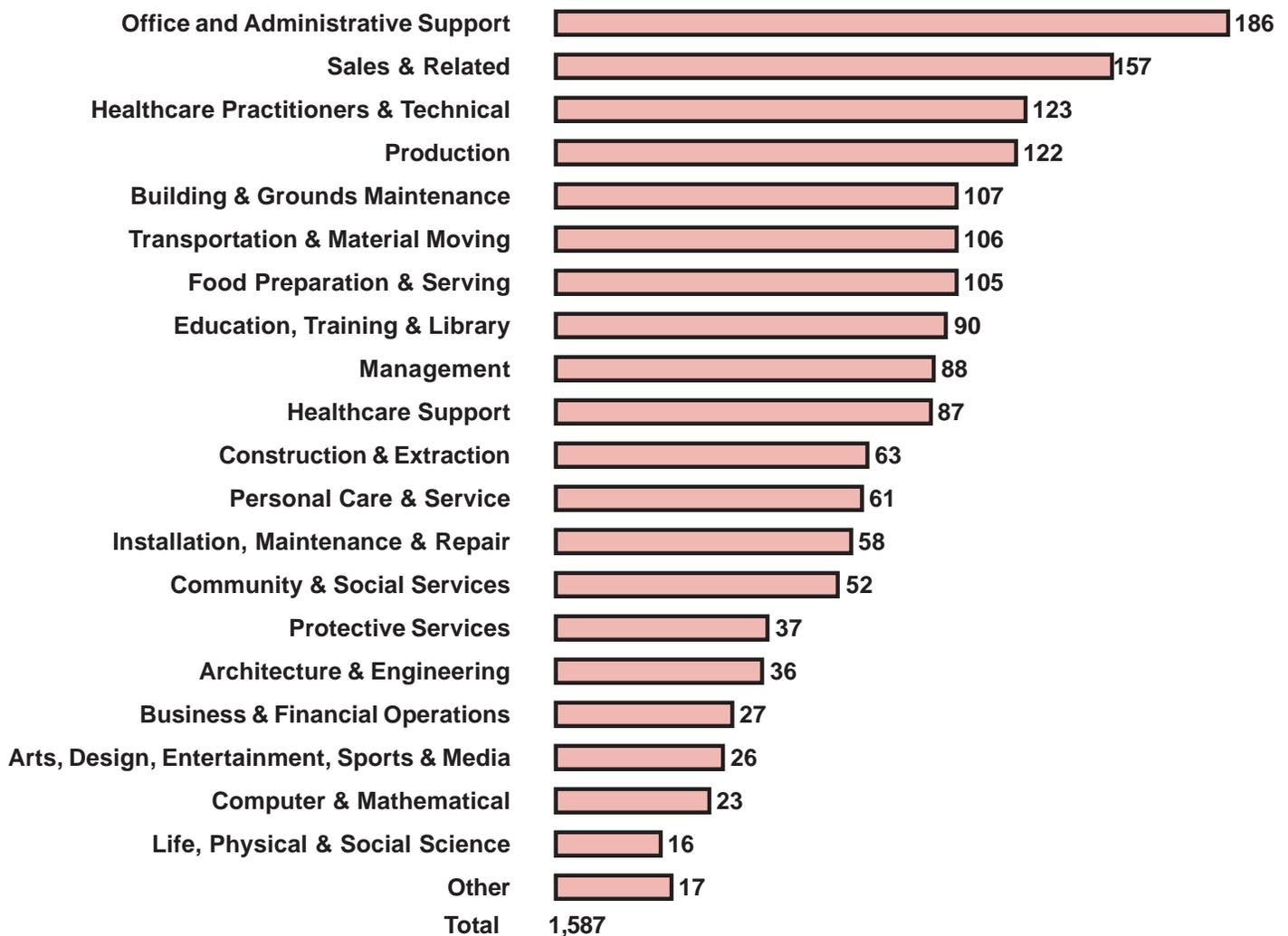
Referral Source of Individuals Vocationally Rehabilitated



Primary Disability of Individuals Vocationally Rehabilitated



Occupation of Individuals Vocationally Rehabilitated



PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Transition Program

Successful transition from high school into appropriate vocational training, post-secondary education or employment is the goal of the transition program. DRS counselors can usually begin working with students with disabilities in the 11th grade to help them prepare for future employment.

Cooperative agreements between the agency, all 55 county school systems, the state Board of Education and the Schools for the Deaf and the Blind enabled 6,115 students with disabilities ages 16-21 to receive services during fiscal year 2007. This was 62 percent of the total number of individuals served by DRS. Of those students, 4,636 were referred directly from the schools to DRS for services. This high number of direct referrals can be attributed to DRS' commitment to serving members of the transition population.

Throughout West Virginia, 63 rehabilitation counselors are assigned to work with public and private schools, 30 of whom serve local education agencies full time. These counselors assisted 876 students with disabilities in developing individualized plans for employment. Comprehensive vocational rehabilitation services and careful planning that involved students, their families and school personnel resulted in the rehabilitation and subsequent employment of 829 clients through this program. This is 52 percent of our total number of rehabilitation closures during fiscal year 2007.

College Education Services

A college education provides increased opportunities for vocational success and independent living. DRS counselors are assigned as liaisons with public and private colleges and universities throughout West Virginia. In fiscal year 2007, DRS spent more than \$2.74 million in tuition and other college expenses, helping 1,594 students get the education they needed.

Community Cooperative Training Program

The Community Cooperative Training Program allows DRS clients to receive training locally while residing at the Division of Rehabilitation Services Institute complex. Students may receive training at Ben Franklin Career Center, Putnam Career and Technical Center, Carver Career Center, Garnet Career Center, National Institute of Technology, PIE Truck Driving School or the Charleston School of Beauty Culture.

Vision Services

Rehabilitation counselors, specially trained to meet the vocational rehabilitation needs of people with blindness or vision impairments, served 385 people during fiscal year 2007. Forty of these clients entered or retained employment after vocational rehabilitation.

Additionally, DRS operates the Visually Impaired Seniors In-home Outreach and Networking Services (VISIONS) program through an independent living grant from the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration. VISIONS provides individualized services such as low-tech adaptive aids and hand-held, low-vision aids, as well as training in activities of daily living, orientation and mobility, computer-access technology and more.

Hearing Services

Specially trained rehabilitation counselors for the deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind served 1,426 clients. Of the 1,587 clients DRS rehabilitated in fiscal year 2007, 174 were severely hard of hearing, deaf or deaf-blind.

DRS continues cooperative activities with the West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the West Virginia Department of Education in a variety of initiatives, ranging from a statewide educational interpreter certification process to operation of a system to loan assistive equipment.

Rehabilitation Technology Services

The Rehabilitation Technology Department provides services to increase the accessibility of client workplaces and homes statewide. During fiscal year 2007, the unit provided 721 services to 285 people, including 194 assistive technology services, 393 driver education services, 89 rehabilitation engineering services and 45 environmental modifications.



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 the most significant disabilities. At present, there are 55 DRS-acknowledged CRPs in West Virginia that have 71 service sites. Of those CRPs, 43 are non-profit with 47 service sites.

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

DRS is working closely with the CRPs and other local community providers to find innovative ways to expand programs, such as pre-vocational training, employment-readiness services and job coaching, to better meet the needs of DRS and its clients. DRS held meetings in the northern and southern parts of the state with the CRPs to discuss the provision and expansion of community-based services. These meetings have revealed that the needs and resources are diverse and varied throughout the different regions of the state.

Through additional meetings held in each agency district in the state, DRS staff, the CRPs and other interested parties met to further discuss and explore ways to improve services in the local communities. These collaborative efforts will continue as we identify needs, available resources, training opportunities and best practices in other states that will enable positive changes to assist West Virginians with disabilities to achieve successful, integrated employment outcomes.

Randolph-Sheppard Program

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

The program has 23 self-employed blind vendors providing concession services to 78 governmental facilities throughout West Virginia. The average income for vendors in the West Virginia program is \$36,861 for fiscal year 2007.

In West Virginia, DRS serves as the state licensing agency for the Randolph-Sheppard Program. The purpose of the Randolph-Sheppard Act is to provide employment for blind individuals. In carrying out the legislative intent of Congress and the state Legislature, the Randolph-Sheppard Program promotes economic opportunity and profitability through self-employment for people who are legally blind.

DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES

Under contract with the Social Security Administration (SSA), Disability Determination Services (DDS) adjudicates Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability applications filed by West Virginians.

In fiscal year 2007, DDS cleared 42,019 disability claims, met SSA's quality standard and exceeded all clearance, processing time and productivity targets.

DDS, which was certified to process claims in a paperless environment in June 2006, cleared 92 percent of its initial and reconsideration claims as certified electronic folders. SSA is aggressively expanding the electronic disability process to minimize exclusions and to include all types of disability claims, including continuing disability reviews, reopenings and appeals. With future software and procedural modifications, DDS anticipates it will process nearly all disability claims electronically by fiscal year 2009.



In December 2006, an estimated 142,670 West Virginians with disabilities received SSDI and/or SSI disability/blind benefits. Of these, 133,770 were adults and 8,900 were children under age 18. Disabled workers, their spouses and dependent children received approximately \$1.1 billion per year in SSDI payments, and disabled/blind adults and children received an estimated \$422,520,000 per year in SSI disability payments. These estimates do not include disabled widows and widowers and disabled adult children receiving payments from SSA's Old-Age Survivors Insurance funds. Individuals eligible for SSI disability payments also receive Medicaid, and those eligible for Social Security disability payments for 24 consecutive months receive Medicare. The income and medical insurance contribute significantly to the state's economy and the quality of life for recipients.

PARTNERSHIPS

WorkForce West Virginia

DRS continues to expand its cooperative services in workforce development through actively partnering in WorkForce West Virginia. DRS is one of eight state agencies participating in the Interagency Collaborative Team (ICT) of WorkForce West Virginia. The ICT tries to identify ways to more effectively serve citizens seeking employment and employers who need trained, qualified workers. DRS involvement ensures that people with disabilities are given consideration for available jobs.

During fiscal year 2007, the ICT continued to expand upon the 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. They also offer employers technical assistance relating to job accommodations, the Americans with Disabilities Act, tax credits for hiring individuals with disabilities and referrals for assistive technology reviews.

In terms of staffing, shared costs and infrastructure support, approximately 10 percent of the funds devoted to DRS client services are used in cooperation with the workforce system. DRS also is an active partner in planning the annual state WorkForce Conference attended by more than 400 workforce professionals, providing needed training in the area of education about disability and accommodation.

DRS continues to actively assist WorkForce West Virginia in honoring the commitment of seamless access to employment services and inclusion for all citizens.



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. Additionally, the SRC contributes toward the development of the DRS State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment.

Each year the SRC conducts a consumer satisfaction survey asking consumers to rate the effectiveness of and satisfaction with services they received through DRS. This information is reviewed, analyzed and a report is made available annually to staff and the general public.

The 26-member SRC is appointed by the governor of West Virginia, according to the provisions of the federal Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, which are dedicated to helping ensure people with disabilities identify and achieve their vocational rehabilitation goals.



Statewide Independent Living Council

In partnership with DRS, the Statewide Independent Living Council is responsible for jointly planning and submitting a state plan for independent living every three years. The council works for people with disabilities through legislative monitoring and advocacy, training and technical assistance to local centers for independent living. 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 a personal assistant(s) to help them live independently.

The council, in cooperation with DRS and the centers for independent living, coordinates a survey of consumer satisfaction of all individuals who receive independent living services each year. By organizing advocacy training and activities, the council also is a resource for developing leadership, grassroots advocacy among people with disabilities and appropriate public policy affecting people with disabilities. 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 governor of West Virginia appoints council members in accordance with provisions of the federal Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998.

ABILITY WORKS

The Ability Works Recognition Ceremony honors individuals who have achieved their vocational goals by means of their own perseverance and with assistance from the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services. The following stories highlight the accomplishments of eight individuals honored during the 2007 ceremony, including Joe Voloski, the State Ability Works Recognition recipient who survived a near-fatal car accident to become a Naval firefighter.

Joseph Voloski • State Winner

Firefighter Joe Voloski wants to help other people and give something back to the community. Near-death experiences have a way of changing your perspective and priorities in life.

In November 1999, Voloski was driving to a Veterans Day Parade when a car accident nearly took his life. He spent 23 days in a coma. After working through the recovery process, Voloski accepted a job as a firefighter for the Department of Navy at the Naval Weapons Station in Yorktown, Va. Voloski is DRS' State Ability Works Recognition recipient.

"When I came home from the hospital, they told me I'd be lucky to graduate from high school. I graduated from high school with my class," he said. "Five years later, I graduated from college with two degrees."

Voloski, 25, defied many people's predictions to resume a normal life. During the accident, his car hit a fence, which caused a board to crash through the windshield and hit his face, inflicting severe facial and head trauma. Paramedics rushed him to Raleigh General Hospital in Beckley, where he underwent eight hours of surgery and was clinically dead and revived three times. After being transferred to University of Virginia Medical Center in Charlottesville, his first voluntary signs of movement from the coma came after friends held a prayer vigil.

During the long recovery process, Voloski learned to walk, talk and eat again. To repair damage to his face, doctors transplanted bone from his hip and muscle from his stomach. He underwent his twentieth facial reconstructive surgery in December 2006.

Overcoming the physical challenges was only half the battle. With the help of DRS, Voloski received direction and counseling to pursue a career in firefighting. The agency provided financial assistance to attend Mountain State University in Beckley, where he earned associate's and bachelor's degrees in fire science.

Voloski is grateful for the help he received from DRS. "Rehab made a major difference of helping in my life," he said. "They gave me the contacts I can pull from. They assisted me in going to college."

Michael Whaley, Voloski's supervisor and battalion chief of the Navy Region Mid-Atlantic Fire Rescue, said Voloski came to the job ready and willing to work, requiring no special accommodations.

"Joe comes to us with a bachelor's degree in fire science," he said. "He's got plenty of education and good experience that we use. He came in willing to accept responsibility."

Employment Specialist John Morgan marvels at Voloski's determination to succeed despite the challenges he's faced. "He is a walking miracle, not only to be alive, but to be able to and want to pursue a career," Morgan said. "He's got more drive and determination than anybody I've ever seen."

Voloski is proud of the education he received and the success he's enjoying. "I guess the biggest thing is I went back to school and got an education after I was told I wouldn't be able to. It's up to your self-determination. You can do whatever you want to do. With the power of the good Lord above and hard work, you can do anything."



Khadidra Taylor, Charleston District

Khadidra Taylor was in high school when she had her first contact with DRS. Six years after her school guidance counselor referred her to DRS, she has earned a college degree and a good job that empowers her to help others.

Khadidra was well-liked by teachers and students at Dupont High School, and was in the first graduating class of Riverside High School after several local schools were consolidated.

Despite her own difficulties with a rare medical condition, Taylor has always wanted to help others. She worked as a peer counselor in high school, helping her fellow students through some of the tough challenges all adolescents face.

Khadidra Taylor has physical limitations caused by McCune-Albright Syndrome. From birth, she has had many painful health complications due to very fragile bone structure. She had her first hip replacement at age 15, and her other hip has since been replaced, too.

Pain, then and now, sometimes requires her to stay in bed and rest. She would need a job with some flexibility in scheduling. Understandably, that was a concern shared by Khadidra Taylor, her school guidance counselor and DRS Rehabilitation Counselor Janet Zerbe.

“She was raised to feel like you can’t let this get the best of you,” said Zerbe, crediting the strength and commitment of Taylor’s parents. “There’s such a difference in people who see things that way.”

Taylor had strong family support all along. For part of the time she attended Marshall University, her father would pick her up at the end of his own work day as a surgical technician at Charleston Area Medical Center. They’d drive to her class, where Dad would catch some sleep in the car until she was ready to go home.

Both her parents have sacrificed retirement savings to pay for her medical needs, including those two hip replacement surgeries before she was 19 years old. She wanted to give Mom and Dad a break, so she needed a job with decent pay and benefits.

Today she has such a job, and it’s one that also answers her lifelong desire to help other people. Khadidra Taylor is a Social Service Worker III with the Bureau for Children and Families at the West Virginia Division of Health and Human Resources (DHHR).

“There isn’t one thing Khadidra is best at. She’s good at pretty much everything,” said Keith Miller, her supervisor at DHHR. “She takes her job seriously and she does it all well.”

True to her own history of helping others, Taylor said the most rewarding aspect of her job is the opportunity it gives her to help children. “If you make even a small difference in their life, it can affect them down the road,” she said, “and then it’s kind of like a domino effect. It will affect the next person, and the next person ...”



Amie Becilla, Clarksburg District

You don’t have to go farther than the front office of Westwood Middle School to find out how Amie Becilla is doing as a teacher of children with autism and behavior disorders.

“She’s wonderful,” said Kay Smith, the school secretary. “She’s just a delightful person to be around, and she seems to take every problem in stride. I wish I knew more people like Amie.”

When Amie Becilla earned her bachelor’s degree in human service sociology from Fairmont State College in 2002, she already had four years’ experience working with children with autism in Monongalia County. Her degree and work experience provided an excellent foundation for a career in teaching, yet she still needed a master’s degree to work as a special education teacher.

She applied to DRS for assistance with training and job placement.

Becilla was working nearly full-time as a teacher’s aide in Monongalia County.



When she applied for services from DRS, she also was providing daily care for three others with special needs, working out daily in a local gym to minimize the impact of her disabilities (insulin-dependent diabetes and orthopedic impairment of her left leg) and was active in a number of volunteer activities related to her *alma mater*, Morgantown High School. Over the course of three years, she also taught sign language courses at the Monongalia Technical Educational Center.

The first employment plan she developed with Rehabilitation Counselor Fred Brooks called for providing tuition assistance for one special education course. This, combined with a course she completed earlier, would have made her eligible for a provisional certificate to teach special education.

“At the time she applied for the provisional certificate, Monongalia County had all the certified special education teachers it required,” Brooks said, “so her goal of teaching after completing six hours of coursework did not work out.”

Undeterred, she continued working as a teacher’s aide, using her income to help pay tuition for the courses she needed to complete the special education curriculum, and Brooks arranged for DRS to provide financial assistance for summer courses during the periods she was unemployed. Based on her economic need, the agency also paid for the examinations she needed to obtain a teaching certificate.

Becilla was hired in 2005 for a permanent part-time teaching position at Westwood Middle School. By August 2006, she was hired as a full-time behavior disorder teacher at Westwood. Her success required considerable sacrifice – evening classes after working all day and assuming a greater financial burden to achieve her goal.

“I love this work,” Becilla said. “It wears me out sometimes, but these kids are special to me, and I really enjoy working with them.”

Sharon Hastings, Wheeling District

From 1992 to 2005, Sharon Hastings struggled to make ends meet and take care of herself and her two children.

A former business owner, Hastings desperately wanted to work but couldn’t find a job that would accommodate her need for regular breaks. The 47-year-old has chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and chronic lobular hepatitis. She came to DRS for help finding a job to fit her circumstances.

Today, Hastings is a top salesperson for LiveOps, a virtual company that provides call center services to more than 150 companies, from small businesses to Fortune 500 corporations. As the Wheeling District Ability Works Recognition recipient, she has carved out a career for herself and is finding success.

“I have strong faith and believed there was something out there I could do,” she said. “I had the will. I just had to find the way. I needed somebody to help me with that.

“This illness is like lupus or multiple sclerosis. You go in remission, you go out of remission. Sometimes people look at you, and they don’t think you have a disability. It’s something that a lot of people don’t understand, but it’s very devastating to have to live with. A lot of people with this type of illness give up hope.”

LiveOps representatives can work full- or part-time from any location with a dedicated phone line and high-speed Internet access. Hastings manages calls from customers buying products or services from companies in various industries, including financial services and food services. As a contract employee, she works for herself and sets her own hours, which provides the flexibility she needs to manage her energy level.

“I have to have rest periods during the day. I can’t overexert myself,” she said. “There are certain things that bring my disability out of remission. That would be stress or exertion.

“It’s a wonderful company. It builds your confidence. It’s just the perfect job for my disability. Fourteen percent of my company is people with disabilities. It’s a really great company to work for.”

To help Hastings get started with LiveOps, DRS provided counseling and guidance, a vocational evaluation, job search assistance, rehabilitation technology services and other services. The agency also purchased computer and phone equipment to help her set up a home office.

LiveOps couldn’t be more pleased with Hastings’ work. As a top salesperson with the company, she has opportunities to offer tips to other representatives. “Sharon is a top agent at LiveOps,” LiveOps Agent Facilitator Theresa McConkey said. “She brings 150 percent effort and is always sharing ideas on how to improve sales for all agents.”



Steven Bennett, Beckley District

Steven Bennett was climbing the ladder of success. He had associates' degrees in drafting/design and industrial engineering, a bachelor's degree in organizational management and had recently accepted a promotion with Vifan USA as a quality assurance lab technician.

When he suddenly lost much of his vision in 2001 due to pseudotumor cerebri, a type of inflammation that resembles a brain tumor, he no longer could do his job. He applied for services at DRS' Princeton Office and decided to go back to school and study rehabilitation counseling.

Bennett, 31, now works as a certified rehabilitation counselor at the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired office in Bristol and helps others overcome similar disabilities. The Beckley District's Ability Works Recognition recipient is back on the road to success.

"I came to DRS to receive assistance in finding training and go back to work," Bennett said. "I lost my vision and I was not able to do the duties that were required. DRS helped me to find the services and training so I could go back to work."

Instead of complaining about his loss, Bennett prepared himself to help others deal with similar problems, according to his supervisor, Dr. Rick Mitchell.

"Since he himself has a visual impairment, he understands what it is to be visually impaired and some of the struggles that some clients go through," Mitchell said. "He's certainly empathetic to their needs. He has a real compassion for the people that he works with and really wants the best for the clients that he serves."

Bennett recently began working with a client who also has pseudotumor cerebri. Thanks to early intervention, the problem hasn't advanced as far as it did with Bennett.

"He received treatment in time," Bennett said. "He's actually able to do things I'm not able to do. He can drive. My vision is not good enough to drive. A lot of the adaptive devices you may see me use, he doesn't have to use. His visual acuity is a lot better."

Changing careers can be difficult in the best of circumstances. However, Bennett seems to have made the adjustment with ease.

"Working as a vocational rehabilitation counselor in Virginia has been very fulfilling," he said. "I've been able to do for other people what other vocational rehabilitation counselors have done for me. I help many people go to school, to find new careers. For many people, I help them maintain their employment. They don't have to lose their jobs like I did."

To help Bennett transition smoothly, DRS provided counseling and guidance, career exploration, rehabilitation technology, computer adaptations, adaptive aids and appliances, recordings for the blind, optical aids, financial assistance with college and job placement services.



Sharon Jenkins, Huntington District

At age 51, a sign at work fell on Sharon Jenkins' hand and nearly severed it completely. Her recovery and rehabilitation took two years, but that gave Sharon time for some serious self-assessment about how she could continue to work.

"I was working at Speedway (a convenience store and gas station), and the hours were long and it was hard work," the Huntington Ability Works recipient said. "I knew I could do better." With some guidance from a counselor at DRS, she proved it.

Jenkins signed up for Business Employment Skills Training (BEST) at the local Goodwill Industries office for the Tri-State area of Kentucky, Ohio and West Virginia. That training opened the door for her to interview for a number of clerical and secretarial positions.

"Sharon would look for jobs on her own, and she would also call me to ask if I knew of anything else," recalled Rexanna Shumaker, DRS rehabilitation counselor. "She always followed through. She was always where she needed to be, when she needed to be there."



Among other job opportunities, she looked into a temporary job as a secretary at Marshall University. Nobody would have blamed Sharon Jenkins if she had turned down that temp job in the hope that a permanent position would come her way sooner. But she applied and she was hired, and soon proved her worth and her willingness to work.

Months passed, and Sharon Jenkins was now known and liked in the close-knit academic community of Marshall University. When the management and marketing division of the Lewis College of Business needed a new executive secretary, she applied for the job. The director of management and marketing, Chong W. Kim, Ph.D., asked around about her.

What he learned from her co-workers pleased him. Dr. Kim also is an eighth-degree black belt and grand master of tae kwon do, the Korean martial art and combat sport. Kim values self-discipline and ingenuity, and he found both in Sharon Jenkins. He hired her as quickly as he could.

“It’s important here to be on time, and Sharon is always early,” Kim said. “Sometimes I can’t be here. She is always available to help people resolve problems in my absence. She’s very helpful and easy-going, and people like her. That’s important to us here.”

It’s also important to Sharon Jenkins, who enjoys the people and the work.

“It’s not mundane work,” she said. “It’s not repetitive. There are meetings I have to attend and take notes on, luncheons to be served ... I don’t have anybody hollering and screaming, like I did sometimes working at Speedway in a public place. I’m in higher education!”



Jeremy Hubbard, Martinsburg District

From childhood to adulthood, Jeremy Hubbard has strived to become an independent person. Born with cerebral palsy, he never let his disability keep him from pursuing his goals.

He moved across West Virginia, from Martinsburg to Huntington, to earn a political science degree from Marshall University. He has appeared in independently produced films. He plays on a travel paintball team. And the 27-year-old works as the associate director of education at the Sylvan Learning Center in Martinsburg.

DRS’ Martinsburg District Ability Works Recognition recipient, Hubbard credits his parents for his success. “They’ve always taught me my disability doesn’t mean I can’t do whatever I want,” he said. “They’ve pounded that into me from the day I was born.”

At Sylvan Learning Center, Hubbard works with clients of all ages, making him one of the center’s most versatile instructors. According to Executive Director Terri Winn, who manages Sylvan Learning Centers in Martinsburg and Frederick, Hagerstown, Damascus and Gaithersburg, Md., both clients and parents ask for Hubbard as an instructor.

“Jeremy does a wonderful job for us here at Sylvan Learning Center because he is confident and has the ability to share his knowledge with the students he works with,” she said. “He also has a very good way of building self-esteem and sharing that confidence with the students. In other words, he helps them build their confidence and self-esteem in the areas they work.

“He is very versatile. He can work with very young students in beginning math or beginning reading all the way up to college age if not adult students. He’s able to adjust to each level with ease.”

Winn said Hubbard fits in with other employees at the center and completes his work assignments with little assistance from others.

“He has done pretty much what he has to do, not asking us for a lot of adjustments. I think that’s part of his confidence and his ability to be a great employee. He comes in here and knows what he has to do and figures out himself how to get that done.”

DRS provided a wide range of services to help Hubbard become employed, including counseling and guidance, college financial assistance, environmental controls in his dorm room, a voice-activated laptop computer, financial help with attendant care for his daily living needs and job placement.



David Romine, Lewisburg District

David Romine uses words like “fortunate” and “lucky” to describe his life, although he’s had his share of disappointment. But determination and hard work, not luck, have made him the Ability Works Recognition recipient for the Lewisburg District of DRS.

Romine has accomplished a major career change that many people would never dare to try. At age 47, forced by degenerative disc disease to leave his job as an electrical lineman, Dave Romine took the advice of a DRS counselor and sought training in the growing field of health services.

His first contact with DRS was Herb Pearis, a retired rehabilitation counselor.

“I knew him from Lions (Lions Clubs International), and when I told him what had happened he told me to stop by and see him,” Romine said. “When I did, it turned out it was the last day to register for classes at Bluefield State Community College, so I went down there as quick as I could and registered for classes.”

Pearis referred Romine to Bill Nelson, a rehabilitation counselor in the Lewisburg office of DRS. Nelson arranged for funding to support David Romine’s training, but Romine still didn’t know where that training would lead until a friend at church suggested radiology. That friend is now one of his bosses, Dr. Charles Shelton III.

Radiation technology seemed a perfect choice for Romine, but it wasn’t easy. The schools he applied to had limits on the number of applicants they could accept each year. He faced an uphill battle persuading them that one of their new students should be a man in his late forties.

Romine commuted for two years to the community college, then finished in 2006 after another two years at Bluefield State College.

Today, Romine is a radiological technician at The Center for Cancer Care in Fairlea. The cancer care centers (there’s a sister office in Princeton) include state-of-the-art radiation treatments that precisely target cancerous cells as they minimize the radiation exposure to healthy cells. That’s Romine’s job, and he does it with a welcome combination of technical skill, compassion and good humor.

“I don’t think you could find a better person for this kind of work,” Dr. Shelton said. “Dave is very upbeat. He likes people, and because of his involvement in this community he knows everybody. All that is important to people who are going through a difficult time in their lives. Dave’s the kind of person who just naturally cheers people up.”



FISCAL YEAR 2007 FINANCIAL REPORT

West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services

Statement of Funds and Expenses for the year ended June 30, 2007

Source of Funds

State Appropriations	12,969,386
Federal Grants	43,726,914
Program Income	500,109
Special Revenue	21,032
Total Funds	57,217,441

Expenditure by Program Category

Administration	10,204,484
Rehabilitation Services:	
Case Services	8,201,077
Counseling, Guidance and Placement	10,364,928
WV Rehabilitation Center	6,519,501
Disability Determination Program	19,048,498
Other:	
Assistive Technology	370,010
Attendant Care	173,774
Benefits Planning	243,784
Independent Living	400,846
Medicaid Infrastructure Grant	496,892
Older Blind (VISIONS)	239,510
Randolph-Sheppard	110,294
Recreation	66,724
Ron Yost Program	340,000
Staff Development	77,794
Supported Employment	121,216
Supported Employment Extended Care	119,010
Traumatic Brain Injury	119,099
Total Expenditures	57,217,441

Classification of Expenditures

Personal Services	30,916,690
Current Expense	11,755,594
Repairs & Alterations	350,100
Equipment	706,454
Purchased Case Services	13,488,603
Total	57,217,441

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