West Virginia
Division of Rehabilitation Services

Investing in Futures

2018 Annual Report
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Dear Friends and Colleagues:

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services’ (DRS) 2018 Annual Report, *Investing in Futures*, reflects how the hard work of DRS staff, in conjunction with our essential vocational rehabilitation program partners – WorkForce West Virginia, West Virginia Adult Education, secondary and postsecondary education, Community Rehabilitation Programs, the State Rehabilitation Council, the Statewide Independent Living Council and West Virginia businesses and employers – enables us to meet our newly adopted mission statement for the vocational rehabilitation program:

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

In fiscal year 2018, DRS and its valued employees provided vocational rehabilitation services to 9,913 West Virginians with disabilities. Those services play an essential role in empowering our consumers, people with disabilities, in their pursuit to work and succeed as productive, self-sufficient community members.

We proudly acknowledge the 1,211 determined individuals who, after receiving services from DRS, secured employment during the past year. These hard-working citizens represent the powerful impact of vocational rehabilitation with an average increase in estimated annual earnings of 355 percent!

This report also highlights the accomplishments of DRS’ Disability Determination Section (DDS), which adjudicates Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income claims for the Social Security Administration (SSA) and they cleared 40,867 claims during fiscal year 2018.

Through continued investment of resources for positive change, DRS dramatically contributes to West Virginia’s economy and to improving the lives of West Virginians with disabilities.

Thank you for sharing in our successes!
Together, we enable and empower individuals with disabilities to work and to live independently by providing individualized services to consumers and employers.
Highlights

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

• DRS served 9,913 West Virginians with disabilities, with 6,245 being transition-aged youth.
• DRS helped 1,211 job seekers with disabilities obtain or retain employment.
• The estimated annual earnings of individuals at application were $6,864,416. After receiving vocational rehabilitation services, their total estimated earnings rose to $31,233,280, which amounts to a 355 percent increase in the total estimated earned income of these hard-working West Virginians, which demonstrates a significant return on investment.
• DRS spent more than $18 million to purchase necessary vocational rehabilitation services for its consumers, which dramatically contributes to West Virginia’s economy.
• DRS continued to work toward the goals identified in the Unified State Plan that was developed in collaboration with core partners, WorkForce West Virginia and West Virginia Adult Education, as required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
• 99.7 percent of individuals served had significant disabilities.

Disability Determination Section

• DDS cleared 40,867 disability claims.
• DDS met SSA’s priority goal in the Continuing Disability Review case workload.
• DDS assisted other states with over 3,841 claims.
• DDS continued to partner with the SSA, Office of the Inspector General and the West Virginia Attorney General to maintain the Cooperative Disability Investigation Unit in Charleston. 128 referrals were made to the unit.
Customer Service Delivery

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

DRS employs approximately 86 extensively trained vocational rehabilitation counselors who work directly with individuals with disabilities throughout the vocational rehabilitation process. Vocational rehabilitation counselors are required to meet a stringent certification criterion.

Each of the 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 work in each DRS district, and as a team, to develop client services policy, review casework practices, assure consistent interpretation of policy throughout the state and provide training on policy and casework.

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

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

The anticipated outcome of the individual’s vocational rehabilitation program is competitive employment in a career of the individual’s choice.

Depending on the services needed, the individual’s involvement with DRS 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.

Steps to Success

Application → Intake → Assessment → Eligibility → Provision of Services → Individualized Plan for Employment → Employment Secured → Follow-up → Case Closed → Success!
Available Services

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

DRS services include:

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

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

- **Pre-employment transition services** may be provided to students with disabilities and can include job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling for postsecondary education, workplace readiness training and instruction in self-advocacy.

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

- **Rehabilitation technology services** may include assistive technology devices, driver evaluation and education services, assistive technology services and rehabilitation engineering services to address barriers encountered by an individual in obtaining or retaining employment.

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

- **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.

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

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

- **Post-employment services** may be provided to previously rehabilitated individuals when needed to maintain or regain suitable employment.
James Morris was on a well-planned path to successfully fulfilling his goals. He had graduated summa cum laude from West Virginia University Institute of Technology with a computer science degree and was working as a computer programmer at Appalachian Software in Scott Depot.

He and his wife, Cami, were planning for their future. But in 2012, just 11 months into their marriage, a blood clot formed in James’ middle cerebral artery, which caused a massive stroke. He wasn’t expected to live throughout the night.

James spent more than 70 days in intensive care and was then moved to an inpatient rehabilitation facility for a month. Doctors didn’t believe he would ever walk again.

That was six years ago and James has defied those odds. He’s walking, talking, working and planning for his future again.

Despite his new disability, James wanted to go back to work. James’ wife encouraged him to apply for services from DRS.

DRS provided James with vocational counseling and guidance, as well as community-based assessments to determine his skills and abilities since his stroke.

James and his wife relocated to Beckley to be closer to family. Because computer programming jobs in that area are limited, James and his vocational rehabilitation counselor, Crystal Lively, started looking at other areas of interest for possible employment.

James had always enjoyed sports. He played tennis throughout junior high, high school and college.

James applied for an opening at Dick’s Sporting Goods in Beckley but got nowhere on his first attempt.

Lively and James spent time focusing on services to help him get ready to return to the workplace, including a driver evaluation, vehicle modifications and driver training.

James’ second application to Dick’s Sporting Goods got him an interview, which ultimately led to his current part-time job as a sales associate in the store’s golf department.

James’ primary role is customer service but he also stocks shelves and performs some specialized services like re-gripping or extending golf clubs.

DRS helped James with some workplace accommodations to make aspects of his job easier to perform – a push cart to help him stock golf balls and a chair to help him get down to stock low shelves.

Dick’s Sporting Goods Store Manager Dwight Marshall explained that James came in with a knowledge and understanding of golf, which helps him to provide good service to their customers.

“He’s been great from day one,” said Marshall. “It’s nice for us, as a company, to put people into departments or positions that they... have an interest in, but then also already coming in and having a little bit of knowledge beforehand helps. He’s gotten countless compliments over the time that he’s been here.”

James describes himself as a person who never gives up. He admits he’s stubborn and outgoing but also introverted.

He’s used his faith in God and the support from his family, especially his wife, to help him through the tough times. “I think my biggest challenge was, before the age of 30, I lost both my parents and had a stroke,” said James.

But James and Cami are working toward a future that’s been adapted along the way. They are raising two foster children and are in the process of adopting them.

James likes the flexibility of his job because it allows him to focus a lot of time on taking care of the kids. He spends most of his free time taking care of household chores.

James had to learn how to do everything without the use of one arm after his stroke, but he’s eternally grateful that he survived. He wants to continue rehabilitation on his leg and arm, and he ultimately wants to get back into the field of computer programming.
Fiscal Year 2018 Program Data

Economic Impact of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

$31,233,280 After rehabilitation

355 percent increase in total estimated annual earnings

$6,864,416 At referral

West Virginians Served by District

Districts

Wheeling - 1,478
Clarksburg - 1,308
Martinsburg - 1,143
Charleston - 1,718
Beckley - 2,030
Huntington - 2,236

Total served 9,913
### Education at Time of Individualized Plan for Employment of Individuals Vocationally Rehabilitated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>At IPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate, GED or special education certificate</td>
<td>656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in high school</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or more years of postsecondary education</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attained postsecondary certification, license or educational certificate</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s degree</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree beyond a bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school diploma</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Referral Sources of Individuals Vocationally Rehabilitated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Rehabilitation Programs</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Corrections/Juvenile Justice</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Institutions (Elementary/Secondary)</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Institutions (Postsecondary)</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/Friends</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Health Providers</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Providers</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-Stop Employment/Training Centers</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Sources</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Referral</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security Administration</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Primary Disability of Individuals Vocationally Rehabilitated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impairment Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Impairments</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing/Communicative Impairments</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Impairments</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Impairments</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Impairments</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Age, Gender and Race of Individuals Vocationally Rehabilitated

### Age
- Under 20: 500
- 20 - 34: 297
- 35 - 44: 243
- 45 - 64: 154
- 65+: 11

### Gender
- Male: 633
- Female: 578

### Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one race</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1,125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Occupations of Individuals Vocationally Rehabilitated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Architecture and Engineering</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports and Media</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building, Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and Financial Operations</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community and Social Services</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer and Mathematical</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction and Extraction</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education, Training and Library</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming, Fishing and Forestry</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Preparation and Serving Related</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare Practitioners and Technical</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare Support</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Installation, Maintenance and Repair</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life, Physical and Social Science</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Specific</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office and Administrative Support</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Care and Service</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protective Service</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and Related</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and Material Moving</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total rehabilitated into competitive, integrated employment</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,211</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DRS expects to annually meet program evaluation standards and performance indicators previously established by the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration. To successfully meet these standards, DRS must pass four of the six employment outcome indicators (Indicators 1.1 to 1.6) and pass two of the three primary indicators (Indicators 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5). DRS must also pass the equal access indicator (Indicator 2.1).

Fiscal year 2018 data shows that DRS exceeded the federal benchmarks, which assure a trend of successful employment outcomes for West Virginians with disabilities, benefiting taxpayers and rehabilitation clients alike.

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

**Performance Indicator 1.1 — Change in Employment Outcomes**
The number of individuals who achieved an employment outcome in the current year must equal or exceed the number from the previous year. (Federal Requirement – equal to or greater than prior year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>FY 2016</th>
<th>FY 2015</th>
<th>FY 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>1,211</td>
<td>1,803</td>
<td>2,090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>1,671</td>
<td>2,090</td>
<td>2,090</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Performance Indicator 1.2 — Percent of Employment Outcomes**
The percentage of individuals exiting the program during the current year who have achieved an employment outcome after receiving services. (Federal Requirement – 55.8%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>FY 2016</th>
<th>FY 2015</th>
<th>FY 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Performance Indicator 1.3 — Competitive Employment Outcomes**
The percentage of individuals who achieved an employment outcome and are earning at least the minimum wage. (Federal Requirement – 72.6%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>FY 2016</th>
<th>FY 2015</th>
<th>FY 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>99.4%</td>
<td>99.8%</td>
<td>99.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Performance Indicator 1.4 — Significance of Disability**
Of those earning at least the minimum wage, the percentage who have significant disabilities. (Federal Requirement – 62.4%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>FY 2016</th>
<th>FY 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>98.9%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>88.1%</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Performance Indicator 1.5 — Earnings Ratio**
The ratio of the average hourly earnings of all individuals earning at least the minimum wage to the average hourly earnings of all employed individuals in the state. (Federal Requirement –.52)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>FY 2016</th>
<th>FY 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Performance Indicator 1.6 — Self-Support**
The difference in the percentage of individuals who at program entry reported their income as the largest single source of support, and the percentage that reported their personal income as the largest single source of support at program exit. (Federal Requirement – 53% mathematical differences)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>FY 2016</th>
<th>FY 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>63.1%</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

**Performance Indicator 2.1 — Minority Background Service Rate**
The service rate for individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio to the service rate for all non-minorities with disabilities. (Federal Requirement – Ratio of .80)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>FY 2016</th>
<th>FY 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>.957</td>
<td>.893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>.922</td>
<td>.883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>.893</td>
<td>.883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>.883</td>
<td>.883</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Programs and Services

Transition Program

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

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

RESULTS

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

- **6,245** students (ages 16 to 21) with disabilities served, which is **63 percent** of the total number of individuals served by DRS.
- **2,637** transition students were referred directly from schools to DRS.
- **1,242** students with disabilities developed individualized plans for employment.
- **550** transition clients gained employment, which is **45 percent** of the total number of rehabilitation closures.

COLLEGE EDUCATION SERVICES

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

- Assisted **2,130** students with college education services they needed to meet their work-related educational goals.

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West Virginia University Human Resource Manager Charlotte Swiger presented on current job openings at the university at the Clarksburg Career Exploration Opportunity Summit.
PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES

Since the enactment of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), DRS has focused on expanding its transition program by providing pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities starting in the 10th grade, up to age 21. There are 69 counselors assigned to work with students with disabilities throughout the state.

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

- **Job exploration counseling**
- **Work-based learning experiences**, which may include in-school or after-school opportunities or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships), that are provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible
- **Counseling on opportunities for enrollment** in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education
- **Workplace readiness training** to develop social skills and independent living
- **Instruction in self-advocacy**, which may include peer mentoring

INITIATIVES

**PATHWAYS TO THE FUTURE**

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

The online resource center focuses on transition planning:

- **Career Planning** – jobs, interest, skills, experience
- **Education Planning** – training, financial aid, postsecondary education, prerequisites
- **Independent Living** – habitation, money management, transportation

**CAREER EXPLORATION OPPORTUNITY SUMMITS**

DRS held 10 Career Exploration Opportunity Summits, serving 199 high school students from across the state. The four-day summits provided tools and information to support students in obtaining long-term career success. The curriculum included career planning and preparation, self-assessments, completing job applications, interviewing skills, how to dress for employment, work ethic, cell phone and internet safety, and self-advocacy.

Career Exploration Opportunity Summit students participated in discussions about business etiquette and appropriate workplace behavior.
Investing in Futures…

Brittany Lambert – Consultant
Clarksburg District Success Story

Growing up, Brittany Lambert knew she wanted to help others, and that goal was a powerful factor as she was choosing a career path.

Brittany grew up in a small West Virginia town called Mill Creek. She attended Tygarts Valley High School. While in high school, she got involved with DRS through her transition plan.

Brittany has had glaucoma since she was a year or so old, which caused a significant visual impairment in her right eye and no vision in her left eye. The disability impacted her throughout her life but, because it’s something she grew up with, she’s accustomed to dealing with it.

According to Olivia Zivney, DRS rehabilitation counselor, Brittany’s plans always included college.

After graduating high school in 2011, Brittany moved on to West Virginia University, where she obtained a bachelor’s degree in psychology with a minor in disability studies in 2015 and earned her master’s degree in clinical rehabilitation and mental health counseling in 2017.

While in college, Brittany did need some accommodations. Those primarily included additional time on testing and large-print versions of paper materials.

But Brittany’s biggest challenge in life thus far has been transportation. Because of her disability, driving was not an option so she has to rely on public transportation or others to get where she needs to go. However, she did not let that barrier stop her.

During graduate school, she did an internship at the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), which is a contract service of the federal Office of Disability Policy based at West Virginia University.

Brittany considers herself fortunate that she didn’t really have much of a job search after graduating. She did such a good job on her internship that JAN hired her for a full-time consultant position.

Her responsibilities include providing consultative services to employees, employers and service providers on the employment provisions of Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as workplace accommodations including assistive technology. She also writes for JAN website publications, and she has started doing Webcast training in their office and traveling around the country to do in-person training.

JAN Codirector Anne Hirsh believes Brittany’s top qualifications for the job include her education and intellect, the on-the-job training she received through her internship, her great demeanor with customers, her knowledge of assistive technology, and her personal experience with disability.

She’s grateful to DRS, not only for the help they provided but for helping her to realize what her ultimate career goal should be.

“DRS has been really helpful to me because they were there from the high school transition, so they were able to help me get an idea of what to expect in a college setting, what things I might need,” Brittany said.

“They helped with providing equipment. They helped financially with things like tuition and really, if it weren’t for being a DRS client myself, I probably wouldn’t have been familiar with the profession of rehabilitation counseling, which is what I ended up pursuing as a career, so I think they had a lot of influence throughout my life in where I ended up.”

Her current plans for the future include staying on with JAN and broadening her knowledge about workplace accommodations and assistive technology so that she can continue helping others as she was helped along the way.

And Hirsh wants to keep her as an employee. “She is tremendous,” she exclaimed. “We are extremely lucky to have her and hope that we can engage her and keep her interested in this job for a good long time.”

Zivney believes Brittany has the motivation and ambition to do whatever she sets her mind to do. “She’s really a shining example of what DRS is all about,” Zivney said. “She has a disability, but it hasn’t stood in her way at all – with the right accommodations, she has just plowed forward and she hasn’t let anything get in her way so she’s just very admirable in that respect.”
Career Exploration Opportunity Summits

DRS held Career Exploration Opportunity Summits at 10 locations across the state during a two-week period in June 2018. This DRS initiative is part of the required pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) activities under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Pre-ETS services required by WIOA include job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs, workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living, and instruction in self-advocacy.

The four-day Career Exploration Opportunity Summits provided tools and information to support students in obtaining long-term career success. The curriculum included career planning and preparation, self-assessments, completing job applications, interviewing skills, how to dress for employment, work ethic, cell phone and internet safety and self-advocacy.

The 10 summits were conducted in Beckley, Charleston, Clarksburg, Eleanor, Elkins, Huntington, Martinsburg, Moorefield, Parkersburg and Welch by DRS’ employment specialists, with 199 high school students attending.

The Clay Center’s “Power Your Future” mobile exhibit visited seven summit locations during these two weeks. This unique exhibition on wheels uses interactive games and activities to take visitors on a journey through the exploration and extraction of natural gas, the engineering and technology of processing it, and the many uses of this important natural resource.

Students participating in the summits earned $8.75 per hour while attending the workshops and received valuable information to prepare them for their future.

DRS received positive feedback from the participating students and their parents. The most rewarding success of the summits was that the students participating remained engaged and were genuinely invested in the learning experience.

Students at the Charleston Career Exploration Opportunity Summit had the opportunity to visit an actual worksite, JSI Presort Mailing Services, to tour the facility and participate in some hands-on work experience.
Employer Services Program

DRS’ team of employment specialists work closely with local employers to help them to determine their workforce needs and then relay current and future job openings to our vocational rehabilitation counselors and clients.

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

In fiscal year 2018, DRS employment specialists made 1,355 employer visits, where they provided employers with solutions in the areas of staffing, job retention of employees who have developed a disability, education, technical consultation on the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, and tax credit information for hiring individuals with disabilities.

Continuing education and training for DRS employment specialists ensures that they are providing quality services to clients. By staying up-to-date on national recruiting and hiring trends, DRS is able to assist clients with remaining competitive in the job market, which improves their chances of finding a job, boosts their visibility to maximize their career opportunities and increases their competitive advantage.

To better serve youth with disabilities, DRS employment specialists have knowledge of workplace ethics, sometimes referred to as soft skills. Employment specialists are able to assist students with disabilities in understanding how to make a good first impression, grasping the concept of interpersonal skills, and increasing their awareness of what employers look for and consider when they hire and promote employees.

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

Career Exploration Opportunity Summit students participated in discussions about appropriate workplace attire, how to dress for success and how to make a good impression with employers in job interviews.
Community Rehabilitation Programs

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

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

There are 74 DRS-acknowledged CRPs with 119 total service locations throughout West Virginia.

To better meet the needs of DRS and its clients, DRS works closely with the CRPs and other local community providers to expand programs, such as pre-vocational training, employment-readiness services and job coaching.

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

DRS continues to cultivate and expand the Student Transition to Employment Program (STEP) to directly assist transitioning youth with obtaining needed employment services. STEP is designed to train special education teachers, school transition teachers, and/or teacher’s aides to provide job placement skills to participating high school students. A DRS employee exclusively recruits and trains school system employees to become new STEP vendors throughout the state.

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

As required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, DRS continued a training program for individuals with disabilities who work in programs covered under the U.S. Department of Labor’s Sub-Minimum Wage Certificate program. The training focuses on ensuring that these individuals are aware of the employment-related services and supports that are available to enable individuals with disabilities to explore, discover, experience and attain competitive, integrated employment. In 2018, CRP staff coordinated and delivered the training to 248 employees with disabilities at six different facilities throughout the state.

Rehabilitation Technology Services

The rehabilitation technology unit travels statewide to provide services to improve DRS clients’ independence in the workplace, home and community. This unit consists of a group of experienced engineers, computer specialists, driving instructors and technicians who specialize in job accommodations, custom-designed assistive technology, product fabrication and driver education.

- Served 630 people, providing 1,064 services which included 128 rehabilitation engineering services, 502 assistive technology services, 374 driver rehabilitation services and 60 environmental modification services.
Investing in Futures…

Julian Baldwin – Maintenance Associate
Martinsburg District Success Story

Julian Baldwin describes himself as friendly, nice, kind, outgoing, unique and fun. And he’s working in an environment where he shares those traits with others.

Julian grew up in Harpers Ferry, where he still lives with his family.

He attended Washington High School and graduated in 2016. His favorite thing about school was spending time with his friends.

During high school, Julian was referred to DRS. A diagnosis of autism, as well as difficulty with math, reading comprehension and staying focused, made him eligible for DRS services that would help him transition from school to employment.

According to Suzanne Van Nosdall, Julian’s vocational rehabilitation counselor, he was a good fit for services from DRS because he really wanted to go to work.

DRS provided community-based assessment services to help him learn what type of jobs might be suitable for him and what type of support he might need on the job. DRS also provided one-on-one job search assistance and job coaching services to help him learn the job once he was hired.

Julian wanted to work in a retail department store or a similar environment but did not want to work as a cashier. So, a vocational goal of stock clerk or maintenance associate was set. DRS helped him learn more about those types of jobs.

Ameriworks, a community rehabilitation provider, helped Julian with his job search, which included applying for jobs and helping him develop his interviewing skills.

In working with Ameriworks, Julian enjoyed going out to potential job sites to learn about work and meeting new people.

It was his idea to apply for a position at Walmart, and Ameriworks helped him with the application process. According to Julian, answering the application and interview questions was the most difficult thing about getting the job. But he was hired by the Walmart in Charles Town, where he works as a maintenance associate.

DRS paid for a job coach who “assisted him with learning all the job duties and responsibilities, as well as understanding his employer’s expectations toward what was required on the job,” Van Nosdall explained.

As a maintenance associate, Julian works mostly on the floor, cleaning up any spills, as well as sweeping, cleaning bathrooms and parking lots and helping to assemble trash for pick up in the back of the store.

For Julian, it was very important for him to find a job. He wanted to contribute – to be part of the community and fit in – providing a service to others.

His favorite part of working is seeing old friends and getting to catch up with them when he can.

He’s grateful to his former Washington High School teacher, Miss Burgess, “for setting me up with DRS to give me all the help I needed to get me where I’m at today,” Julian said.

Julian is most proud of graduating high school and getting a job but there are still things he’d like to accomplish, including pursuing a driver’s license, eventually finding a better job and getting married at some point down the road.

Van Nosdall credits Julian with being happy, personable and friendly but also with being a responsible, dedicated, hard worker who wants to be the best employee that he can be.

She explained that he’s doing great on the job, and his employer even told her that Julian is helping to train other maintenance workers.

She also believes that Julian will do very well in his future, especially now that he has some work experience and is becoming more self-confident and independent.

“Julian is just a delight to be around,” said Van Nosdall. “His personality is very infectious, and people are drawn to him. Yes, he does a good job, but he’s also very well-liked, and that causes people to want to be around him.”
Kelly Counts knew what job he wanted, and he used his unending determination to get it.

Kelly had previously worked in the food service industry but was unable to continue that employment because of back problems.

Despite his limitations, Kelly wanted to work so he sought services from Goodwill Industries which referred him to DRS.

Jennifer Hudnall, a DRS vocational rehabilitation counselor, began working with Kelly to assess his barriers to employment, as well as his skills and abilities. Kelly had several diagnoses including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), degenerative disc disease and some learning disabilities.

Kelly wanted to work as a janitor through Goodwill Industries, and he believed he could do a good job with this type of work. According to Hudnall, one of the first things DRS provided to Kelly was a community-based assessment, which functions as both an assessment of his abilities and as training for the job he was trying to get.

Through this assessment, Kelly worked 20 hours a week, without pay, with Goodwill on different janitorial jobs. Kelly gained training and work experience in the field, which ultimately helped him successfully gain employment as a janitor with Goodwill.

Hudnall explained that there was a lot of communication between DRS and Goodwill to arrange what was needed for his job.

“Kelly wanted to do janitorial work from the beginning,” said Hudnall. “He met with me to apply and came to appointments with me till I could make the referral to Goodwill. He attended all of his assessment appointments and training. He went through background checks and fingerprinting and all of that until he was eventually hired.”

Kelly currently works as a janitor through Goodwill, which does contractual janitorial work in buildings on the State Capitol Complex in Charleston. Fred Johnson, Kelly’s supervisor, refers to Kelly as his right-hand man.

Johnson explained that Kelly is responsible for cleaning the first floor in Building 3, which he describes as the most important because it’s the first thing people see when entering the building.

Kelly’s responsibilities include sweeping, mopping, taking out garbage, cleaning windows and restrooms, and restocking supplies on the floors he cleans.

Kelly describes himself as a hard worker, who is funny and dependable. Both Hudnall and Johnson agree.

“He will come in early. He will pick up extra shifts. He’s just on top of everything,” Hudnall explained.

“He’s starting to be a leader,” said Johnson. “He’s my go-to guy when I need something done.” Johnson credits Kelly with never slouching on the job and with being a great guy that people in the building just love.

Hudnall explained that she’s received nothing but positive feedback about Kelly. He’s hard-working and he doesn’t miss work. He’s thorough, and he’s happy to help his coworkers.

But it was his persistence and determination that helped him succeed.

“The first thing I think of when I think of Kelly is how funny he is,” Hudnall said. “He is hilarious – one of the funniest people I’ve ever met. He is very persistent. He was always calling to check on the status of his case. I never had to chase him down, like I have to do with some clients, and just a lot of determination and just really a lot of desire to work. Not every client has that much determination to work as hard as he does.”

Kelly feels the interview process was the biggest challenge he faced when trying to get the job, claiming that it was very difficult. But it was important for him to get this job so he could pay his bills and provide for his family.

Hudnall believes Kelly has the potential to eventually have a supervisory position in his field.

Kelly enjoys his job – being able to work at his own pace and help his coworkers if they need him.
**Sensory Specialty Unit Programs**

**BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED SERVICES**

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

- Served 362 people with blindness or significant vision impairments.
- 52 individuals obtained or retained employment after completing their vocational rehabilitation programs.

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

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

**DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING SERVICES**

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

- Served 1,146 clients who listed hearing impairments as their primary or secondary disability, which included people who are deaf or deaf-blind.
- 129 clients with hearing impairments achieved their employment goals.

**INITIATIVES**

In 2018, DRS implemented an initiative, where two employment specialists were fully trained in sensory impairments and serve these individuals in their job placement efforts. The employment specialists attended professional employment training at the Helen Keller National Center. The training was designed to provide an understanding of the diversity of the deaf-blind population, methods in identifying community and employment options for individuals with combined vision and hearing loss, and techniques on developing strategies that support the job development process.

DRS collaborated with the Children’s Vision Rehabilitation Project for a second straight year on a youth summer camp for high school students from across the state who are blind or visually impaired. The camp provided these individuals with opportunities to interact with peers with similar disabilities. DRS provided guidance and pre-employment transition services, as well as information about college and vocational training, orientation and mobility, assistive technology, self-advocacy training and Braille training.

DRS collaborated with Marshall University and West Virginia University Medical Schools to meet with both first-year and second-year medical students and the nursing academy to discuss the needs and possible accommodations of patients who have sensory impairments, including those who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired and/or deaf-blind, and present perspectives and experiences from this special population to the audience for educational purposes, discussion and better understanding.

**VISIONS**

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

VISIONS serves individuals age 55 and older with permanent vision loss. The purpose of the program is to enable individuals to live as independently as possible within their home and community. Training focuses on activities of daily living such as identifying money, using large print and maximizing remaining vision. Low-vision adaptive aids, including magnifiers, writing equipment, talking watches and large-button telephones, may be provided to help individuals become more self-sufficient. Referrals to the Talking Book library (audio books and Braille) may also be made.

In fiscal year 2018, 880 consumers were served statewide through the VISIONS program.
For Dan Boggs, it was his own motivation, determination and persistence that earned him employment success.

Dan grew up in Wheeling, where he was raised by his grandparents.

A detached retina in his right eye caused him to lose his eyesight in that eye between third and fourth grade. While in eighth grade, he had another detached retina in his left eye, which left him legally blind.

Dan got involved with DRS as a sophomore in high school. DRS helped Dan with several accommodations while in school, including a closed-circuit television (CCTV), which is a video magnifying system, and a computer so that he could do the schoolwork that other students were doing. They also got him involved with the Seeing Hand Association, a community rehabilitation provider that serves people who are blind or visually impaired to help them become self-sufficient and independent.

After graduating from Central Catholic High School in 2003, Dan went on to Wheeling Jesuit University, where he decided to major in criminal justice. He later transferred to West Liberty University.

According to Beth Lipscomb, DRS rehabilitation counselor, DRS also helped sponsor Dan in college and made sure he was established with the college disability services office to ensure that he received accommodations in his classrooms as well.

After earning a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice in 2008, Dan went on to complete a disability services certificate program at City University of New York.

After that, Dan began a massive job search.

He had some work experience. Dan had worked part-time at Seeing Hand while in high school. While in college, he also worked with the student affairs and disability services offices, and gained internship experience through the Ohio County Sheriff’s Department and the campus police office.

Dan’s goal was to find work in state or federal government because the benefits were better for people with disabilities, and he was willing to relocate if the right opportunity came along.

Dan worked with a DRS employment specialist who helped him build his résumé, and using a job search website called Indeed, he applied for somewhere around 13,000 jobs and traveled to 15 different states for interviews.

Dan’s hard work and persistence paid off when he was offered employment at Mohawk Valley Community College (MVCC) in Utica, New York. Dan works as an accommodations specialist, where he coordinates essential services for students with learning, physical, emotional and psychological disabilities so they have what they need to succeed in the classroom.

According to Jim Daoreuang, director of the MVCC disability resources office, Dan is frequently the first contact a student has when seeking services from their office.

“Dan does a great job of immediately connecting with students and working with students and understanding their abilities, their accommodation plan and their pursuit of higher education,” he explained.

At his job, Dan’s primary tools to help him are technology that aids him with reading and seeing his work materials. He also has a guide dog, Mickey, that assists him with getting around obstacles that he can’t see.

Dan knows how hard it is for people with disabilities to get jobs, and his goal is to encourage people to use available resources to help them succeed.

During his own educational experiences, Dan’s biggest challenges were ensuring that he had all necessary information in a format that he could access using computer-based technology, and dealing with the stigma associated with blindness and disability.

Dan is also working on his master’s degree in disability services, and completing that is a top goal for his future.

Other goals include advancing his career in government and maybe eventually working for a vocational rehabilitation agency or the state Commission for the Blind.
Behavioral Health, Corrections and Community Assets Program

The Behavioral Health and Corrections program was established in 2014 to help DRS better serve individuals with behavioral health conditions, as well as people with criminal histories who have disabilities. The Community Assets piece was added in 2017 and involves working with various partners such as the State Rehabilitation Council, the Statewide Independent Living Council and the Centers for Independent Living. Each of these valuable partners help support the vocational rehabilitation mission.

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

• provide information about DRS services to those who may make new client referrals to DRS and to those who may be eligible for services through DRS,

• obtain information and resources that DRS counselors can use to assist individuals with mental health conditions and substance related disorders, as well as people with disabilities who are involved in the criminal justice system, to achieve their employment goals and

• promote self-sufficiency for West Virginians with disabilities.

Through this program, DRS has continued its relationship with the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation, and in fiscal year 2018, DRS received 16 new client referrals directly from the parole services employment coordinator. DRS also received referrals from probation officers, day report centers and juvenile services and served an estimated 300 individuals with disabilities and criminal histories this year.

Cross-training efforts have continued for vocational rehabilitation counselors, partners and stakeholders to help DRS clients obtain employment. In cooperation with the West Virginia Council of Churches, DRS has been active in the development of and has participated in re-entry councils across the state, which focus on solving barriers to re-entry, connecting with employers and improving outcomes through collaboration.

In 2018, DRS continued collaborating with the Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities to build and strengthen recovery-oriented services and supports for DRS clients. DRS staff are made aware of available Recovery Coach and Leadership Academies where our clients in recovery can take advantage of these free or low-cost trainings to gain employability skills.

DRS maintains active participation on the Behavioral Health Planning Council, the West Virginia Olmsted Council and the West Virginia Achieving a Better Life Experience (WVABLE) Advisory Committee to promote wellness, recovery, resiliency and financial security for West Virginians with disabilities. DRS has continued working with experts in the field of psychiatric rehabilitation.

In 2018, DRS successfully completed a free technical assistance project with the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation at Boston University to develop a self-study course for vocational rehabilitation counselors and community partner staff on effective strategies for helping people with serious mental illnesses obtain and maintain employment.

Randolph-Sheppard Program

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

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

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

The program provides services to 16 licensed, self-employed blind vendors, providing concession services to 230 governmental facilities throughout the state. Average income for vendors in West Virginia for fiscal year 2018 was $40,054 with gross sales of $1.9 million.
Sally Johnson used her own determination to persevere in starting over at the age of 55.

Sally grew up in Huntington and graduated from Huntington High School. She went on to Ohio University for pre-nursing courses and ultimately earned her nursing degree from Marshall University.

But, according to Sally, “I was in addiction, we call it substance use disorder now, since I was 12 or 13. It started with drinking and smoking some weed. After that, it was something every day. My sobriety date is December 3, 2010.”

Sally was going through a recovery program at HER Place, an addiction recovery center for women in Huntington, and they encouraged her to apply to DRS. Sally was interested in becoming a recovery coach, and DRS helped her receive on-the-job training with HER Place. She worked through them as a recovery coach at Cabell Huntington Health Department. The on-the-job training was supposed to turn into a full-time job, but their funding fell short.

Sally had a lot of past work experience as a registered nurse at several different hospitals, but she had lost her nursing license due to her substance use disorder.

In 2011, Sally started working toward getting her license back when she wrote her first letter to the state licensing board.

Sally found out that it was possible for her to get her license back, and DRS assisted her along the way. DRS helped pay for the required training, including computer classes, and counseling services, which were all necessary to reinstate her license.

She is still working on getting reinstated as a nurse and is under a three-year contract, which allows her to work in the field. Her experience as a recovery coach at the health department provided her with the opportunity to get to know the nurse supervisor there. So, when a position became available, she was quick to apply, and they gave her the chance she was seeking.

She enjoys the versatility of the job the most, getting to work in the department’s five different clinics, which include the areas of immunizations, tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases, family planning and harm reduction.

Sally believes trying to get her license reinstated has been her greatest employment challenge, and she credits Anne Moncer, her DRS rehabilitation counselor, with helping her learn the importance of structure, patience and listening to others. “She taught me those things through preparing me and getting me ready for work, for employment,” Sally said. “I couldn’t have done it without her. She was a very integral part of my recovery.”

Her biggest life challenge, though, is finding a way to balance everything that she needs and wants to do, including work, family, friends and her recovery. “My recovery comes first because, if I don’t put my recovery first, I’m going to lose it. Then I’ll lose everything else that I’ve worked so hard to get and that’s been given back to me,” she explained.

Sally believes prayer and a support group of good friends, who hold her accountable, to be her biggest motivation through difficult times.

Sally is most proud of her sobriety and of her children and their accomplishments. She’s also grateful that everything she’s been through has taught her humility.

Personally, she just wants to continue learning and being the best person that she can be. Professionally, her focus is on completing the nursing contract that will ultimately earn her the nursing license for which she’s been working so hard.

In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her two grandchildren, outdoor activities and helping other women with their recovery process.

Moncer believes the health department is a great fit. “She likes the job. They were the ones that gave her a chance,” she explained. “They knew what she had been through. They knew she was trying to get her nursing license back, and I think she appreciates the fact that they took a chance on her and she likes it. She’s good with them, and she is able to, in a lot of areas of her work, help people through the recovery process.”
Disability Determination Section

Mission

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

Under contract with the Social Security Administration (SSA), Disability Determination Section (DDS) makes eligibility determinations on disability claims filed by West Virginians for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). SSA, which fully funds DDS, authorized $18.5 million to fund DDS for fiscal year 2018.

DDS cleared 40,867 claims in fiscal year 2018. While DDS did not realize projected receipts in initial claims, adjudications of this workload still exceeded receipts by 595 claims. In addition, DDS met the established goal in the critical Continuing Disability Review case workload, which was a priority for SSA. DDS also assisted other states with over 3,841 claims.

During fiscal year 2018, DDS again collaborated with SSA, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and the West Virginia Attorney General to maintain the Cooperative Disability Investigation Unit (CDIU) in the Charleston DDS office. This unit was established to assist in the detection and prevention of fraud in the Social Security Disability program. For 2018, DDS made 128 referrals to the CDIU.

DDS had hiring authority from SSA during fiscal year 2018, which was limited to two positions. These positions were filled in the Clarksburg DDS office. DDS did have overtime authority from SSA and worked over 15,000 hours of overtime during the year.

SSDI and SSI disability benefits have a significant economic impact for West Virginians with disabilities and their families. In 2017, an estimated 159,000 disabled West Virginians and 25,000 spouses and dependent children of disabled workers received over $1.5 billion in Social Security and/or Supplemental Security Income payments based on disability or blindness.

Individuals eligible for SSI disability payments also receive Medicaid, and those eligible for Social Security disability payments for more than 24 months receive Medicare. The $1.5 billion in cash payments and the health insurance entitlement significantly affect the state's economy and the quality of life for recipients.
Partnerships

**WorkForce West Virginia and West Virginia Adult Education**

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

In 2018, DRS, along with its core partners, WorkForce West Virginia and West Virginia Adult Education, updated the Unified State Plan but maintained the goals identified in the original plan. The Unified State Plan delineates the road ahead for West Virginia’s workforce development system under WIOA, and how the partnering agencies will navigate that road to ensure that West Virginians, particularly those with barriers to employment, are ready and able to enter and remain in gainful employment.

As part of the Unified State Plan, four statewide goals were established:

- Integration of the workforce development system,
- Creation of a customer (individual and employer) driven approach,
- Development of career pathways, and
- Increase in opportunities for youth.

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

- Provide integrated vocational rehabilitation services to West Virginians with disabilities to enable them to attain a high school education or greater;
- Provide pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities;
- Provide integrated vocational rehabilitation services to West Virginians with disabilities to enable them to obtain competitive employment, especially in occupations and careers within emerging industries statewide;
- Improve access and availability of transportation options at the community level for DRS consumers who need transportation assistance to achieve or maintain competitive, integrated employment; and
- Continue to build collaborative relationships with community providers (including Community Rehabilitation Programs, Independent Living and other community providers) to enhance the availability of services to DRS consumers.

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

During fiscal year 2018, the data sharing project among the three core agencies was completed and these agencies started sharing data pertaining to their common consumers. The ICT continued its focus on expanding business services teams so that all seven workforce regions can better serve employers by coordinating visits and sharing resources. All DRS employment specialists are members of those teams, and they offer their unique abilities and expertise in helping individuals with disabilities to become employed and self-sufficient.

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

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

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

Keeping abreast of national trends, trainings, legislative agendas and innovative networking is vital to the success of the SRC. To assure this aspect is met, the SRC participates in the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and is an active trainer for the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC). The SRC executive director serves as the Region 3 liaison for the SRC and as vice chair of the NCSRC.

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

Statewide Independent Living Council

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

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

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

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

Community Living Services Program

The Community Living Services Program (CLSP) assists eligible individuals with disabilities to return to or remain in their homes and communities by enabling them to function more independently.

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

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

When requests are received for services, CIL employees make every effort to locate needed resources, including donations by third parties. If the necessary funds are not available, applicants are prioritized in order of request and are served as funds are received. A total of 574 consumers remained on waiting lists for CLSP services as of June 30, 2018.

In state fiscal year 2018, a total of 238 consumers completed CLSP services and were successfully enabled to remain in their own homes. At least 75 of the successful consumers were either diverted or transitioned from nursing homes. According to Genworth 2018 Cost of Care Survey, the cost for a semi-private room in a nursing home has a median annual rate of $123,370 in the state of West Virginia. Therefore, the diversion or transition of 75 consumers from nursing home care through CLSP is estimated to have created a net annual savings of over $8.8 million in fiscal year 2018.

Consumer Affairs Committees

DRS has five Consumer Affairs Committees that support its mission by working to empower people with disabilities in making informed choices and achieving equality of opportunity, meaningful employment, independent living and economic and social self-sufficiency.

With local leadership, the Consumer Affairs Committees work independently as concerned citizens to plan and carry out a wide variety of activities in cooperation with community leaders in business, government, healthcare, education and others. Committee activities address a broad range of shared goals, including public awareness and support for the rights, individual dignity, personal responsibility, full inclusion, equal access, self-determination and community involvement for all people with disabilities.

DRS provides guidance, information and other resources to committees statewide through its consumer affairs liaison and district offices. Membership is open to anyone wishing to participate. All members are volunteers, and all meetings are open to the public.
Diversifying Perspectives Art Contest and Exhibition

DRS, in partnership with the West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture and History, sponsored the fifth annual Diversifying Perspectives Art Contest and Exhibition. The contest and exhibition featured the artistic abilities of West Virginia artists with disabilities during National Disability Employment Awareness Month and played an important role in bringing awareness to disability-related employment issues.

**Grand Exhibitor**
Danielle Doss
Fairmont, Marion County
*Wild Strawberries*
Oil

**Award of Excellence**
Kristie Garrison
Waverly, Wood County
*Lighting the Way*
Mixed Media

**Award of Excellence**
Joel DeAlba
Huntington, Cabell County
*Embracing Technology - Is This Paradise?*
Mixed Media

**Award of Excellence**
Jeannine Schmitt-DePaepe
Wheeling, Ohio County
*Solitude*
Oil
Financial Report

Source of Funds
State Appropriations 13,964,614
Federal Grants 48,210,182
Program Income 306,417
Special Revenue 714,812
Total Funds $63,196,025

Expenditures by Program Category
Administration 6,899,603
Rehabilitation Services:
  Case Services 19,886,034
  Counseling, Guidance and Placement 13,474,431
Disability Determination Program 18,253,478
Other:
  Employment Attendant Care Program 131,575
  Benefits Planning 103,100
  Independent Living 729,833
  Older Blind (VISIONS) 485,580
  Randolph-Sheppard Program 793,969
  Ron Yost Personal Assistance Fund 333,828
  Supported Employment 233,496
  Supported Employment Extended Care 53,680
  Workshop Development 1,817,418
Total Expenditures $63,196,025

Classification of Expenditures
Personal Services 26,521,683
Current Expense 9,117,687
Repairs and Alterations 15,766
Equipment 5,904
Grants 3,542,489
Purchased Case Services 23,992,496
Total $63,196,025

Statement of Funds and Expenses for the year ended June 30, 2018
Contact Information

DRS Administrative Offices
109 Capitol Street
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304-356-2060

Beckley
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Beckley, WV 25801
304-256-6900

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Charleston, WV 25304
304-356-2371

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mullens
316 Howard Avenue
Mullens, WV 25882
304-294-5633

New Martinsville
Workforce Career Center
257 N, State Route 2
New Martinsville, WV 26155
304-455-0912

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

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

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

Rehab Tech Department – North
5000 Greenbag Road F14 and F15
Morgantown, WV 26501
304-285-3163

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

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

Romney
P.O. Box 943
Romney, WV 26757
304-822-3957

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

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

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

Welch
110 Park Avenue
Suite 200
Welch, WV 24801
304-367-3175

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

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

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

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