

# Pathways to Possibilities



**State Rehabilitation Council**  
Annual Report 2022



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## From the SRC Chairperson



I am happy to present to you the 2022 annual report for the Virginia State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). In this report, you will find vital information and resources on the status of vocational rehabilitation programs operated within the commonwealth and on the performance of the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), which includes the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC).

This year's theme is "Pathways to Possibilities." This report highlights the achievements of persons with disabilities in the vocational rehabilitation program and the limitless possibilities for employment, independence and success of persons with disabilities.

I began the year as vice chairperson, and was honored to be elected to the role of chairperson shortly after. My elevation into this role was made seamless by the help of other SRC members and our DARS support staff. I personally would like to thank my fellow SRC members and our DARS support staff for the continued success of the Virginia State Rehabilitation Council.

I ask that, as you read this report, you keep in mind that SRC members (like myself) have helped pave these pathways for clients utilizing vocational rehabilitation programs in Virginia. Please consider sharing this report with your professional and personal networks. Spreading the word about DARS can do wonders to help others become more aware of the services offered and increase the number of individuals benefiting from DARS' services—creating new pathways to possibilities!

Justin M. Spurlock  
Chairperson

## From the DARS Commissioner



In 2022, DARS realigned its core values. Many months of work by a diverse task force of DARS employees resulted in five new values: customer service; accountability; innovation; engagement; and diversity, equity and inclusion.

Throughout this report, I hope you recognize examples of all of these values in action. I am proud of our hardworking vocational rehabilitation (VR) staff who uphold high levels of customer service

as shown in the customer satisfaction survey results.

Their accountability resonates in fulfilling two new multi-year grant projects, striving to meet target goals and increasing VR referrals. They engage consumers with hands-on summer training academies and on-the-job work experiences in high-demand, high-paying careers. Numerous examples of innovation abound with assistive technology and rehabilitation engineering services that make work possible for many of our VR clients.

We embrace diversity, equity and inclusion not only in our own hiring practices, but by advising businesses, nonprofits and government agencies on the benefits and opportunities of employing individuals with disabilities.

Lastly, on behalf of DARS, I extend our sincere and heart-felt gratitude to the State Rehabilitation Council as a key advisor to our agency. The council's guidance fortifies the complex mix of people, resources and systems required to deliver high-quality VR services to people with disabilities.

Kathy Hayfield  
DARS Commissioner

## VR Consumer Success Stories

Listen to these podcast stories at [VR Workforce Studio](#).



**Eric Choi**

### The Man with the Magic Glasses

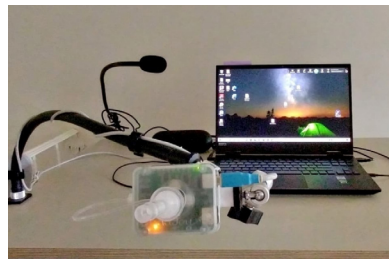
Judy Heumann, a well-known disability rights activist, once said that, “For most of us, technology makes things easier. For a person with a disability, it makes things possible.”

This expression could not be more true for Eric Choi, who was working as a graphic designer and led an active life - playing golf and mountain biking - until one day he went over his bike’s handlebars and broke his neck.

While he was in the hospital, he had an “aha” moment. Eric had an interpreter come in to help his wife understand his injuries. He said, “I speak Korean, which is my native language, and speak English, so I looked into that and I found out maybe there’s a job out there for me as interpreter. It’s a perfect job for someone like myself.”

Eric contacted DARS’ Northern Virginia office and worked closely with Occupational Therapist Carrie Clawson and DARS’ Rehabilitation Technology Services team. Carrie said, “Eric really had a lot of significant needs, we don’t often see someone who has as many assistive technology needs.”

DARS set up Eric with tools to work on his computer, including an ergonomic workstation, laptop setup, Dragon speech recognition software and a QuadJoy mouse, which is a hands-free, mouth-operated joystick. He also began using “smart” glasses, which are bluetooth and voice-activated and allow Eric to answer the phone, listen to music or take videos.



Eric launched his new career as a contract Korean interpreter, allowing him to work independently and set his own schedule. He can perform his job either virtually or in person. Eric said, “It is very exciting, I’ve done a few assignments

already. It gives me pride and self-confidence that my disability is not limiting myself and my family financially. And there’s a lot more potential down the road.”



**Lindsay Barton**

### From Coal Miner’s Daughter to Developer at Dell

Lindsay Barton grew up in Southwest Virginia, a former coal mining region in which her father worked. The career prospects were slim, and Lindsay worked odd retail jobs until she decided to get evaluated through DARS.

Lindsay is diagnosed with ADHD, autism and a math learning disability called dyscalculia. She also has sensory issues related to sound and struggles with agoraphobia. For two-and-a-half years, Lindsay did not leave the house.

She worked with DARS vocational rehabilitation counselor Pam Spurgeon, who provided extensive support and guidance, including securing accommodations through Old Dominion University, where Lindsay is earning a degree in computer science. Pam also referred Lindsay to [Dell Technologies’ Neurodiversity Hiring Program](#).

Dell onboarded Lindsay through a paid internship that led to a full-time position with a competitive salary and benefits - including tuition reimbursement. Now Lindsay is a software developer focusing on cybersecurity and works remotely from her home in Abingdon.

Lindsay said, “My life has completely changed. Before I had housing insecurity. I was always afraid, ‘How am I going to pay rent this month?’” Lindsay was recently pre-approved for a loan and is looking for a house.

“Pam and DARS in general were able to point me in the right direction and give me support. If something’s going wrong, I know I can always call Pam and get some advice.”

## SRC Recommendations

The SRC supports DARS in its commitment, in partnership with consumers and their informed choice, to provide services that prepare consumers through career pathways to enter the workforce in sustainable jobs with livable wages that decrease poverty, improve their economic quality of life and independence, and reduce their reliance on public benefits. The following SRC recommendations will help further these shared goals.

1. The median hourly wage for vocational rehabilitation (VR) consumers for federal fiscal year 2022 (Oct. 1, 2021 - Sept. 30, 2022) was \$12.00 per hour in all districts but one, which is a marked improvement from previous years and continues to exceed the minimum wage. The SRC requests continued briefings and additional information on Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) performance measures, including the goals and targets established for these measures and DARS' progress towards those goals. In particular, DARS should examine the median wage performance and performance gaps in each district, looking at the demographics of DARS clients, with the expectation that the median hourly wage increases to \$13 per hour (\$15 per hour in the Northern district) to best align with increases to the minimum wage and the current economy.
2. Equity in the provision of VR services is imperative. In order to achieve successful closures, DARS should examine barriers, successes, and service delivery—paying particular attention to marginalized and underserved populations-- as well as aligning efforts with available census population and workforce participation data. DARS should:
  - a. Target outreach toward marginalized and underserved populations, working consistently toward representative customer demographics - particularly with regard to race/ethnicity, age, and location.
  - b. Continue to support and encourage interested applicants for appointment to SRC vacancies, including individuals from underserved populations, and collaborate constructively with the Secretary of the Commonwealth regarding such vacancies.
  - c. Provide updates on the commonwealth's Alternative Hiring Process and its impact on the employment of individuals with disabilities.
3. The SRC recommends that DARS continues collaborative efforts with Centers for Independent Living, as well as other community partners and agencies, to offer financial empowerment education, skill-building opportunities, and career pathways education to clients.
4. DARS is poised to play an important role in the commonwealth's continued focus on workforce services and development. The SRC requests that it be kept updated on these initiatives, as well as the ability to collect data on referrals through the Virginia Career Works Referral Portal.
5. The SRC would like DARS, including WWRC, to expand virtual programs that deliver VR resources and education to those who could benefit from remote learning and services, while remaining mindful of technological literacy or access challenges that may prevent some Virginians from fully utilizing these options.
6. The SRC recommends that DARS evaluate the quality and inclusion of career pathways in Individual Plans for Employment and ensure VR Counselors are empowered to advocate for services that result in career pathways being utilized and achieved. The SRC requests that data currently being collected on this objective be shared once it can be meaningfully reported.
7. The SRC would like DARS to serve more transition age youth, particularly students with disabilities. DARS should continue to increase outreach to local education agencies, families, and students regarding the availability of and access to transition and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). This should include collaboration between DARS, the Virginia Department of Education, other community partners, and especially local school divisions. DARS should identify local education agencies in which Pre-ETS services are under-utilized and conduct direct outreach. Data on referral sources to DARS (i.e., school or parent) for Pre-ETS or other transition services, types of services utilized, geographic trends, and information on the frequency with which students who receive Pre-ETS services move on to VR services should be evaluated.
8. The SRC encourages DARS to examine opportunities for improved employee diversity in its workforce through increased recruitment efforts and to provide data-driven updates and objectives to the Council.
9. The SRC encourages DARS' continued development of an updated language and disability access policy to ensure increased access for all clients.

The SRC requests that DARS' updates to the council on these recommendations include available data and performance measures that can be meaningfully reported.

## SRC Activities

During federal fiscal year 2022 (FFY 2022), the Virginia State Rehabilitation Council held five meetings and an annual retreat. The council held its physical meetings at DARS' headquarters in Henrico County, the most central location for membership and DARS' support staff. At each meeting, council members reported on the activities of the constituencies they represent and their advocacy efforts. Members also shared information on successes and obstacles and had the opportunity for robust discourse with DARS leadership.

- For the first time since 2019, the SRC held all four of its quarterly meetings and its annual retreat in-person, allowing council members the opportunity to reconnect and reunite.
- The council adopted an electronic meeting policy, so that, when necessary, council business can continue uninterrupted in a virtual setting.
- Pursuant to the Memorandum of Agreement approved in November 2022, DARS will continue to administer the Consumer Satisfaction Survey on the SRC's behalf into FFY 2023. Earlier in the year, the council approved the Annual Report on Consumer Satisfaction Survey results from FFY 2022.
- Three SRC subcommittees carry out business outside of full Council meetings: a Nominations Subcommittee, an Annual Report Subcommittee, and a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Subcommittee. Each of these subcommittees provides updates to the full Council on their areas of focus.
- Executive committee members were elected for a term beginning Oct. 1, 2021, with some movement mid-year due to a resignation. The executive committee continued to meet and function without interruption in the handling of council business. The chair and vice chair were re-elected on Oct. 1, 2022 and are poised to lead the SRC in these roles for another year.
- Updates on DARS' Division of Rehabilitative Services' (DRS) performance outcomes, successes and barriers were provided by the Director of DRS and the Director of the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) Director (or their designees) at each quarterly meeting.

- The SRC kept up with significant developments in DARS' workforce programs and employment services and special programs with presentations from program directors.
- DARS' Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs provided the council with quarterly updates on policy changes and legislative matters.
- The contracts for three Fair Hearing Officers were renewed and the council received a Fair Hearings Report from the VR Appeals Coordinator.

## SRC Members



Pictured left to right: Meghan Cox, (SRC coordinator); DARS Commissioner Kathy Hayfield (ex-officio); Heidi Lawyer, Henrico; Frederick Foard, Virginia Beach; Billie Cook, Hampton; Joliefawn Liddell, Richmond; Angie Leonard, Blue Ridge; Jennifer Witteborg, Rixeyville; and Talisha McAuley-Davis, Chesterfield.

Not pictured:  
Justin Spurlock, Aylett; Madeline Nunnally, Henrico.

## VR Performance Outcomes

In the past year, 2,410 clients with significant or most significant disabilities successfully became employed after receiving VR services.

DARS increased the number of Individual Plans for Employment (IEP) for FFY 2022 with 5,780 plans compared to 4,868 written in FFY 2021.

The timeliness of service for the length of time between applications to eligibility increased slightly. In FFY 2021, the average time was 32.5 days and went up to 33.2 days in FFY 2022. The length of time between plan development and successful closure increased slightly. In FFY 2021, the average time was 22.28 months and was up to 23.2 months in FFY 2022.

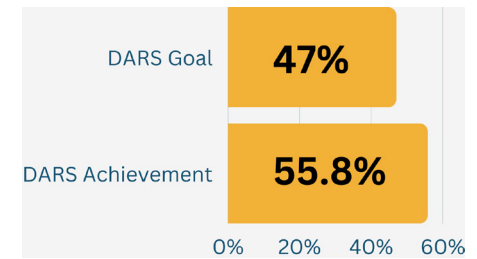
DARS continues to report on the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) performance indicators. This data currently comes from the Virginia Employment Commission and does not include federal employment or employers with five or fewer employees.

DARS operates under an Order of Selection, which requires states to establish priority categories of individuals to serve when they do not have the funding to serve all eligible individuals. This creates a waiting list for services.

DARS has worked diligently from 2020 on to address the waiting list, opening up categories to serve those on the waiting list. COVID-19 slowed services and left additional funding. With these unexpended funds, the VR program was able to offer services to all clients on the wait list in September 2020. The waiting list had not been previously cleared since May 2016. No client has been placed on the waiting list since September 2020.

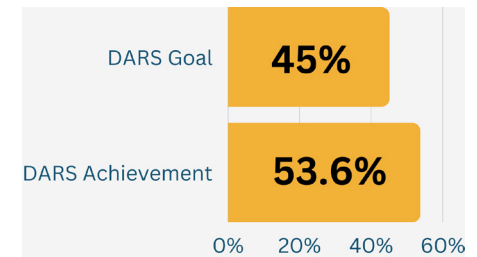
Percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the 2nd quarter after exit from the VR program.

*(cases closed after plan 07/01/2020 - 06/30/2021)*



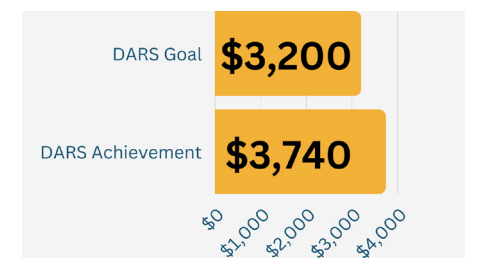
Percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the 4th quarter after exit from the VR program.

*(cases closed after plan (01/01/2020 - 12/31/2020)*



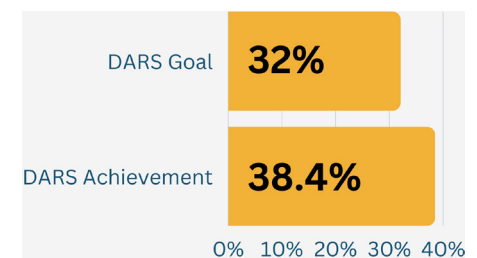
Median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the 2nd quarter after exit from the VR program.

*(cases closed after plan 07/01/2020 -06/30/2021)*



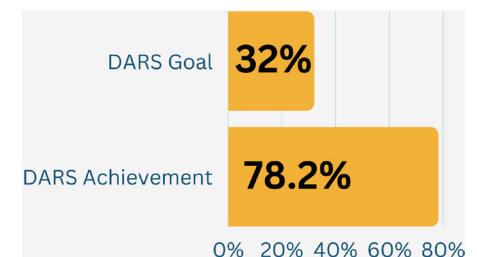
Percentage of program participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or secondary school diploma or its equivalent during participation or 1 year from exit.

*(Credential attainment rate is for cases served 01/01/2020 - 12/31/2020 w/employment or post-secondary within a year)*



Percentage of program participants who during a program year are in an education or training program that will lead to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skills gains towards a credential or employment.

*(Measurable Skill Gain Attainment Rate is for cases served 07/01/2021 - 06/30/2022)*



## 8 VR Consumer Satisfaction Survey FFY 2021

The State Rehabilitation Council partners with DARS to assess satisfaction with services received through the Division of Rehabilitative Services (DRS). Federal fiscal year 2021 was the eighth year of assessing satisfaction for consumers in service delivery (post Individualized Plan for Employment but prior to employment).

Each month, a stratified sample was used to ensure the sample matched as closely as possible to the population proportions for DARS offices as of survey selection. An additional sample breakdown occurred based on transition type due to DARS's large number of transition consumers. A total of 2,788 consumers were selected to participate in the FFY 2021 survey.

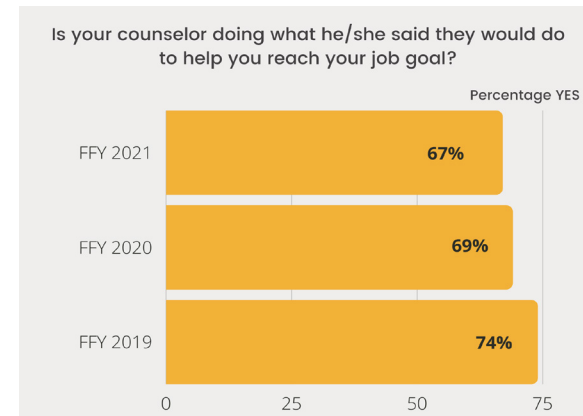
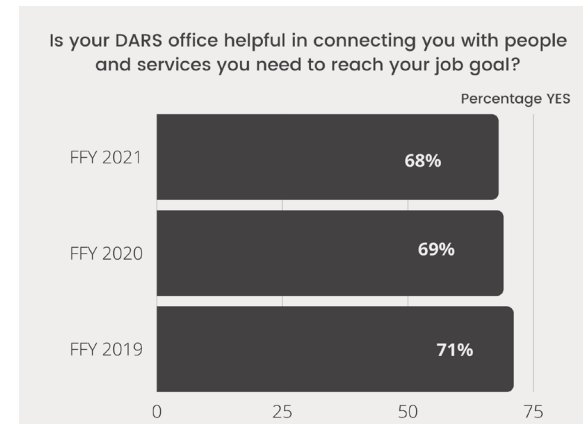
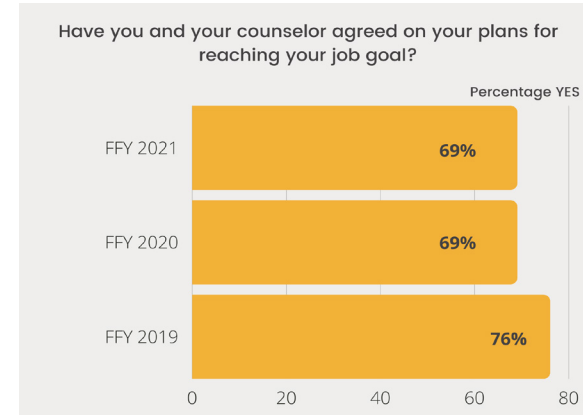
The FFY 2021 response rate was 23 percent (n=599). Seventy-nine percent (n=471) of the 599 surveys were completed by consumers (on their own or with help). The remaining surveys were completed by proxies (completed survey on behalf of consumer) or respondents who did not identify themselves as consumers or proxies. Survey results are based on 471 consumer respondents.

### FFY 2021 Highlights for DRS Service

Since FFY 2014, the survey has captured feedback from consumers during service delivery [post Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) but prior to Employment]. In the FFY 2021 survey, consumers were asked questions related to their relationship with their DARS counselor and office. Percentages for survey questions are indicative of real time assessment (what was happening at the time of survey completion).

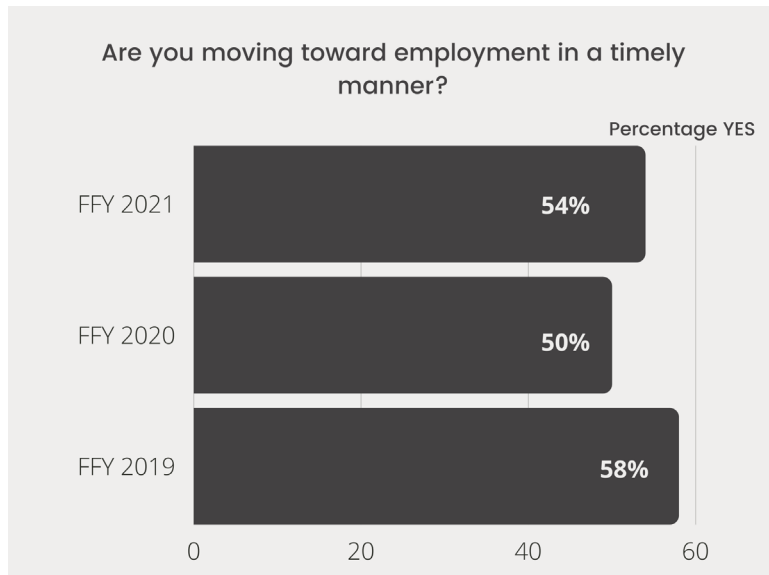
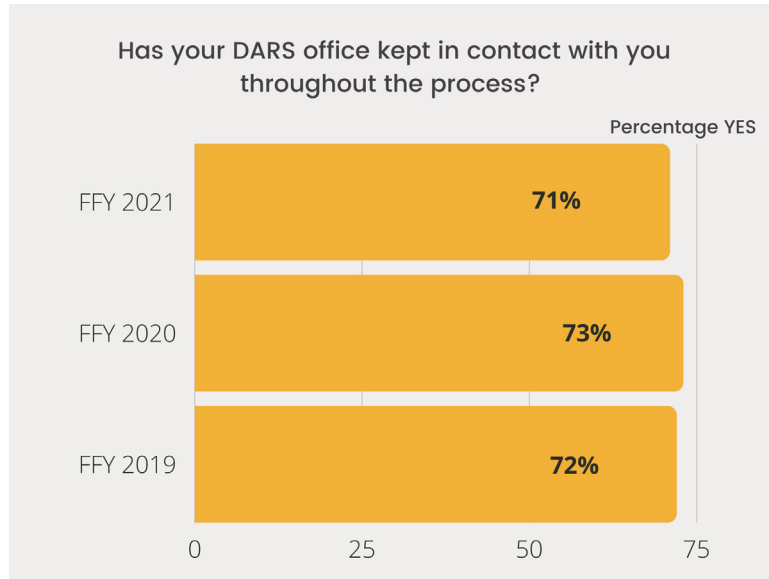
The graphs below include percentages for FFY 2019 to FFY 2021. In general, there were no serious decreases in percentage of "Yes" responses from FFY 2020 to FFY 2021.

- Perception of moving toward employment in a timely manner had a rebound from 50 percent in FFY 2020 to 54 percent in FFY 2021.
- Perception of maintaining contact was one percentage point below the prior seven-year average (71 percent for FFY 2021).
- FFY 2021 (69 percent) was the same as FFY 2020 and five percentage points below the prior seven-year average for plan agreement. FFY 2020 was the first year the percentage of "Yes" responses for plan agreement was less than 70 percent.





## VR Consumer Satisfaction Survey FFY 2021



### Moving Closer to the Job Goal

- Of 429 responses for “What is the best thing that has happened to help you move towards your job goal?,” 30 percent were related to consumers’ positive outlook (hope, confidence, expectation, things being accomplished) and 21 percent were related to helpfulness (responses describing elements of guidance, support, provision, connections, and positive things done by staff or others). Eleven percent of responses were job related.
- In terms of what would help consumers move closer to their job goal, 23 percent of 424 responses were job related and 14 percent were related to helpfulness. Eleven percent were related to postsecondary education or training.

	Best thing	Help move closer
Number of Responses	N=429	n=424
Job Related	11%	23%
Helpfulness	21%	14%
Miscellaneous	14%	34%
Postsecondary/Training	5%	11%
Nothing/DK/NA	18%	11%
Positive Outlook	30%	7%

## Division of Rehabilitative Services

### RSA awards DARS \$13.8 million grant

The U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) awarded DARS a \$13.8 million grant. The five-year grant is for the Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE) demonstration project, with the goal of decreasing the use of subminimum wages and increasing access to competitive integrated employment for people with disabilities.

The Real Pay for Real Jobs initiative is designed to help 600-700 youth and adults with disabilities, who are currently working in or at risk for working in subminimum wage employment, transition to or pursue competitive integrated employment. The goal is to address the barriers and challenges these workers face in finding and maintaining competitive integrated employment, especially for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities as well as with serious mental illness.

DARS will collaborate with multiple national, state and local partners, including Virginia Commonwealth University; Northwestern University; George Washington University; and with Virginia's Department of Education; Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services; the Partnership for People with Disabilities; the ARC of Virginia; Parent Education and Advocacy and Training Center (PEATC); Griffin and Hammis Associates; and three supported employment services organizations – SOAR365, Henrico Area Mental Health and Developmental Services and Mount Rogers Community Services' Industrial and Developmental Centers.

### Pathways to Careers Grant update

In 2021, DARS received a \$9.2 million grant from the RSA. The project, named "Pathways to Careers using Partnerships, Apprenticeships and Equity," will serve at least 750 Virginians with disabilities to acquire skills-based training and registered apprenticeships in high-wage, high-demand fields, including STEM and state government. The Pathways grant team completed year one of the five-year project and has implemented the initiative in each district.

The Pathways team worked closely with the Virginia Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) to develop the state Alternative Hiring Process, which launched in April 2022. This allows individuals with disabilities to request and attach a certificate of disability to the Virginia state job application. DARS responded to over 400 requests for certificates of disability and issued 266. Additionally, 106 of those requests were referred to 20 different local DRS offices for VR services and 87 of those referrals are from new VR clients.

Read the Governor's announcement of the Alternative Hiring Process in the [Richmond Times-Dispatch](#).

### GoodLife CAFE Project update

DARS received a no-cost, year-six extension on the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research grant. The GoodLife CAFE (Community Access, Financial Empowerment) project is designed to study the impact of financial coaching and how ABLE accounts may increase community engagement for transition-age youth who receive Social Security benefits.

The project is starting its fourth cohort. Along with recruiting cohort participants statewide, the project started identifying potential niche cohorts including WWRC, Project SEARCH, Central Virginia Community College and other potential cohorts.

Researchers are studying additional data from the project, including the role of supports (family or paid) in the participants' successes, guidance on how to navigate potentially complicated conversations with family as relates to finances, and case studies to document how the project and participants successfully pivoted project protocols during a global pandemic. Researchers are also interested in any potential change in familial perspective about participants' financial independence as a result of the GoodLife CAFE project.



## Business Services

### Windmills Trainings

The DARS Business Services team and select placement counselors, vocational evaluators and assistive technology staff presented 22 Windmills trainings to over 740 individuals with state agencies, businesses and community partners in 2022.

Windmills is designed to increase awareness of the role that attitudes play in the employment of people with disabilities. Developed in California in 1982, Windmills consists of modular exercises that can be arranged for one to eight one-hour training sessions.

Twelve DARS staff are now certified trainers, whose function is to facilitate exercises and guide group discussions. The team added a module this year, "Taking Emotions out of Emotional Disabilities," which explores the effects of employers' reactions to emotional disabilities and how employers can offer reasonable accommodations to create an emotionally neutral environment.

All of the Windmills modules are approved for both Human Resources Certification Institute and Society for Human Resource Management credits and also expands DARS' ability to market the training to employers.

### CaVERN Project

The CaVERN project kicked off in 2022 as a partnership between DARS, Centers for Independent Living and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). CFPB provides detailed training on the "Your Money, Your Goals" toolkits and teaches participants to establish region-specific networking and resource mapping.

Monthly sessions were paused as CFPB develops new materials. The program will continue through summer 2023 and continue to grow efforts around collaboration and financial empowerment. Additional participants include Employment Service Organizations, Community Services Boards, Work Incentive Specialists and Ticket-to-Work Employment Networks.

## Champions events

Each October, DARS marks National Disability Employment Awareness Month by recognizing businesses, community partners and individuals who exemplify being Champions of Disability Employment.

This year, the Business Services team held a virtual event honoring eight organizations and individuals (below) throughout Virginia with 200 attendees. The team also organized six virtual educational events with 224 total participants designed to increase awareness of DARS' services and resources and highlight businesses who employ individuals with disabilities.

### Businesses

Food City, Bristol  
Social Security Administration, Petersburg

### Community/Workforce Partners

Virginia Department for Labor and Industry  
Virginia Credit Union

### Employees *(shown here)*

Maranda Fletcher  
Bassett Physical  
Therapy

Mark Sturkey  
U.S. Dept. of Fish and  
Wildlife

Maya Simmons  
Franklin County Schools

Michael Brooks, Supply One



## Transition Services

### Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) 2022 Summer Work Experience Program

During summer 2022, DARS supported 490 students with disabilities (ages 16-21) to participate in paid and unpaid work experiences across Virginia, which is an increase from 350 students in 2021.

Programs ranged from three- to eight-week on-the-job experiences where students explored careers and gained valuable job skills with a host business. This effort was assisted by a network of Pre-ETS vendors who helped skills trainers to support many individuals in their work experiences.

Several work experiences turned into permanent paid employment for students. Pre-ETS will continue to create opportunities for students to have authentic work experiences, helping raise their expectations for pursuing competitive integrated employment when they graduate and transition from secondary education into adult life.

### Virginia College and Career Success Summer Pre-ETS Academies

DARS partnered with the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) to create “Virginia College and Career Success Summer Pre-ETS Academies” for students with disabilities ages 14-22. Four community colleges (Blue Ridge, Virginia Peninsula, Southwest and Eastern Shore) partnered with DARS to host a total of six academies this past summer.

These academies provided an opportunity for 73 students to explore high-growth and in-demand career pathways through hands-on activities at their local college campuses. Some examples of career pathways explored by participants include heavy equipment operation, welding and machining, advanced manufacturing, information technology, aviation (drones) and digital multimedia.

### Map Your Future 2022

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, with support of WWRC’s PERT services, held its annual Map Your Future program at WWRC in July 2022 for five students who are deaf. Students learned about self-advocacy and expressing themselves in an activity of “Who am I?”

Career exploration activities included a “Career Corner” as students selected job titles to research online and “Spin the Wheel Charades,” where students chose cards to perform job duties as everyone guessed “What job am I?” Lastly, the “Game of Life: The LIFE of Job and Financial,” included financial literacy, independent living skills and challenges with work and life situations.

### Project SEARCH Transition Programs on Military Installations

Project SEARCH is a nine-month school-to-work program for students with disabilities that takes place entirely in a host business. With over 600 Project SEARCH programs around the world, Virginia is home to three of only six programs that are hosted by military bases.

Fort Eustis (shown below) has supported over 35 students with disabilities since its inauguration in 2017, of which over 70 percent of the students have obtained paid competitive employment following their participation in the program. Naval Air Station Oceana is the second military program which began in the 2021-22 school year and is now in its second year of supporting students. Fort Lee is the newest military Project SEARCH program and is currently in its inaugural year supporting eight students.

These programs are supported by partners including DARS, Virginia Department of Education, Virginia Commonwealth University’s Research and Rehabilitation Training Center, local school divisions, employment service organizations and the host military bases.



## Assistive Technology Services

DARS' assistive technology (AT) professionals provide dynamic and customized AT services across Virginia through several divisions, including DRS' Rehabilitation Technology Services, WWRC and Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS). These divisions collaborated in 2022 to provide many innovative approaches to service delivery.

### Emergency Management

DARS signed a memorandum of agreement with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) and Foundation for Rehabilitation Equipment and Endowment (F.R.E.E.) to donate and distribute used durable medical equipment to statewide disaster shelters in the event of an emergency.



In 2022, F.R.E.E. donated three sets of sanitized durable medical equipment, aka "shelter kits," including wheelchairs, walkers, rollators, canes, bedside toilets and crutches. VDEM is storing the equipment in its Richmond warehouse and will transport it to shelters as needed during a declared disaster.

VATS also participated in the state's Access and Functional Needs Advisory Committee (AFNAC) to identify and address needs of Virginians with disabilities during disasters. AFNAC's mission is to advise the commonwealth on effective ways to ensure universal accessibility of Virginia's disaster programs and services to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities before, during and after disasters.

### Virginia AgrAbility

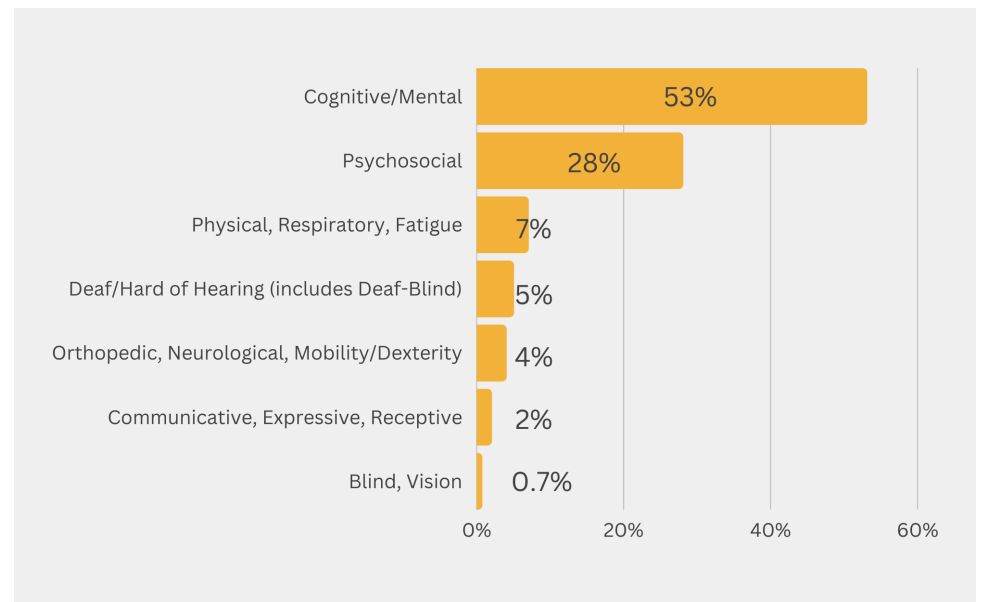
DARS AT professionals have an ongoing partnership with Virginia AgrAbility to identify farmers who may benefit from DARS services across the state. DARS AT specialists and rehabilitation engineering staff work with Virginia AgrAbility to provide community education on injury prevention and accommodation for disabilities in the garden and on the farm. AgrAbility is funded by the USDA and promotes safety, wellness and accessibility on the farm through education, rehabilitative services and assistive technology.

### WWRC Sensory Rooms

The Occupational Therapy Department at WWRC developed sensory rooms to provide a space for clients to learn about sensory interventions, available equipment and ways to improve sensory processing and self-regulation skills.

Lastly, after a three-year hiatus due to COVID, DARS' Assistive Technology Training returned to WWRC. This two-day training highlighted WWRC and AT services for new and seasoned vocational rehabilitation counselors.

## Primary Disabilities of VR Clients Served in FFY 2022



## WWRC Highlights

This year marks 75 years of operation for the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC), located in Fishersville. The center is a key resource for DARS, providing comprehensive vocational rehabilitation services to eligible consumers with disabilities to prepare for gainful employment. Here are some highlights for state fiscal year (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022) and federal fiscal year (FFY) 2022.

In fall 2021, WWRC completed its two-phase renovation of the R.N. Anderson vocational training facility. The \$23.7 million project encompassed 100,000 sq. ft. of renovation and 12,500 sq. ft. of new construction.

This modernized training environment includes state-of-the-art instructional technology, teaching materials and labs. Its purposeful universal design principles feature wider doors, updated automatic door openers and increased capacity elevators and layout, lighting, acoustics and color schemes that help accommodate individuals with sensory and information processing issues.

In August 2022, WWRC piloted a new semester system. The semesters include a fall 18-week semester, spring 18-week semester and a six-week summer semester. The new scheduling model fosters greater unity among students as well as improves efficiencies in ancillary services.

WWRC continues to support WIOA and DARS performance measures, especially those aligning with workforce credentials, measurable skills gains and business engagement. The center has evolved WIOA-recognized workforce credentials in every training program and continues to focus on helping consumers find a career pathway, through pre-employment training services (Pre-ETS), that leads to employment that is retained over time with advancement and good wages.

For the second consecutive year, median earnings were slightly more than the previous year's earnings. The second quarter median earnings for vocational training graduates, closed by DARS in SFY 2021, was \$5,052.96. In addition to the increase in earnings, WWRC tripled the number of WIOA-recognized credentials from SFY 2021-22 (40 to 130). This continued to be an increasingly positive achievement during the latter part of the pandemic.

WWRC continues to focus on increased rigor in our curriculum to enhance our clients' ability to earn WIOA credentials. This focus will allow current and

future clients to enter the workforce with greater skills that will enhance their employability. These positive changes continue to be reflected in the increase in median earnings.

### Postsecondary Education/Rehabilitation Transition Program (PERT)

PERT is a program for students transitioning from high school to adult life and assists youth in discovering their options. DARS clients who qualify are referred through their VR counselor. During SFY 2022, 533 explorations (up from 503 in SFY 2021) were performed for youth with disabilities through the PERT program, both on campus and in the community.

FFY 2022 Consumers Served by Service Area	
Vocational Evaluation	385
Vocational Training Graduates	105
Pre-Employment Readiness Education Program (PREP)	238
Postsecondary Rehabilitation Transition (PERT) Program	490
Driving Services	421

PERT Services Received	Number
Comprehensive Evaluations and Youth in Transition	235
Virtual Program	190
Career Day/Career Seminar	62
Credential week	21
Community PERT	15
Transition Academy	7
Situation Assessments/Manufacturing Academy	3
<b>Total explorations SFY 2022</b>	<b>533</b>

## PERT Program Satisfaction

At the PERT Advisory Council (PAC) meetings, the group compiled program satisfaction survey results (see table). The PAC is an interdisciplinary group of stakeholders composed of former PERT students, parents, field rehabilitation services staff and local educational area transition staff from across Virginia.

PAC monitors progress made by receiving reports from the PERT director at the beginning of the next cycle relative to each initiative. PAC met in person Sept. 1, 2022. This meeting had 20 participants representing the Virginia Department of Education, DARS and local area school transition staff.

The PAC discussed the future of PERT programming, including 3-year and 10-year plans. The 10-year plan includes enlarging PERT comprehensive programming from its current numbers to 1,000, placing overall service numbers over 1,300 clients per year.

Satisfaction information was gathered through PERT and center student exit interviews, report implementation meetings held in the student's community and surveys that accompany the student's summary completion report. Overall satisfaction with the PERT program was overwhelmingly positive.

DARS survey responses (n=36)	% agreed
The recommendations included in the PERT Summary Report were useful.	97%
The recommendations will be used in the development of the client's IPE.	92%
PERT increased my client's confidence and self-esteem.	92%
My client described the PERT assessment process as helpful.	92%

Parent survey responses (n=20)	% agreed
PERT helped me talk with my child about their future.	95%
PERT increased my awareness of my child's abilities and strengths.	85%
PERT helped my child identify their career goals.	75%
PERT increased my child's confidence and self-esteem.	90%
My child described the PERT assessment process as helpful.	95%

## Virtual PERT

The center implemented Virtual PERT in January 2021 in response to the pandemic. At the time, no student could attend on campus during the pre-vaccine period.

Virtual PERT used a series of preparatory classes in work behaviors and independent living skills presented to students in their homes using Internet-based technology.

Programming included:

- Workplace Readiness Skills: building a routine, work/life balance, work relationships, and safety awareness
- Virtual model does not include a vocational evaluation
- Independent Living: kitchen safety, money handling, laundry skills, and mindfulness
- Virtual tour: WWRC, PERT, and campus life

Comments from our partners (school and DARS) regarding the virtual program from satisfaction surveys:

"For the first time being virtual, I think it was an awesome experience. It opened doors for him and he is more open about what he wants. He is planning on coming to campus this summer."

"This program opened doors for the student and provided an opportunity to meet and form a plan of action. The student is advocating more for himself."

"What an awesome program! Even in the face of COVID, [student] got the opportunity to participate virtually and learned skills that will definitely benefit him in the future."

"I feel the relationship and collaboration between PERT and the public school will benefit our students tremendously."

## WWRC Performance Outcomes

FFY 2022 WIOA Credentials Obtained	Number
Certified Nursing Aide (CNA)	10
Certified Logistics Associate (CLA)	29
Certified Logistics Technician (CLT)	4
Manufacturing Specialist	19
Manufacturing Technician 1	19
Manufacturing Skills Institute (MSI)	18
Microsoft Office Suite (3 exams)	20
Microsoft Office Expert	6
Microsoft Office Master Certification	1
A+	3
Security+	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>

FFY 2022 Vocational Training Graduates	Number
External Training Option	30
Materials Handling	24
Manufacturing Technology Training	19
Food Service	16
Business	7
Health Occupations	6
Information Technology	3

FFY 2022 Other Credentials/Certifications Obtained	Number
Driver's License	49
Learner's Permit	39
Career Readiness Certification - Platinum	2
Career Readiness Certification - Gold	3
Career Readiness Certification - Silver	6
Career Readiness Certification - Bronze	6
ServSafe Food Handler	35
OSHA10	30
FAA-Certified Drone Pilot	2
National Retail Federation (NRF) Customer Service	9
PERT NRF Fundamentals	5
CPR and First Aid	7
Virginia Pre-Service Training for Child Care	3
Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS)	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>283</b>



*Division of Rehabilitative Services Director Dale Batten (right) congratulates a WWRC nursing student at its June 2022 graduation.*





## SRC Information

### Our Mission

The mission of the Virginia State Rehabilitation Council, in partnership with the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, and in collaboration with advocacy groups, consumers and their families, is to ensure that Virginians with disabilities receive quality services while seeking to achieve meaningful employment, self-sufficiency and independence.

### Our Vision

All Virginians with disabilities will have access to quality services leading to meaningful employment, self-sufficiency and independence.

### Attend a Meeting

The quarterly SRC meetings are open to the public. Meeting locations, dates and times are posted at:

[www.va-src.virginia.gov](http://www.va-src.virginia.gov)

<https://commonwealthcalendar.virginia.gov>

### Call

Voice: (800) 552-5019 | (804) 662-7000

Videophone: (804) 325-1316

Fax: (804) 662-7663

### Write

Chair, State Rehabilitation Council  
Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services  
8004 Franklin Farms Drive  
Henrico, VA 23229

To request this report in Spanish or another language contact

Meghan Cox  
DARS/State Rehabilitation Council  
8004 Franklin Farms Drive  
Henrico, VA 23229  
[Meghan.Cox@dars.virginia.gov](mailto:Meghan.Cox@dars.virginia.gov)

## SRC Membership Application

If you are interested in a gubernatorial appointment to the Council, you may begin the application process with this form by indicating your:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please email, fax or mail this form to the SRC Administrator:

Meghan Cox  
DARS/State Rehabilitation Council  
8004 Franklin Farms Drive  
Henrico, VA 23229

Questions? Contact [Meghan.Cox@dars.virginia.gov](mailto:Meghan.Cox@dars.virginia.gov)

Upon receipt, someone from the SRC will contact you to discuss your interest. However, to officially apply for this appointment, you must contact the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Office. You may obtain information about the formal application process by calling the Secretary's office at (804) 786-2441 or applying online at <https://solutions.virginia.gov/BoardAppointments>.

**Thank you for your interest in the Virginia State Rehabilitation Council.**



[www.va-src.virginia.gov](http://www.va-src.virginia.gov)





VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT FOR AGING  
AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES



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