

# DSHS/DVR 2016 – 2020 State Plan

## Goals and Priorities

---

### **Draft Federal Guidance**

The designated State unit must:

1. Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions.
2. Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs.
3. Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:
  - a. the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;
  - b. the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and
  - c. other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.

## Introduction

This section identifies the goals and priorities that DSHS/DVR intends to achieve throughout the 2016 – 2020 planning cycle. DSHS/DVR has updated its goals and priorities to reflect previous State Plan goals which were achieved. New activities described herein align with Washington’s strategic plan for workforce development as well as the operational components of this Combined State Plan, jointly developed by all State workforce development programs. This plan alignment is intended to realize the letter and intent of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), to implement a coordinated service delivery system which supports the long-term labor market engagement of individuals with disabilities and improves services to businesses.

The goals and priorities established in this State Plan reflect DSHS/DVR’s ongoing commitments to customer service, successful outcomes, staff development, organizational system improvement, strong partnerships, and improved business engagement.

These goals and priorities also reflect analysis of DSHS/DVR’s performance and the needs of individuals with disabilities in Washington. In FFY 2015, DSHS/DVR successfully passed six of the seven Standards and Indicators by fairly wide margins, failing one by a slim margin. Consistent with previous performance, the Ratio of Average VR Hourly Wage to Average State Hourly Wage did not meet expectations. However, DSHS/DVR has demonstrated consistent, measurable improvement over the last four federal years and preliminary analysis indicates that DSHS/DVR performance will remain strong under WIOA’s Performance Accountability standards.

## Goals and Priorities

### Goal One: Improve Employment Outcomes for Individuals with Disabilities

Goal one reflects DSHS/DVR’s focus on providing high-quality services that result in high-quality employment outcomes. Based on 2014 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) findings and stakeholder input, this goal’s priorities emphasize the importance of supporting customers in high-quality employment, jobs which offer the pay and benefits to support independence.

To achieve this goal, DSHS/DVR establishes the following priorities:

1. Strengthen vocational assessment practices as the foundation for more comprehensive services which meet customer needs, identify and address barriers to employment, and maximize outcomes.
2. Conduct outreach to key populations, including students with disabilities, to ensure that all Washingtonians with disabilities have access to services and supports needed to prepare for and obtain employment.
3. Increase business engagement to improve employment for individuals with disabilities.
4. Strengthen cross-system collaboration with WIOA core programs.

## **Goal Two: Improve the Quality of Customer Services**

Goal two priorities reflect CSNA results and stakeholder input which challenge DSHS/DVR to provide better information on available services, improve service quality and timeliness, and increase the time customers spend with their counselors.

To achieve this goal, DSHS/DVR establishes the following priorities:

1. Incentivize timely service delivery by implementing new performance measures for VR counselors which ensure that 90% of eligibility determinations will be completed within 60 days of customers' application dates and that 90% of Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs) are developed within 90 days of customers' eligibility determination dates.
2. Provide high-quality training and support, ensuring staff have the knowledge and skills needed to deliver high-quality vocational rehabilitation services.
3. Through statewide case file reviews, build an organizational culture of quality to strengthen substantial counseling and guidance.

## **Goal Three: Establish DSHS/DVR's Role in the Workforce Development System**

Goal three priorities will improve outcomes for individuals with disabilities served by Washington's workforce development system. DSHS/DVR will contribute its value, expertise, and strengths as a core program to maximize outcomes for individuals with disabilities. These priorities align with the strategic and operational elements of this Combined State Plan and reflect the needs of individuals with disabilities served throughout Washington's workforce development system.

To achieve this goal, DSHS/DVR establishes the following priorities:

1. Work with partners, at front-line and state levels, to ensure the workforce development system is accessible and provides beneficial services for all individuals with disabilities.
2. Lead cross-program staff training in areas such as accessibility, disability culture and awareness, and vocational rehabilitation services.
3. Ensure DSHS/DVR customers get optimal benefit from the workforce development system by educating customers about other workforce development programs.

## **Goal Four: Improve DSHS/DVR's Systems and Performance**

Goal four reflects DSHS/DVR's commitment to improving the systems and practices which support DSHS/DVR staff and, in turn, affect customer service.

To achieve this goal, DSHS/DVR establishes the following priorities:

1. Develop and implement a communication plan to provide consistent internal standards for professional communication.
2. Redesign data systems and management reports which leverage new WIOA partnerships and strengthen data driven decision making.

# DSHS/DVR 2016 – 2020 State Plan

## Strategies to Achieve Goals & Priorities

---

### **Draft Federal Guidance**

Describe the required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the VR and the Supported Employment programs (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act and section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)):

1. The methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.
2. How a broad range of assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process and on a statewide basis.
3. The outreach procedures that will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities, as well as those who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.
4. The methods to be used to improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, postsecondary education, employment, and Pre-employment Transition Services).
5. If applicable, plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the State.
6. Strategies to improve the performance of the State with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.
7. Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce development system in assisting individuals with disabilities.
8. How the agency's strategies will be used to:
  - a. achieve goals and priorities by the State, consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment;
  - b. support innovation and expansion activities; and
  - c. overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State VR Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program.

## Introduction

DSHS/DVR has established four goals to assure that high-quality services are provided to both job seekers with disabilities and to Washington’s businesses. The methods by which these services will be provided, and maximized within available resources, are described in this attachment. Specific consideration is given to the innovation and expansion activities which seek to enhance the scope of services available to individuals with disabilities.

These strategies reflect in-depth analyses of DSHS/DVR customer service data, statewide demographic data, Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) findings, research conducted by the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB), and the ongoing input and recommendations from the Washington State Rehabilitation Council (WSRC).

Duplication of activities, strategies, and methods in the sections to follow is intentional; the coordinated efforts of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) core programs to improve services to job seekers with disabilities and Washington’s business community are not mutually exclusive. As an active core partner, DSHS/DVR will fully leverage all available resources to maximize the labor market engagement, self-sufficiency, and independence of all Washingtonians with disabilities.

## Strategies to Achieve Goals & Methods to Improve Services

### Goal One: Improve Employment Outcomes for Individuals with Disabilities

**Priority One**      **Strengthen vocational assessment practices as the foundation for more comprehensive services which meet customer needs, identify and address barriers to employment, and maximize outcomes.**

- Strategies**
- Utilize the new vocational assessment screen and process to improve service quality and to implement new WIOA requirements.
  - Expand knowledge and use of labor market information to support local industry sector strategies.
  - Promote customer participation in training programs that prepare them for high demand careers and help businesses fill skill gaps.
  - Refine vocational assessment practices and provide ongoing staff training on how to use new tools and resources.
  - Evaluate all customers’ Assistive Technology (AT) needs and leverage Assistive Technology Assessment Practitioners (ATAP) to provide AT assessment, consultation, and support to counselors and customers statewide.
  - Utilize assessment results to identify self-directed job search customers and appropriate DSHS/DVR Business Specialist support services (e.g. assistance with résumé development, interviewing skills, and submitting applications).

**Priority Two**      **Conduct outreach to key populations, including students with disabilities, to ensure that all Washingtonians with disabilities have access to services and supports needed to prepare for and obtain employment.**

- Strategies*
- Provide Pre-employment Transition Services designed to facilitate job exploration and other services such as counseling and self-advocacy training in the early stages of the school to work transition.
  - Broaden the population of individuals with disabilities served by DSHS/DVR through outreach which increases the representation of underserved or unserved populations, specifically emphasizing outreach to Washington’s Hispanic and Latino communities.
  - Target outreach, education, and marketing to individuals with disabilities who are currently employed to retain or advance, previous customers who may be unemployed and are seeking employment, students nearing completion of academic programs, individuals who have exhausted Unemployment Insurance benefits, and other underserved populations.
  - Utilize contracted translation and interpreter services, including American Sign Language services, to improve accessible and quality services to customers with limited English proficiency or who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

**Priority Three**      **Increase business engagement to improve employment for individuals with disabilities.**

- Strategies*
- Leverage affiliations, memberships, and strategic partnerships to promote the success of job seekers with disabilities (e.g. Society for Human Resource Management, Microsoft’s Specialisterne Project, and local chambers of commerce).
  - Increase visibility in Washington’s business community through methodical outreach and marketing.
  - Develop and implement tracking tools to quantify business engagement outcomes.
  - Engage Business Specialists in the development and implementation of WorkSource Business Plans, local-level industry sector strategies, and cross-program business engagement activities.
  - Collaborate with Workforce Development Council (WDC) Business Teams to target business services for federal contractors and subcontractors.
  - Utilize Business Specialists to provide training for businesses on how to recruit, hire, retain, and advance skilled workers with disabilities.

**Priority Four**      **Strengthen cross-system collaboration with WIOA core programs.**

- Strategies*
- Utilize Business Specialists to coordinate business engagement, and business engagement planning, with each local WDC Business Team.
  - Collaborate with WDC staff to braid services across workforce development programs, promoting quality customer services offered in-person and online through Washington’s WorkSource locations.
  - Invest staff and resources to create One-Stop center navigators, who provide triage services which match job seekers to the programs that best meet their needs.

## Goal Two: Improve the Quality of Customer Services

**Priority One**      **Incentivize timely service delivery by implementing new performance measures for VR counselors which ensure that 90% of eligibility determinations will be completed within 60 days of customers’ application dates and that 90% of Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs) are developed within 90 days of customers’ eligibility determination dates.**

- Strategies***
- Implement case management system improvements which streamline the eligibility determination, vocational assessment, and plan development processes.
  - Evaluate staff performance on new measures and provide targeted training and support as needed.

**Priority Two**      **Provide high-quality training and support, ensuring staff have the knowledge and skills needed to deliver high-quality vocational rehabilitation services.**

- Strategies***
- Implement staff training focused on customer service, cultural sensitivity, and best practices to identify and address barriers employment.
  - Modernize DSHS/DVR’s training program to fully leverage new communication platforms and evidence-based practices.

**Priority Three**      **Build an organizational culture of quality to strengthen substantial counseling and guidance.**

- Strategies***
- Utilize case file review results to:
    - Determine where additional guidance and training are required; and
    - Emphasize specific areas of need in the Advanced Best Practices curriculum.
  - Implement staff recognition and appreciation throughout DSHS/DVR.
  - Provide supervisors with the tools needed to deliver effective and ongoing coaching to their staff, using structured monthly coaching and reports to DSHS/DVR Area Managers.

## Goal Three: Establish DSHS/DVR’s Role in the Workforce Development System

**Priority One**      **Work with partners, at front-line and state levels, to ensure the workforce development system is accessible and provides beneficial services for all individuals with disabilities.**

- Strategies***
- Target necessary improvements to workforce development system physical and digital infrastructure, based on customer feedback, customer outcomes, and annual One-Stop center accessibility review findings.
  - Commit staff and resources to each WDC to ensure that DSHS/DVR has front-line representation throughout Washington’s One-Stop centers.

**Priority Two**      **Lead cross-program staff training in areas such as accessibility, disability culture and awareness, and vocational rehabilitation services.**

- Strategies**
- Develop and distribute informational materials for workforce development professionals which identify best practices in serving individuals with disabilities, including DSHS/DVR customers.
  - Provide specific training for workforce development staff, based on customer feedback and annual One-Stop center accessibility review findings.

**Priority Three**      **Ensure DSHS/DVR customers get optimal benefit from the workforce development system by educating customers about other workforce development programs.**

- Strategies**
- Develop and distribute informational materials to DSHS/DVR staff and customers which describe workforce development programs, highlighting services and eligibility criteria.

## **Goal Four: Improve DSHS/DVR's Systems & Performance**

**Priority One**      **Develop and implement a communication plan to provide consistent internal standards for professional communication.**

- Strategies**
- Establish a workgroup to develop an internal communication protocol which addresses the Who, What, Where, When and Why of all communication, including accountability, timelines, and follow-up.
  - Increase capacity and use of communication technology (e.g. video conferencing, video phones, and distance learning programs).

**Priority Two**      **Redesign data systems and management reports to leverage new WIOA partnerships and strengthen data-driven decision making.**

- Strategies**
- Implement new reports and tracking systems which align with WIOA performance measures and are designed for staff use.
  - Provide training on the data reports, performance measures, and tracking systems underpinning WIOA implementation.
  - Enhance data analysis capacity and tools to support data-driven decision making.

## **Assistive Technology Services**

DSHS/DVR counselors are required to assess, throughout the rehabilitation process, if assistive technology (AT) services or devices are needed or beneficial reducing or eliminating customers' barriers to employment. Information regarding AT services and devices is included in DSHS/DVR brochures and the newly developed Customer Service Handbook, which are available to all customers. DSHS/DVR employs full-time Assistive Technology Assessment and Practitioners (ATAPs) dedicated to assuring that assistive technology services are well integrated in to the rehabilitation process. These ATAPs provide regular consultation to staff and customers, work with vendors providing AT services and devices, and routinely share AT information and resources with VR personnel and customers. DSHS/DVR will continue

to an organizational role model in effective utilization of AT as accommodations for individuals with disabilities including, but not limited to, individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing and individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

## **Outreach Procedures**

DSHS/DVR continues to maintain active organizational relationships with a wide range of agencies and community groups that serve minority populations, and has formal liaison relationships to assure an ongoing referral stream of individuals with disabilities who identify as racial or ethnic minorities. Individuals with disabilities who identify as racial or ethnic minorities are consistently represented within the DSHS/DVR population at rates well above respective representation within the statewide population of individuals with disabilities. An in-depth analysis of this representation is provided in the Statewide Assessment section of this plan.

Individuals who identify as Hispanic or Latino are, by contrast, underrepresented in the DSHS/DVR customer population. To better engage Washington's Latino communities, DSHS/DVR has taken numerous steps including, but not limited to, appointing bilingual staff statewide, Spanish-language radio Public Service Announcements, a Spanish-language phone line, and Spanish-language printed and promotional materials. These efforts have resulted in increased Hispanic and Latino customers served.

## **Pre-employment Transition Services & Coordination**

DSHS/DVR will develop and implement Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with Washington's regional and local education agencies to coordinate the provision of Pre-employment Transition Services. These new services will provide a continuum of services between school and adult life, providing students with disabilities the services and experiences necessary to enjoy meaningful employment, independence, and quality of life. Policy and guidance revisions, as well as new staff training, will support these services. An in-depth description of the significant changes to DSHS/DVR's services to students with disabilities is described in the Coordination with Education section of this plan.

## **Community Rehabilitation Programs**

DSHS/DVR will establish a workgroup of DSHS/DVR staff and Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) representatives to focus on improving service delivery partnerships, particularly at the local level. Particular emphasis will be placed on strengthening communication and coordination between local DSHS/DVR offices and CRPs and develop strategies to inform CRPs of changes or updates in DSHS/DVR policies and procedures which affect service delivery. A full description of DSHS/DVR's plans to improve its CRP partnerships is included in the Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations section of this plan.

## **Program Improvement under WIOA Performance Accountability**

DSHS/DVR will employ numerous strategies to improve customers' employment retention, long-term labor market engagement, earned wages, education credential attainment, and vocational skill progress. Additional strategies will target improved services to businesses, as DSHS/DVR implements a dual-customer model, serving Washington's businesses as well as its job seekers with disabilities.

DSHS/DVR will implement the following strategies to improve services to individuals with disabilities:

- Increase use of Post-Employment Services to support customers in maintaining, regaining, or advancing in employment through better communicating these services and their benefits.
- Provide training and technical assistance to businesses on best practices for recruiting and retaining employees with disabilities.
- Evaluate current customer service practices which promote employment retention and reinforce these practices through training and system improvements.
- Leverage labor market research tools and local-level industry sector strategies to ensure that vocational goals are aligned with in-demand occupations to the greatest extent possible.
- Support customers in developing vocational goals and training objectives which align with in-demand occupations as well as customers' skills, abilities, interests, and informed choice.
- Develop apprenticeships, paid internships, and on-the-job training opportunities to enhance customers' employability, in partnership with local WDCs and the business community.
- Utilize the results of the new comprehensive vocational assessment to evaluate customers' skills, abilities, interests, as well as potential barriers to successful participation in, or completion of, training programs.
- Complete required meetings at the end of every post-secondary term to review grades, progress, and support needs of customers participating in associate's, baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral programs.

DSHS/DVR will utilize the following strategies to improve its services to businesses:

- Utilize Business Specialists to provide training to businesses how to recruit, hire, retain, and advance skilled workers with disabilities.
- Engage Business Specialists in the development and implementation of WorkSource Business Plans, local-level industry sector strategies, and cross-program business engagement activities.
- Lead coordinated engagement of federal contractors and subcontractors, linking these contractors to the skilled job seekers with disabilities they seek.
- Increase visibility in Washington's business community through a methodical outreach and marketing plan which includes participation in local boards of commerce, membership in professional organizations (e.g. the Society for Human Resource Management), representation at career and recruitment fairs, and the provision of business training (e.g. Americans with Disabilities Act and reasonable accommodation trainings).

## Assisting Workforce Development Partners in Serving Individuals with Disabilities

DSHS/DVR plays significant roles on state and local workforce development boards and contributes to strategies and activities which assist partners in serving for individuals with disabilities. These roles will strengthen under WIOA. To coordinate and align workforce development services at the local level, DSHS/DVR and the Washington Workforce Association (WWA) have created and signed a *Shared Vision, Values, & Principles of Collaboration* document which outlines how DSHS/DVR and WDCs will provide integrated services to individuals with disabilities.

## Use of Title I Funds for Innovation & Expansion Activities

During 2015 – 2016, DSHS/DVR will continue to fund the following innovation and expansion activities:

- Existing high school transition projects that DSHS/DVR established with six county developmental disabilities programs
  - Under this model, DSHS/DVR contracts with county-level developmental disabilities programs to place supported employment transition customers with developmental disabilities in permanent employment upon high school completion. The county program pays CRP subcontractors a monthly fee to provide community based assessment, job placement, and job coaching services. When the customer is placed into employment and begins extended services, DSHS/DVR pays the county program an outcome fee of \$8500.00. As all county subcontractors are CRPs, these subcontractors appreciate receiving a monthly service delivery fee from the county that is not outcome-based; these monthly fees differ from DSHS/DVR's milestone contract system, which provides payment only when outcomes are achieved.
- The Washington Initiative for Supported Employment (WISE) comprehensive series of web-based on-demand training modules for CRP Supported Employment Specialists
  - CRP staff attrition is very high and frequently new Supported Employment Specialists are hired with little or no experience. This significantly slows service delivery and often reduces successful outcomes. The suite of on-demand training modules that WISE produces will increase staff knowledge and skills and will support CRPs in retaining highly-trained staff. These trainings will be created in partnership with the Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation (CCER), DSHS Developmental Disabilities Administration, DSHS Behavioral Health and Service Integration Administration, and other supported employment partners.
- Soft Skills curriculum and training support for community partners and Tribal VR programs
- Childhood Deafness and Hearing Loss Center outreach activities which identify and connect students who are Deaf or hard of hearing with DSHS/DVR services
- Washington State Rehabilitation Council (WSRC) and Washington State Independent Living Council (WASILC) operations