



Division of Vocational Rehabilitation – Lynnae Rutledge Director

Addressing Employee Concerns

We learned from the 2006 Employee Survey that DVR staff understand how their work contributes to our mission. This strength will help as we address organizational performance issues and strive to help as many people with disabilities as we can to get and keep jobs important to them.



Almost every DVR employee (99%) participated in the survey and over 85% provided additional comments in response to the open-ended questions. Thank you for your input!! I have read each of the reports and comments, we will continue to use these results to help understand your perspectives.

Based on my initial review of the survey results, I want to first focus on the following two issues: employee recognition and teamwork. I feel very strongly about the importance of both of these and want DVR to improve.

Concerning recognition, I have already asked supervisors to meet with you to learn how we can better recognize your contributions. I know that you work hard and are committed to the success of our organization and that you deserve recognition. As for teamwork, I believe that we will have a strong foundation for improving as we formalize the three field service areas. Some units report effective teamwork and others need improvements. We must work together to build on our strengths.

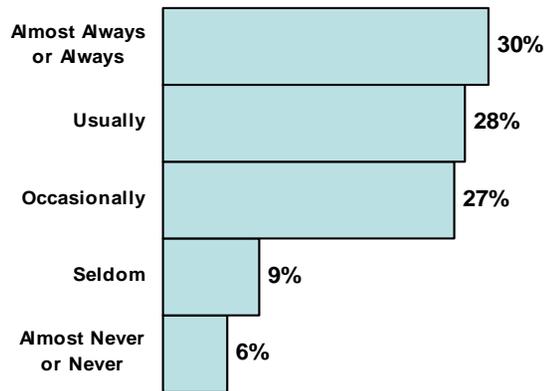
Thanks again for your input and for the work you are doing. You do make a difference!

– Lynnae Rutledge, Director



Focus Issue: Recognition – page 1

Question: *I receive recognition for a job well done.*



Employees say:

“I would like to see more acknowledgement given to the field staff for helping challenging customers navigate their way through our complicated world in order to better their life.”

“My supervisor understands how praise benefits both the employer and the employee.”

Summary of the Issue

DVR believes employees deserve recognition and that recognition:

- Builds employee morale.
- Motivates future high quality performance.
- Creates a culture where staff feel valued.
- Increases ownership and commitment of staff.

Survey results show that 58% of DVR staff report they “always, almost always, or usually receive recognition for a job well done.” While this score exceeds the overall DSHS rating, it is one of DVR’s lowest. Staff comments about recognition further support the need for DVR to improve in this area with 17 negative and 9 positive responses to the open ended questions.

Some ideas shared by employees in their comments:

- Supervisors play a key role in acknowledging range of work performed.
- Managers should recognize quality, range of skills, and performance.
- Field staff want recognition for how difficult their tasks are.
- Employees who feel recognized also feel valued.

(View comments concerning recognition on the DVR Intranet.)

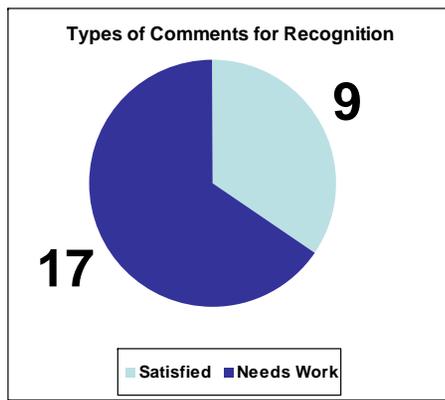
Employee recognition helps create a strong, productive workforce and a positive work environment. DVR wants to continually improve in this important area and will actively seek better ways to recognize employee work.



Focus Issue: Recognition – page 2

What we're already doing

- Conversation started with supervisors to learn about current practices and generate new ideas.
- Supervisors asked to talk with staff to learn how to better recognize their efforts and outcomes.
- Supervisors encouraged to continue local activities and to regularly recognize staff contributions, accomplishments and successes in both informal and formal ways.
- “Kudos” about staff will soon become regular posting on DVR intranet.
- Supervisors recently asked for a nomination from their unit for “employee of the year.”
- Small committee formed to review nominations and select employees for formal recognition.
- Formal recognition of outstanding staff accomplishments will be held at area in-services training sessions when Director is present.
- DVR actively participates in the DSHS Regional recognition ceremonies.



Employees say:

- “I am well supported and my efforts are recognized.”
- “More acknowledgement by supervisor of counselors challenges and accomplishments.”

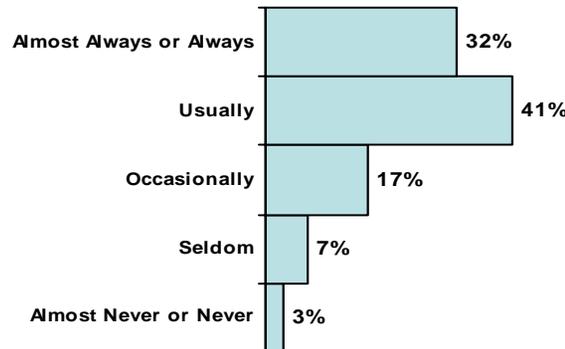
Our plan for the coming year

- Seek additional input from staff about tangible ways DVR can do better job of recognizing staff.
- Evaluate differences in how supervisory units view recognition to inform process.
- Work to create a culture where the workforce is recognized regularly and feel more valued.
- Continue a yearly formal awards process.
- Participate in the DSHS Statewide Employee Recognition Workgroup.



Focus Issue: Teamwork – page 1

Question: A spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in my workgroup



Employees say:

•“I work with a great bunch of co-workers and we are all ready to jump in and help each other as well as our customers.”

•“The value of teamwork is sadly incredibly low.”

Summary of the Issue

DVR provides services to clients throughout the state in 36 offices. While some offices have a large number of staff and many have few, EVERY office requires good teamwork and coordination to provide quality services.

73% of DVR staff that completed the employee survey felt that “always, almost always, or usually” “a spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in my workgroup.” While this rating is strong, much room for improvement remains. Many comments were shared, with some employees noting the strong teamwork of their unit, while many others expressed concerns. 28 of the 48 comments regarding teamwork identified improvement needs.

Employee comments about teamwork noted the need for:

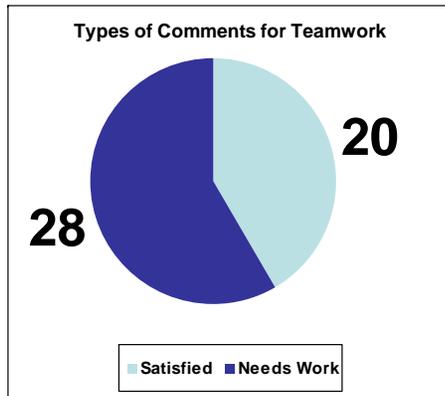
- Increased cooperation and support.
- Better interpersonal and conflict-resolution skills.
- More active teamwork building activities by the supervisors.
- Stronger collaboration.

Employees who shared positive comments point to camaraderie and a willingness to put the team first.

(View comments concerning teamwork on the DVR Intranet.)



Focus Issue: Teamwork – page 2



Employees say:

- “I like the people I work with in my office. They are hardworking and dedicated people.”
- “There needs to be more teamwork within the office environment. Supervisors are not good at fostering trust and teamwork among co-workers.”

What we’re already doing

- DVR has just started to address the need for improved teamwork. We will focus on this issue through current changes in organizational structure from 2 to 3 field service areas and better restructuring of state office units to support the field. New hiring is underway for a statewide field services administrator, deputy, and area managers. These changes offer new opportunities to work on improving teamwork and will start as the hiring and restructuring moves forward. Additionally, we are promoting an expectation of increased teamwork through key external partnerships.

Our plan for the coming year

- Unit level results from the employee survey show wide variance in teamwork. Further study and discussions with supervisors will be planned to learn more about the differences.
- A task force of staff from various offices, areas, and positions will work to come up with specific steps to show improvement in cooperation and teamwork within the various work units.
- The Senior Leadership Team will focus on teamwork issues related to the new organizational structure. Area managers will work with supervisors to create teamwork across the units and within the newly configured areas.
- At the state, area, and local levels, we will increase the number of times and ways we work together with key external partners (Community Rehabilitation programs, education, DSHS programs, business and disability groups).



Other important issues

Employees say:

- “I like the team I work with and my supervisor.”
- “We need better communication - who needs to know what and when. Effective dates for changes so everyone is on same page.”
- “I like that I have a voice.”
- “Less paper work and more working with the customer.”
- “We need more opportunity to grow within DVR.”

Overview of the Ratings

- Items with Highest Average Ratings at Statewide Level:
 - My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect.
 - I know how my work contributes to the goals of my agency.
 - I know what is expected of me at work.
 - My supervisor hold me accountable for performance.
- Items with Lowest Average Rating at Statewide Level:
 - I have confidence in the decisions made by senior leaders in DVR.
 - In my workgroup we use customer feedback to improve our work processes.
 - My agency uses my time and talents well.
 - I receive recognition for a job well done.

Overview of the Comments

DVR employees shared more comments expressing satisfaction than those identifying areas that need work, with the majority of the positive comments focused on “helping/working with clients.” Areas needing work include “work process/policies”, “teamwork and support, and “other management issues.”

(Full text of comments available on the DVR Intranet.)

Our plan

- Results and comments from the employee survey will be used regularly to help with discussions and decision-making of the Senior Leadership Team and Supervisors.
- Workgroups will be developed over time to address and resolve specific issues.
- Updates will be shared with employees and they will be invited to provide further input.
- The Director’s regular messages will include items about the two initial areas of focus and further actions taken.