



State Plan

Highlights of 2020-2023 State Plan Update
Effective July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2024

As Approved by the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration
and the federal Departments of Education and Labor

This State Plan is included in Washington's Combined State Plan
for Workforce Development, Talent and Prosperity for All

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation



To improve readability and accessibility, formatting and sequencing changes have been made to this version. However, no content approved by the federal Departments of Education and Labor has been edited or omitted.

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State Goals, Priorities & Strategies

The Department of Social and Health Services' Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has established four goals to support the provision of high-quality services to both job seekers with disabilities and to Washington's businesses. This section reviews the goals that DVR intends to achieve and evaluates progress made on the priorities and strategies adopted for Program Years (PY) 2020 through 2023, which includes the period from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2024.

These goals and priorities were based on analyses of DVR's past performance, feedback from customers and the Washington State Rehabilitation Council, and the results of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, which examines the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities in Washington.

Activities described herein also align with the strategic vision and operational elements of Talent and Prosperity for All, Washington's Combined State Plan. This alignment supports the letter and intent of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, to implement a coordinated service delivery system that promotes the long-term labor market engagement of individuals with disabilities and improves services to businesses.

Goal 1:

Customer Service and Outcomes are DVR's Highest Priority

Goal 1 reflects DVR's focus on providing high-quality services and prioritizes the importance of supporting customers in attaining high-quality employment, which offers pay and benefits that support financial security and stability.

Goal 1, Priority 1

Customers experience timely, continuous progress throughout the VR process.

Strategy 1

Identify and address barriers to timely services and continuous progress for customers throughout the VR process.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 22.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

Continued to implement recommendations from a PY 19 process improvement project focused on eligibility determination.

With assistance from an Advisory Workgroup, plans to standardize and address bottlenecks in the intake process were developed and staff training needs were defined. Standard intake and records request forms were completed, curriculum for intake training was completed, and eligibility determination training is in development.

Initiated a problem-solving activity around communication issues with Community Rehabilitation Programs.

To address ongoing concerns about these issues, Field Services surveyed CRPs to more fully understand the extent and types of communication challenges and is reviewing the results. This is the first step in a process that includes group problem-solving around causes and possible solutions, and prioritizing improvements.

Provided guidance and training to staff to address customer service barriers and timely services.

Field Services Division leadership has communicated consistent messaging to reinforce expectations for answering phones, frequency of customer contacts, timeliness of providing service plans to CRPs, and customer notification of change in status. New staff training in core VR competencies and customer service was launched, with a focus on effective, timely, consistent eligibility determination and plan development.

Strategy 2

Identify career pathways and increase the rate of customers with IPEs that include postsecondary training resulting in employment in their field of study.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 22 and continue through PY 23.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

This strategy is scheduled to be implemented in PY 22-23.

Strategy 3

Develop effective job search and job placement assistance and/or services that are readily available to all customers at the time they are job ready.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 21 and continue through PY 22.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

DVR's Business Engagement program expanded resources and targeted employer outreach to connect job-ready customers to employment opportunities. Business Specialists are hosting virtual job clubs, referring customers to WorkSource workshops when applicable, and utilizing job boards for people with disabilities, including AbilityJobs, Circa, and USAJOBS. Employer outreach efforts are partially determined by customer interests and needs.

Goal 1, Priority 3

Students are better prepared to engage in VR services after high school.

Strategy 1

Pre-ETS are available in all areas based on statewide needs assessment, school demographics and contract mapping data.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 23.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

Statewide transition needs assessment is underway.

The assessment identifies: 1) the number of students with disabilities who are in need and not receiving Pre-ETS; 2) the availability of secondary school-based transition services; and 3) the extent to which services are coordinated with VR. The 2022 update will include additional school types, such as tribal and non-traditional schools (e.g., alternative programs, juvenile rehabilitation site), and enable DVR to assess progress in service availability, accessibility and coordination.

School demographic data is being updated to include 2019-20 secondary school enrollment data. This data provides school-level information on students with disabilities, including numbers with an Individual Education Plan and 504 accommodations, poverty and drop-out rates.

Established contracts with Pre-ETS providers that reach all areas of the state.

Students throughout the State can access Pre-ETS services from at least one provider. DVR maintains an inventory of providers available to each secondary school in the state and recently added data to its tracking logs to show the number of students served at each school site.

Increased numbers of students received Pre-ETS services. The number of students receiving Pre-ETS has increased in each of the last five quarters: by 176 percent from second quarter PY 20 to first quarter PY 21 and by 58 percent in the past two quarters.

Strategy 2

Lead collaboration with individual school districts to identify gaps in services and CTE opportunities.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin and end in PY 23.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

To be implemented in PY 23.

Strategy 3

Engage with transition staff, students, and families earlier and work toward alignment of IEP and High School and Beyond Plan goals.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 22 and continue through PY 23.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

To be implemented in PY 22-23.

Goal 1, Priority 4

Individuals with disabilities have equitable access to DVR services.

Strategy 1

Improve access to DVR services through the use of technology, mobile service locations, translation and interpreter services, transportation services, or other accommodations.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 23.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

Supported customer access to remote services through equipment distribution, technology upgrades and changes in business practices.

Guidance for issuing equipment was provided to staff, equipment distribution to customers is underway, and an agency workgroup has identified barriers to customers receiving or using equipment. DVR has also modified practice standards and upgraded agency technology to deliver remote services, including acceptance of electronic signatures on official documents.

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Strategy 2

Develop a an outreach plan targeting under-represented populations in local communities that may be unaware of DVR services.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 21 and continue through PY 22.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

To be implemented in PY 21-22.

Strategy 3

Strengthen information and referral for those who need basic services and support to engage effectively with DVR and to facilitate access to workforce development programs.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 22 and continue through PY 23.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

To be implemented in PY 22-23.

Goal 2:

Motivate and Inspire High Performing Staff

Goal 2 priorities reflect Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment results, internal case review results, staff and stakeholder input which challenge DVR to provide staff with clear performance expectations, training and working conditions that support their success.

Goal 2, Priority 1

DVR staff achieve mastery in their work.

Strategy 1

Deliver foundational and practical training for field staff through VR Institute and internal trainers.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 23.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

Improved oversight and management of training operations.

Established a Training Steering Committee of staff in a variety of roles to provide quality assurance and diverse insights on training needs and design. Reorganized training team under a training manager to improve consistency and effectiveness of training delivery. Identified new methods and tools to adopt, including role-based curricula and multimodal delivery structure for new hires and a multimedia reference library for on-demand job aids.

Implemented the Vocational Rehabilitation Institute, a series of foundational courses in core VR topics, provided under contract with the Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation at the University of Washington.

- Foundational VR training was substantially completed (90% or more of staff) in four subject areas:
 - Foundations of Counseling, Case Management, Medical Aspects A and Medical Aspects B
- A majority (50-89%) of staff completed training in four additional subject areas:
 - Medical Aspects C, Vocational Assessment Process in Rehab, Labor Market Information and Job Development and Assistive Technology and Workplace Accommodations.

Provided in-service courses through DVR's Training Team and the state's on-demand Learning Center. Trainers developed and delivered trainings on topics such as youth transition, verbal de-escalation, ethics and working remotely. These courses are available to all staff.

Strategy 2

Expand new VRC program to all regions to reinforce VR counseling principles and practices among newer counseling staff.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 23.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

Expanded cohort program for new VRCs statewide.

The cohort program provides opportunities for new staff to meet with their peers for facilitated discussions and expert consultation to support their learning and connectedness to their colleagues. Originally established in one of DVR's three service regions, it was adopted statewide in PY 20.

Strategy 3

Strengthen DVR knowledge and application of transition planning and practices that support positive outcomes.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 22 and continue through PY 23.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

To be implemented in PY 22-23.

Goal 2, Priority 2

DVR excels in key performance indicators.

Strategy 1

Establish, track and monitor key performance measures for all levels of the agency using reports/dashboards easily accessible to staff at all levels.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 21.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

Established and regularly distributed “Measures that Matter” reports to staff.

These include data on case volume, performance measures, and preliminary analyses of customer demographics, to assess possible disparities in access to services and outcomes.

Completed or updated data sharing agreements to obtain performance data.

DVR established data sharing agreements to obtain wage data for customers employed in other states and analyses of household poverty status for employed customers and post-secondary education and employment outcomes for youth.

Strategy 2

Evaluate, monitor and coach staff using performance reports.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin and end in PY 23.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

To be implemented in PY 23.

Strategy 3

Build capacity and skills throughout DVR for continuous improvement and innovation.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin and end in PY 22.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

To be implemented in PY 22.

Goal 2, Priority 3

DVR is an employer of choice.

Strategy 1

Develop a recruitment and retention plan to address staff patterns, turnover and recruitment of under-represented groups among staff. Plan will acquaint managers with targeted recruitment strategies, reasonable accommodations, training and cultural competencies that foster a diverse and inclusive work environment.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 21.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

Implemented an Equity, Diversity, Access and Inclusion program.

DVR appointed an EDAI Administrator in June 2021 and has established a Community of Practice, made up of staff at all levels. The Community of Practice recommends ways to advance inclusion and belonging for staff. DVR has also facilitated a series of conversations with staff about EDAI issues to foster cultural awareness and competencies and movement toward a more inclusive work environment.

Certified Diversity Executive credentialing is in process for key staff.

Leadership is completing this training program to prepare them to support and promote EDAI objectives in the workplace.

Strategy 2

Increase options for telework, flexible work schedules, and part-time.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin and end in PY20.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

Successfully transitioned staff to remote work in early stages of the pandemic.

Pursuant to Gov. Inslee's Stay Home, Stay Healthy order, almost all staff are working remotely and adjustments to work schedules have been made on a case-by-case basis. Although staffing options will be revisited when the order is lifted, telework will continue be an option for staff approved to work remotely. More flexible work schedules and limited part-time options are being considered for some positions.

Strategy 3

Adopt and implement a staff recognition approach.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 21.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

To be implemented in PY 21.

Goal 3:

DVR Collaborates with Businesses and Partners that Deliver Benefits to Customers

Goal 3 priorities will improve outcomes for individuals with disabilities served by Washington's workforce development system, as well as other agency partners and DVR service providers. As a core WIOA program, DVR will contribute its value, expertise and strengths to maximize outcomes for individuals with disabilities and business customers. These priorities align with the strategic and operational elements of this Combined State Plan and reflect the needs of individuals with disabilities served system-wide.

Goal 3, Priority 1

Strengthen communication and collaboration with partners that deliver benefits to customers.

Strategy 1

Collaborate with CRPs on contract changes that incent/reward higher quality outcomes based on established outcome measures.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 22.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

Convened a workgroup to review the CRP contract and recommend changes.

- In a series of monthly meetings, DVR managers and CRP staff discussed the relationship between payment for contracted services and outcomes and general issues related to case service payments. These discussions were the first phase of information gathering for the new contract.
- DVR decided to extend CRP two-year contracts for an additional year, to July 2023, due to impacts of the pandemic, staff transitions and replacement of the agency's case management information system. The extension also provides additional time to identify areas for further assessment by the CRP Workgroup, define high quality outcomes in relationship to DVR's performance measures and investigate options for providing incentives.

Strategy 2

Increase collaboration with and understanding of services available to DVR-Community Service Office mutual customers.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin and end in PY 22.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

To be implemented in PY 22.

Strategy 3

Collaborate with DBHR to fully implement FCS inter-local agreement statewide.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 22.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

Established a DVR-DBHR Workgroup to implement a collaborative framework for serving DVR customers eligible for Foundational Community Supports.

Customers with a behavioral health condition may receive services from DBHR's FCS program as well as DVR's supported employment program. The collaborative framework identifies shared eligibility criteria and defines respective roles and responsibilities. The workgroup, which includes leadership from both agencies, has been meeting quarterly to discuss ongoing coordination and collaboration between the two systems and best practices for joint service delivery.

Increased capacity for program implementation and quality assurance.

DVR has developed supported employment training for staff, which includes a basic introductory course for VR counselors and supervisors and in-depth foundational DVR Supported Employment training for VRCs. In PY 20, training content, which includes FCS-related guidance, was revised and designed for online instructor-led webinars. Additionally, DVR's Supported Employment Program Manager participates in FCS fidelity reviews to provide vocational rehabilitation expertise to FCS evaluators and providers.

DVR and FCS staff provided supported employment services to joint customers.

In some locations, DVR staff and FCS providers routinely liaison to discuss their respective program practices and work together to braid services for customers. DVR aims to implement this approach statewide. FCS referrals cannot be tracked in DVR's case management system but will be built into the new system and data are expected to be available for PY 22. In the meantime, DVR has advocated for better identification of DVR customers in FCS service data and program evaluation.

Strategy 4

Collaborate with WorkSource leadership to increase WorkSource staff capacity and effectiveness in assisting people with disabilities with job search activities.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 23.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

Established a goal to participate in business engagement meetings in every Workforce Development Area, as part of DVR's three-year Business Engagement Program Strategic Plan.

Some Business Specialists have a very strong presence at their local WorkSource, attending all business engagement meetings and having co-located office space. DVR is working to build those types of connections to workforce partners statewide, to share expertise and coordinate resources and business outreach activities.

Goal 3, Priority 2

Formalize and implement targeted business engagement efforts.

Strategy 1

Define business engagement staff roles and responsibilities for education, training and outreach to employers.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 20 and end in PY 21.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

Created a new position description for the Business Specialist role.

Strategy 2

Develop statewide plan establishing expectations and measure outcomes for the business engagement program.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 20 and end in PY 21.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

Created a three-year Business Engagement Strategic Plan.

DVR convened a team to strategize and provide direction to the Business Engagement Program, with emphasis on integrating services with WorkSource activities, building relationships with businesses, linking customers to in-demand job opportunities and providing staff training and support.

Strategy 3

Provide technical assistance to employers on the use of natural supports and disability DEI and etiquette in the workplace.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin and end in PY 23.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

To be implemented in PY 22.

Goal 4:

DVR Operations and Infrastructure Support Our Work

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

Goal 4, Priority 1

Establish a reporting framework that informs decisions and improvements at all levels.

Strategy 1

Build reports/dashboards for DVR managers with easy access to performance data at the statewide, regional, unit and office levels.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 21

Progress Report for 2020-2021

Created new reports on caseload and performance trends at state and regional levels to support management decision-making. One report compares pre- and post-pandemic case volumes, performance and expenditures. Another set of reports shows longer-term trends and provides data to monitor VRC caseloads and assess the impact of waiting list releases on caseloads.

Assessed and addressed report priorities for supervisors. Completed reports to support monitoring of allotments and case service expenditures and to identify customers in need of benefits planning. Maintained the Business Engagement Tracking Tool, which captures data on business contacts, for WIOA reporting and internal program performance monitoring. Further work on management reports has paused until completion of DVR's new case management system.

Strategy 2

Develop a reporting framework and database for overall agency reporting.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 21 and continue through PY 22.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

To be implemented in PY 21-22.

Strategy 3

Full implementation of DVR customer satisfaction survey.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin and end in PY 20.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

Contracted with Social and Economic Sciences Research Center at Washington State University to conduct a quarterly DVR customer satisfaction survey.

Washington State Rehabilitation Council, sponsor of the survey, entered into this agreement in PY 20. Survey results were first reported for the period Oct-Dec 2020 and quarterly thereafter. The shift from monthly to quarterly surveys provides for large enough sample sizes to allow reporting at both the state and regional levels. WSRC also has the option to add supplemental survey questions. DVR provides SESRC the customer data needed to conduct the survey and is addressing this data transfer as part of Waves implementation. DVR has adopted customer satisfaction as a performance measure and uses the survey results for this purpose.

Goal 4, Priority 2

DVR Staff have modern, user friendly tools that streamline their work.

Strategy 1

Modernize DVR's electronic case management system.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 20 and continue through PY 22.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

Selected a vendor to develop a new system to replace STARS, DVR's current electronic case management system.

Design of the new system, Waves, is in the final stages. DVR's goal is to launch the new system on July 1, 2022.

Strategy 2

Update and enhance the content and usability of the iDVR website to provide staff with easy access to clear, up-to-date program, policy and administrative reference guides information.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 21 and continue through PY 22.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

To be implemented in PY 21-22.

Strategy 3

Implement new application to document Pre-ETS participant information and consent to participate in services and allow use of personal data for service delivery and reporting.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin in PY 22 and continue through PY 23.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

To be implemented in PY 22-23.

Strategy 4

Establish a formal IT portfolio management process to include a dashboard that allows staff to see how IT projects are prioritized.

Timeframe

This strategy will begin and end in PY 20.

Progress Report for 2020-2021

Created an IT portfolio and process for updating the portfolio.

The tool tracks projects that are active and their stage of completion. It also includes a placeholder section for projects that are pending.

Assistive technology services and devices provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process and on a statewide basis.

Throughout the rehabilitation process, DVR counselors assess whether assistive technology services or devices are needed to address customers' barriers to employment. DVR brochures and Customer Service Handbook provide in-depth information on AT services and devices. Full-time Assistive Technology Assessment Practitioners provide specialized AT assessment, consult with staff and customers, coordinate with vendors, and disseminate information and resources.

DVR will monitor AT service delivery in compliance with WIOA requirements. In addition, DVR will renew its commitment to being 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 or with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

Outreach procedures 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.

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 DVR population at rates at or above respective representation within the statewide population of individuals with disabilities. However, disparities have been observed in case progress and outcomes for racial and ethnic minorities. An in-depth analysis of this representation is provided in the Statewide Assessment section of this plan.

Methods 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.

DVR has developed a Memoranda of Understanding with DSB and OSPI to promote the successful implementation and operation of clarifying roles and responsibilities of each partner agency in coordinating activities that promote successful secondary transition services for students with disabilities.

DVR VR counselor liaisons who are trained to provide outreach and comprehensive high school transition services are assigned to every public, private, charter and tribal schools, alternative and transition programs as well as juvenile rehabilitation facilities across the state. As liaisons, they schedule regular check-ins with those partners who jointly serve DVR customers including: Developmental Disabilities Administration, county developmental disabilities programs, behavioral health agencies, as well as high schools, public institutions of higher education, WorkSource centers, and Juvenile Rehabilitation.

DVR Regional Transition Consultants are assigned to each of the nine Educational Service Districts across the state to provide outreach and collaboration in an effort to identify potentially eligible students who may benefit from Pre-Employment Transition Services. They provide coordinated transition planning and services between local education agencies and DVR contracted partners assist with assessment of service gaps, share training materials and attend transition local activities and events. Gaps in services are identified through the use of the comprehensive transition assessment, Transition Self-Assessment Tool. Data collection efforts are ongoing in through a partnership with Washington State University.

DVR delivers Pre-Employment Transition Services to potentially eligible youth directly and through contracts and partnerships with CRPs, educational agencies, community colleges, businesses and workforce agencies. This provides 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, support these services. An in-depth description of the significant changes to DVR's services to students with disabilities is described in the Coordination with Education section of this plan.

Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce development system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

DVR plays significant roles on the state Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board and local WDCs which contribute to strategies and activities that assist partners in serving individuals with disabilities. To coordinate and align workforce development services at the local level, DVR and the Washington Workforce Association have created and signed a Shared Vision, Values, & Principles of Collaboration document which outlines how integrated services will be provided to individuals with disabilities.

Support for innovation and expansion activities

DVR will continue to fund the following innovation and expansion activities:

- Washington State Rehabilitation Council and Washington State Independent Living Council operations.
- Continued use of WOIS, a tool used by staff around the state to help customers select suitable vocational goals.

Strategies to 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.

Washington DVR continues to experience barriers to ensuring equitable access to and participation in VR services, including Supported Employment Services, to those who live in rural and remote areas of the state. The program has physical office locations in all large and most medium-sized communities in the state, and provides scheduled visits to some smaller, more rural communities. However, it is difficult to offer equitable access to those individuals who live in some of Washington's small, rural communities and more remote areas.

Staff capacity and the small number of eligible individuals in rural and remote areas contribute to the provision of equitable services. Transportation continues to rise to the top of the list as the greatest barrier to access for these individuals. In areas where DVR does not have an ongoing presence, community members are often not aware of these services or how to access them.

Data shows a few groups who are represented in DVR services at lower levels than in the general population, including women and people who are African American/Black and/or American Indian. Certain geographic areas of the state are under-represented in DVR services as well compared to the estimates of people with disabilities living these areas.

Individuals experiencing extremely difficult life circumstances face the most barriers to participation in DVR services. While DVR could be an integral step in regaining stability for these individuals, inaccessibility to basic services, such as housing, food, and medical care often prevents them from fully participating and they drop out of services to deal with these more urgent needs. The program has difficulty maintaining contact with individuals who regularly move from place to place, who live in unsafe conditions, and who are not connected to community resources and supports, if those supports are available.

Easy access to certified interpreters is emerging as a barrier in all areas of the state, even in our largest and most populous counties. Washington DVR has experienced substantial difficulty recruiting and retaining counselors for the deaf, and the availability of contracted sign language interpreters has become challenging. Interpreters need to be arranged well in advance of appointments, which creates access issues when a customer has an immediate or unexpected need. These scheduling limitations create inequitable access for individuals who are deaf.

DVR has identified the following strategies and activities under Goal One, Priority Four to specifically target equitable access for unserved and underserved populations:

- Improve access to services through the use of technology, mobile service locations, translation and interpreter services, transportation services, or other accommodations.
- Develop an outreach plan targeting under-represented populations in local communities who may be unaware of DVR services.
- Strengthen information and referral for those who need basic services and support to engage effectively with DVR and to facilitate access to workforce development programs.

Additionally, DVR will undertake targeted outreach and collaborate with educational, human service and workforce development agencies to improve access and participation by students, economically disadvantaged populations and individuals with supported employment needs.

DVR Performance on WIOA Indicators

DVR has been providing data for WIOA performance measures to RSA through quarterly case service reports since 2017. The table below shows actual performance levels for PY 2019 and PY 2020 and targets established for PYs 2021-2023.

Title V Performance on WIOA Section 116 Performance Accountability Indicators*					
WIOA Measure	PY 19 Actual	PY 20 Actual	PY 21 Proposed Baseline/ Target	PY 22 Proposed Target	PY 23 Proposed Target
Employment Two Quarters after Exit	15.6%	33.6%	45.0%	44.0%	45.0%
Employment Four Quarters after Exit	12.6%	15.1%	43.0%	36.0%	37%
Median Wage Two Quarters after Exit	\$3,440.39	\$4,177.88	\$4,000	\$4,350	\$4,400
Credential Attainment	13.7%	20.1%	25.0%	19.8%	26.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	40.0%	46.3%	44.0%	43%	48.0%

*Combined indicators for DVR and DSB.

Strategies to improve the performance of the State with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.

DVR will employ 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 DVR implements a dual-customer model, serving Washington's businesses as well as job seekers with disabilities.

DVR will implement the following strategies to improve performance under WIOA Performance Accountability:

- Support customers in developing vocational goals and training objectives which align with labor market demand as well as customers' skills, abilities, interests and informed choice.
- Leverage the labor market exchange, labor market research tools and industry sector strategies to ensure that customers' vocational goals are aligned with in-demand occupations to the greatest extent possible.
- Integrate and align DVR services and career pathways programs.
- 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.
- Support apprenticeships, paid internships and on-the-job training opportunities to enhance customers' employability, in partnership with local Workforce Development Councils and the business community.
- Utilize the results of the 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, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs.

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

- Engage Business Specialists in the development and implementation of local WDC industry sector strategies and cross-program business engagement activities.
- Collaborate with local WDCs/ WorkSource to provide services to federal contractors and subcontractors, linking these contractors to the skilled job seekers with disabilities they seek.
- Provide training for businesses on how to recruit, hire, retrain and advance skilled workers with disabilities. Additional training includes information on Americans with Disabilities Act, disability awareness/etiquette and reasonable accommodation trainings.
- Increase visibility in Washington's business community through a methodical outreach and marketing plan which includes participation in local chambers of commerce, membership in professional organizations (e.g. the Society for Human Resource Management), representation at career and recruitment fairs.
- Provide candidate (VR customer) referrals to employers to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Service Levels for PY 2020

Annual applications for services fell to about 40 percent of previous levels in PY 20, as customers delayed seeking assistance with finding employment during the pandemic. The number of new customers began to increase in the second half of the year and reached 48 percent of pre-pandemic levels during the second quarter of PY 21. The number of new plans declined during the initial six months of PY 20 but have been climbing for the past year, reaching pre-pandemic levels in the first quarter of PY 21.

Timely completion of customer plans for employment averaged 30-40 days longer than pre-pandemic levels in the first half of PY 20. Factors affecting plan development included transitioning to remote services, job market conditions, reduced vendor capacity and customer hesitancy to engage in community-based activities. Average days to plan began to decrease at the beginning of PY 21 and approached pre-pandemic levels in the second quarter of PY 21.

The number of customers in plan fluctuated very little during PY 20 and PY 21 to date, compared to previous year levels. This trend can be attributed to a combination of fewer jobs available and customers pausing their job search. DVR services helped 986 customers attain employment in PY 2020, about 68 percent of the number of successful customers in the prior year.

DVR's goal was to serve approximately 1,000 customers in supported employment and to achieve 600-700 successful rehabilitations annually. In PY 2020, 411 customers with supported employment needs had successful outcomes. Though less than predicted, the number is consistent with fewer customers obtaining jobs overall in PY 2020, which was about two-thirds the previous year's number.

DVR continued to release customers from the waiting list at rates of 200-400 per month. Declining applications in PY 20 allowed DVR to release more cases. A total of 4,742 customers were moved to active status between July 2020 and October 2021, reducing the waiting list by about 75 percent. Releases were paused from November 2021-February 2022 to maintain manageable caseloads. Releases will resume in March and continue throughout PY 2022.

Case Volume Monthly Averages				
	Jul 2019 – Mar 2020 (pre-COVID)	Apr 2020 – Jan 2022 (post-COVID)	Most recent quarter	Total PY 2020
New Applications	530	230	264	2,710
New Eligibility Determinations	535	228	258	2,444
New Plans	246	209	227	2,414
In Plan	5,634	5,536	5,527	8,777
In Plan-Employed	754	672	950	2,889
Closed after Plan	286	213	299	2,408
Closed Employed	151	95	149	986

Factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

Two main factors affected overall performance in PY 2020: the impact of the pandemic and staff vacancies, due to departures and position changes. At the beginning of the pandemic, DVR and its vendors were challenged to acquire and set-up the necessary technology and staff capacity to operate remotely. Similarly, customers faced barriers to accessing and participating in services. Even once remote services were in place, a significant number of customers lacked internet access, equipment, or skills to connect to services; some customers require in-person services. About one-third indicated a need for technology or technology training. DVR is in the process of distributing equipment to customers and addressing barriers to receiving or using equipment. By November 2021, DVR had re-opened offices and was operating on a hybrid basis. Resurgence of COVID, however, led to a temporary pause of in-person services.

In addition to reduced job opportunities due to business shutdowns and layoffs, several factors affected customer interest and ability to engage in services. The potential danger of working (particularly in customer service occupations), increased family responsibilities, and unavailability of public transportation or support person were the main barriers.

Staff changes at DVR have presented both challenges and opportunities. The number of vacancies, new staff and position changes have delayed implementation of some program plans, although new staff have also brought new skills and vision to the agency. New initiatives, such as DVR's robust training program, EDAI initiatives, and development of a new case management system, have required dedication and redirection of staff time and resources but will have profound and long-lasting impacts on service quality.

Estimated Service Levels for PY 2022 and PY 2023

Applications: 5,000 annually

Eligibility Determinations: 4,800 individuals annually

Customers in an IPE: 3,200 new plans and 8,200 receiving services in a plan annually

Case Service Expenditures: \$42 million

DSHS/DVR Eligibility, Wait List, Service, & Cost Projections: Total for FFY 2023 & FFY 2024

FFY 2023-24	Eligibilities Determined	Wait List	New IPEst	Total IPEs	Rehabilitation Cases	Total Case Service Costs
Priority Category 1	6,800	0	4,000	5,600	2,400	\$28,600,000
Priority Category 2	1,400	0	900	1,200	600	\$6,200,000
Priority Category 3	1,000	0	650	800	340	\$4,200,000
Priority Category 4	300	300	400	530	230	\$2,600,000
Priority Category 5	100	100	50	70	30	\$400,000

Supported Employment Estimates

DVR provide supported employment services under the Title VI Supported Employment Grant. For program years 2022 - 2023, DVR estimates 800 customers will receive supported employment services annually through Individualized Plans for Employment, resulting in 400-500 supported employment outcomes per year. At these levels, DVR estimates serving approximately 3,200 supported employment IPEs and producing 1,800 supporting employment outcomes during the four-year period of this plan.

DVR aligns Supported Employment services and resources with Priority Category 1 customers; only individuals with the most significant disabilities receive Supported Employment services.

Input of State Rehabilitation Council

Introduction

This section addresses the input and recommendations of the Washington State Rehabilitation Council, provided to DVR during FFY 2020-2021, as well as DVR's formal responses to each item.

The Washington State Rehabilitation Council

The WSRC provides guidance and advocacy to improve vocational rehabilitation services and makes recommendations about important or emerging issues. The WSRC met on a quarterly basis during the reporting period.

Summary of Input & Recommendations

WSRC Item 1

June 24th, 2020

The WSRC recommends rescinding the Non-CRP Job Placement policy that was implemented in January 2019. The WSRC conducted an extensive case study of the Workforce System for the 2019 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment that included interviews of 11 of 12 Workforce Development Council staff and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisors who are liaisons to the Workforce Development Councils. The results clearly outlined that while the WorkSource system has developed some promising practices in coordination with DVR, there are significant gaps in their ability to serve complex needs of customers with most significant disabilities. Staff providing direct service in these local offices would require intensive disability training for successful implementation of this policy's efforts.

DVR Response to WSRC Item One

On August 12, 2020, DVR rescinded the procedural requirement for customers to access services from WorkSource prior to a referral for CRP Job Placement. At the time of the decision, the closure of WorkSource locations to the public made it harder for DVR customers to benefit from services. To prevent delay of customers' progress toward stable employment due to DVR procedures, the requirement was removed in its entirety from DVR's Customer Service Manual.

WSRC Item 2

June 11th, 2021

The WSRC recommends rescinding the VRS Approval of Certain Services policy that was implemented in January 2019.

- DVR may not choose to provide only some services, or to delay services to eligible individuals with an IPE to reduce costs or to serve additional eligible individuals.

- VR Supervisor approval of all Community Rehabilitation Program provided Community Based Assessments, CRP Job Retention, and services supporting customer participation in post-secondary services in advance is not consistent with Individualized Plan for Employment requirements or customer informed choice.
- Timeliness has been the number one issue for the Council and for DVR customers. This guidance has added many new documentation and review processes to a system that is already administratively burdensome.

DVR Response to WSRC Item Two

DVR rescinded the VRS Approval of Certain Services directive on July 23, 2021 and provided additional criteria for VRC approval of services, including referrals to CRPs for Community-Based Assessment and Job Placement and Retention services, postsecondary education, and self-employment services. DVR updated its Customer Service Manual to include some decision criteria to consider when purchasing these services. Journey level VRCs may approve these services, as necessary for their customers, and must document the justification in case notes.

Summary of Consumer Satisfaction

Between October 1, 2020 and September 30th, 2021, customer satisfaction input was gathered through Customer Listening Sessions & Customer Satisfaction Survey:

Customer Listening Sessions

Given public health safety concerns presented by the pandemic, the WSRC shifted the in person Focus Groups to virtual Customer Listening Sessions to ensure council members were able to connect directly with customers to hear their feedback on services. During this time, we conducted sessions with eight customers in the Wenatchee office and seven customers in the Bellingham office. WSRC members ask customer the following questions during the focus group:

1. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate DVR's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and providing services remotely?
2. Are there any barriers you have to receiving services during COVID-19 and throughout your DVR experience?
3. DVR has phases of service: eligibility, plan and closed. What phase are you currently in?
4. Have you been referred to a Community Rehabilitation Provider?
5. What has DVR done well?
6. How would you describe your overall satisfaction with DVR?
7. Is there anything else you would like DVR to hear?

Customer Satisfaction Survey

This reporting period we achieved our goal of beginning an external contract with Washington State University – Social & Economic Sciences Research Center for purposes of expanding our Customer Satisfaction Survey reporting capabilities to include regional and statewide satisfaction rating by case status. We also now have the capability to receive customer comments reports separated by region and office location. This has allowed us opportunity to educate regional administrators and supervisors better on the trends in customer satisfaction. In addition, we will now be able to conduct supplemental surveys on an as-needed basis. The survey asks customers the following questions, allowing them opportunity to rate their responses on a 5-point Likert scale:

1. My counselor does a good job keeping in touch with me.
2. My counselor understands what is important to me.
3. My counselor understands how my disability affects me.
4. My counselor cares about my input.
5. DVR moves quickly enough for me.
6. Overall, I am satisfied with DVR.

Customers receive an invitation by mail and email to participate in the survey via a webportal as well as a phone-in option. Customers are surveyed in each of the four respective phases of the VR process: eligibility, plan, closed-employed, and closed-other. Since we recently started this new contract and updated our methodology, we have only three quarters of data to share at this time from October 2020 to June 2021.

Quarter 1 – October 2020 to December 2020

- Region 1 – 72% (Margin of Error +/- 8%)
- Region 2 – 66% (Margin of Error +/- 7%)
- Region 3 – 69% (Margin of Error +/- 6%)
- Statewide – 69% (Margin of Error +/- 4%)

Quarter 2 – January 2021 to March 2021

- Region 1 – 64% (Margin of Error +/- 8%)
- Region 2 – 72% (Margin of Error +/- 7%)
- Region 3 – 61% (Margin of Error +/- 7%)
- Statewide – 65% (Margin of Error +/- 4%)

Quarter 3 – April 2021 to June 2021

- Region 1 – 69% (Margin of Error +/- 8%)
- Region 2 – 67% (Margin of Error +/- 7%)
- Region 3 – 59% (Margin of Error +/- 8%)
- Statewide – 65% (Margin of Error +/- 4%)

These results provide a new baseline for the Customer Satisfaction Survey goal of 75 percent customer satisfaction.



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