



DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Strategic Plan 2021-2023

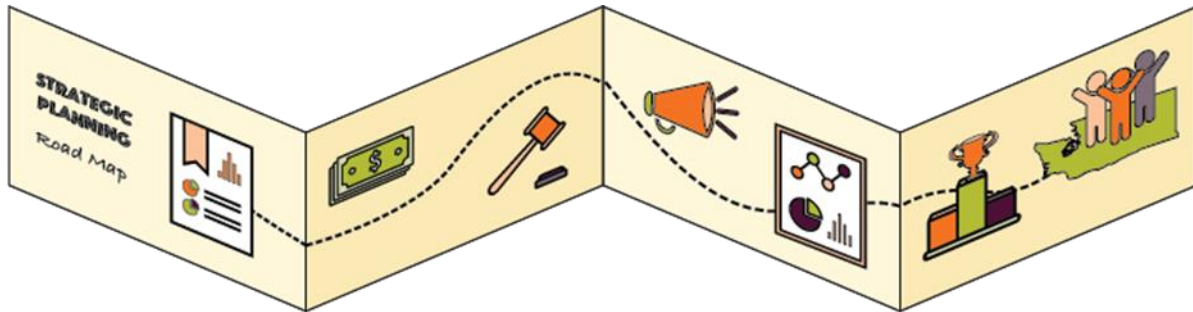
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STRATEGIC PLANNING IN DSHS

DSHS' goal and commitment is to be a national leader in every aspect of client service. The DSHS strategic plans are a roadmap to the future. They identify where we currently are with our performance, where we want to be and how we're going to get there. The plans are used to guide our day-to-day efforts and focus our resources. They are integral to the work we do every day.



To that end, a strategic plan is crucial for making informed budget decisions. The Legislature requires each agency's budget recommendations be directly linked to the agency's strategic plan. Our plan articulates our mission, programs, goals and objectives. The strategic plan itself links budget requests to specific efforts in order to achieve statewide goals.

While the primary purpose of a strategic plan is to guide the agency's activities, it also provides a helpful means to communicate with clients, partners and stakeholders outside the agency. In addition, state law ([RCW 43.88.090](#)) directs each state agency to define its mission and to establish measurable goals to achieve desirable results for customers, and to develop clear strategies and time lines for achieving these goals.

Given the historic times we are living in with the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021-2023 biennium will be a dramatically different strategic planning and budget season. COVID-19 has had a significant impact on state revenues and as such, the Department is facing devastating budget reductions that reflect an economic downturn expected to match or exceed that of the Great Recession. DSHS doesn't know yet what our new normal will be. However, we will take this opportunity to think about the fundamental changes to how we serve people and focus on the strategic priorities that support our core mission of transforming lives.

For the 2021-23 Strategic Plan, DSHS has an overarching executive summary that encompasses the many services and administrations within DSHS. Additionally, each administration has a more specific strategic plan, with objectives and action plans related to their vast and diverse programs. Lastly, the plans have metrics that are monitored quarterly to ensure we are meeting our goals and objectives. The DSHS strategic plans are developed on a two-year cycle and are annually updated.



DSHS PRIORITIES AND GOALS

This agency-wide strategic plan addresses the priorities for all of DSHS, and sets measureable objectives and goals. Using data, we monitor our progress in order to ensure DSHS serves our clients in a meaningful way and to the best of our ability within our funding. Every DSHS employee contributes to the mission of Transforming Lives by addressing the priorities and accomplishing the objectives within our agency-wide strategic plan.



DSHS has articulated broad over-arching priorities for the agency based on discussions with clients, stakeholders, the Governor's Office, legislators, staff and others. These priorities directly address current needs and anticipate future needs. By working together across administrations, stakeholders, vendors, community partners, agencies, and others, DSHS will be able to deliver a range of quality of services to Washington residents, work efficiently and effectively, and be an employer of choice for our staff.

In addition, each strategic objective within the DSHS Strategic Plan supports the five broad goals for DSHS.



These DSHS goals align with the Governor's goals of:

- Healthy and Safe Communities.
- Efficient, Effective and Accountable Government.

DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



“Our Division of Vocational Rehabilitation continues to forge ahead in serving Washingtonians who face barriers to employment because of a disability. Kudos to DVR for their forward-thinking approach to transforming lives, especially by helping prepare young people to leave secondary school and live independently.”

Cheryl Strange, Secretary

Department of Social and Health Services



“Preparation for the DVR Strategic Plan was a great opportunity for us to focus on new goals and strategies that will lead to better outcomes for customers, staff and partners. We look forward to implementing this plan and seeing the fruit of our efforts.”

Robert Hines, Director

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

DVR Organizational Chart

DSHS' Division of Vocational Rehabilitation believes every person can work with the right supports. DVR empowers people with physical, sensory, cognitive or mental disabilities to achieve a greater quality of life by obtaining and maintaining employment.

Through 37 offices around the state, DVR provides individualized services to about 20,000 people annually who want to work but face barriers to finding or keeping a job. DVR staff work with customers to address disability-related barriers to employment and provide counseling, career, training and support services that lead to jobs and careers.

DVR also engages Washington's business community and provides technical assistance and training to support the hiring, retention and advancement of people with disabilities. DVR enhances its customer services through partnerships with community-based organizations, secondary and post-secondary education institutions, DSHS partners and WorkSource.

Mission

Transforming lives by assisting individuals with disabilities to fully participate in their communities through meaningful employment.

Vision

Dedicated professionals leading the field of vocational rehabilitation, delivering exceptional experiences to every customer, every time.

Values

- **Transparency** through clear, honest communication with customers, staff and partners.
- Acting with **Integrity**, upholding the ethics and values of our profession.
- Promoting a culture of **Empowerment** for customers and staff.
- Advancing rehabilitation practices through **Innovation**.
- **Collaboration** with customers, staff and partners that produces results.
- Commitment to **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion** in all of its forms to achieve excellence.



OBJECTIVES

Below are the specific strategic objectives within the department's priorities. Some objectives refer to decision funding packages. Decision packages are funding requests DSHS submits to the Office of Financial Management as part of the state budget process. DSHS monitors progress in meeting strategic objectives, reports on it quarterly on the DSHS website and updates objectives as needed.

DSHS STRATEGIC PRIORITY: PROVIDE A PATHWAY OUT OF POVERTY AND BECOME HEALTHIER

Importance: Whether people come to us for simple, short-term assistance or with more complex, long-term needs, we must be present to the whole person, offering the right benefits at the right time. Our participation in the Governor's Poverty Reduction Workgroup and our own efforts to work with families to understand the cycle of intergenerational poverty will give us the tools we need to help individuals and families achieve economic stability.

Based on this, DSHS has established the following strategic objectives to support how we will provide a pathway out of poverty and becoming healthier.

Strategic Objective 1.1: Improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Does this objective have an I.T. component? ☒Yes ☐No

Importance: Employment contributes to a person's ability to live independently, attain a higher quality of life and participate fully in their community. People with disabilities who want to work can face substantial barriers to finding or keeping a job.

As a core program of Washington's workforce development system, DVR promotes a healthier, more prosperous Washington through a dual-customer model, serving individuals with disabilities and Washington's businesses. DVR provides individualized services to people with disabilities, with priority for individuals with the most significant disabilities. These services are customer-driven and consistent with individuals' unique strengths, abilities, interests and informed choice. Through business engagement, DVR and its partners work to close skill gaps, strengthen and diversify the workforce and expand opportunities for people with disabilities in Washington.

Success Measure 1.1.1: Increase the percent of DVR participants who achieve successful employment outcomes from 57% in June 2020 to 60% by June 2022.

See [Chart V1.1: Percentage of program participants who are successfully rehabilitated achieving employment](#)

Action Plan:

- Identify career pathways and increase customer participation in post-secondary training that leads to employment in their field of study.
- Develop effective job search, job placement and other services that are readily available to all customers when they are job ready.
- Provide training through the VR Institute, regional trainer team and new counselor cohort program to ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills needed to equitably deliver high-quality vocational rehabilitation services to customers with diverse needs, abilities and interests.



- Modernize the case management system to improve the effectiveness of service delivery and its capability to assess program effectiveness and continuous improvement.
 - Develop and implement an outreach plan targeting under-represented populations in local communities that lack awareness or understanding of DVR services.
 - Develop statewide expectations and outcomes for business engagement activities and staff roles and responsibilities to expand employment opportunities and job placements for individuals with disabilities.
 - Increase coordination and collaboration with DSHS, workforce development and community partners to develop integrated service delivery models and expand access to the services and supports customers need for job success.
 - Provide access to Foundational Community Supports by implementing an interlocal agreement with the Health Care Authority's Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery.
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Strategic Objective 1.2: Ensure successful transitions into the workforce for students with disabilities.

Does this objective have an I.T. component? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Importance: Students with disabilities often leave school without a path to further education or employment. Criteria for services change when youth reach adulthood and many supports no longer are available once they leave high school. Youth often are unprepared to navigate the complex array of services available to adults.

Comprehensive planning and coordination of school-based and vocational services help students acquire the knowledge, skills and supports needed to achieve their vocational goals and live as independently as possible after high school. DVR collaborates with education and workforce development agencies to offer group services for students with disabilities so they can learn about the world of work, develop work-readiness skills and find employment. Eligible students may also receive individualized services from DVR.

Success Measure 1.2.1: Attain a 70% rate of entering post-secondary education or employment within one year of exiting secondary education for students with disabilities who are DVR customers.

See Chart VX.11: Percent of DVR customers who are students with disabilities entering post-secondary education or employment within one year of exiting secondary education

Action Plan:

- Expand the scope and availability of pre-employment transition services through new and extended contracts with Washington's community rehabilitation programs, Workforce Development Councils, community and technical colleges, and educational service districts. Emphasize work-based learning experiences and work-based readiness training.
 - Lead collaboration with individual school districts to identify service gaps and establish a seamless continuum of services for students with disabilities throughout Washington.
 - Strengthen DVR knowledge and application of transition planning and practices that support positive post-secondary outcomes for youth.
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Strategic Objective 1.3: Reduce poverty in the disability community in coordination with DSHS and workforce development partners

Does this objective have an I.T. component? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Importance: Poverty affects the disability community at rates nearly double that of individuals without disabilities. DVR customers who obtain employment improve their economic circumstances and are less reliant on public benefits. However, only about 18% of DVR participants who are employed have incomes that equal or exceed 200% of the federal poverty level.

DVR provides access to services that support labor force participation and higher education and demand-driven job training that result in higher wages and financial independence. DVR also supports policy reforms to address barriers to economic success for Washingtonians with disabilities. These initiatives are carried out in collaboration with DSHS' Economic Services Administration, WorkSource and workforce training programs and community partners and advocates.

Success Measure 1.3.1: Increase the percentage of DVR participants who exit DVR services with incomes at or above 200% of federal poverty level from 18% to 25% by June 2022.

See Chart VX.10: Percent of DVR participants who exit services earning income at or above 200% of federal poverty level

Action Plan:

- Increase the rate of customers with job goals leading to self-sufficiency, using the following strategies: identify career pathways and increase customer participation in post-secondary training that leads to employment in their field of study; educate customers about well-paying career options and encourage participation in educational and workforce training programs that prepare job-seekers for careers that pay a living wage; ensure that customers are well-informed of pay scales of occupational options and the match to their desired standard of living.
- Collaborate with Community Rehabilitation Programs on contract changes that incentivize higher quality outcomes based on established outcome measures.
- Develop effective job search, job placement and other services that are readily available to all customers when they are job ready.
- Increase coordination and collaboration with DSHS, workforce development and community partners to develop integrated service delivery models and expand access to the services and supports customers need for job success.
- Provide access to Foundational Community Supports by implementing an interlocal agreement with the Health Care Authority's Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery.
- Ensure that benefits planning is offered to all customers who are eligible.



Importance: At DSHS, we strive every day to get even better at what we do, no matter how each of us contributes to our agency mission of Transforming Lives. An important piece of that is transforming ourselves. Our most important resource is our professional, caring, compassionate staff. We need to continue our efforts to be an employer of choice – recruiting and retaining individuals committed to a career in public service. We will keep a laser focus on equity, diversity and inclusion. Those values are foundational to every aspect of our work with clients and in our day-to-day interactions with each other. Data will be used to drive decisions that will ensure our work is effective, efficient and accurate.

Based on this, DSHS has established the following strategic objectives to support how we will increase organizational efficiency, performance and effectiveness.

Strategic Objective 2.1: Increase customer satisfaction with DVR services by addressing customer and stakeholder concerns about service timeliness and quality and incorporating ideas for improvement.

Does this objective have an I.T. component? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Importance: DVR's success as well as our customers' success is built on enduring partnerships with the disability community, disability advocates, state partners and Community Rehabilitation Programs across Washington.

To maintain public trust, DVR is committed to acting with integrity in its relationships and being receptive and responsive to customer and other stakeholder input. DVR solicits stakeholder participation and incorporates it into its strategic and operational planning and receives routine feedback from customer satisfaction surveys and focus groups sponsored by the Washington State Rehabilitation Council.

Success Measure 2.1.1: Increase customer satisfaction rates from 70% in June 2020 to 75% by June 2022.
See Chart VX.6: Percent of participants who, after closure, report satisfaction with DVR services.

Success Measure 2.1.2: Increase timely completion of individual plans for employment from 98% in June 2020 to 99% by June 2022.
See Chart VX.8: Percentage of Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs) developed within 90 days of customers' eligibility determination dates

Action Plan:

- Develop strategies to improve timely and continuous case progress and reduce the time customers are wait-listed for services. Establish customer contact and response standards as performance measures for counseling staff. Establish an approach for reducing the impact to customers' case progress when staff transitions and vacancies occur.
- Modernize the case management system to improve the effectiveness of service delivery and its capability to assess program effectiveness and continuous improvement.
- Enhance tools and skills for performance monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement: establish key performance measures; evaluate and coach staff using performance reports; conduct case reviews to identify practices that need improvement; implement standard operating procedures

and Lean techniques to achieve quality improvements; build capacity throughout DVR for continuous improvement and innovation; and provide training to address knowledge and skills gaps.

- Facilitate the workgroup established to strengthen communication and partnerships between DVR and Community Rehabilitation Programs and address strategies to improve service quality and outcomes.
 - Fully implement the Washington State Rehabilitation Council's Customer Satisfaction Survey. Evaluate and address concerns conveyed through that survey, focus groups, the DVR Advisory Workgroup and employee surveys.
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Strategic Objective 2.2: Promote equity, diversity and inclusion in the workplace by hiring and retaining a workforce that is inclusive of people with disabilities and representative of the racial and ethnic diversity of our customers.

Does this objective have an information technology component? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Importance: A diverse and inclusive workforce is at the heart of DVR's mission and the integrity of its work is demonstrated, in part, by the extent to which it employs individuals with disabilities. Understanding cultural context and providing services that respect cultural differences are an aspect of good customer service and affect customers' participation and success. DVR strives to be a model employer for people with disabilities and recognizes that a diverse workforce expands DVR's perspective and helps us better meet the needs of our customers.

Success Measure 2.2.1: Increase the percentage of people with disabilities in DVR's workforce from 16% in June 2020 to at least 20% by June 2022.

See Chart VX.12: Percentage of people with disabilities in DVR's workforce

Success Measure 2.2.2: Increase the percentage of DVR employees who complete cultural humility training to 95% by June 2022.

Action Plan:

- Ensure that managers are well-versed in bias-free hiring practices, reasonable accommodations, employee training, mentoring opportunities and cultural competencies that foster a diverse and inclusive work environment.
 - Include cultural humility and awareness training in staff training curriculum.
 - Obtain Certified Diversity Executive and Certified Diversity Professional credentialing for key staff to support and promote EDI objectives in the workplace.
 - Partner with HRD's Talent Acquisition Team to identify and target recruitment efforts to the disability community, organizations that assist people with barriers to employment, organizations that represent diverse racial and ethnic communities and institutions with vocational rehabilitation specialties.
 - Publicize the work and successes of DVR to targeted audiences through media and events and encourage post-secondary students to pursue careers in vocational rehabilitation.
 - Promote a more inclusive work environment by providing opportunities for modified job duties, flexible work sites and flexible schedules.
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Strategic Objective 2.3: Identify service delivery improvements for individuals who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native.

Does this objective have an I.T. component? ☐Yes ☒No

Importance: DVR shares responsibilities with the state's tribes for meeting the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities who are tribal members as well as those who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native. DVR has a cooperative working relationship and service delivery commitments with all federally recognized tribes in the state, including those that do not operate federally funded Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs. A memorandum of understanding with Washington's 11 TVR programs outlines collaboration, coordination and effective communication among the partners. DVR also participates as a member of the DSHS Indian Policy Advisory Committee, which meets regularly to identify needed service improvements.

Success Measure 2.3.1: Develop a plan for outreach to organizations who serve or advocate for individuals who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native by the end of June 2021 and implement by 2022.

Action Plan:

- Assess need for improvements to procedures addressed in the joint memorandum of understanding with Washington's tribal VR programs for referrals, joint cases, financial responsibility, shared training opportunities, information sharing and communication.
 - Develop outreach strategies in consultation with Native American/Alaska Native organizations.
 - Identify training resources and experiential opportunities to develop DVR staff cultural sensitivity in working with individuals with disabilities with Native American or Alaska Native heritage.
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Strategic Objective 2.4: Emergency Management Services: DVR staff will be prepared to respond to emergencies and workplace hazards to ensure that employees and visitors remain safe and secure and business operations are maintained and/or can recover quickly.

Decision Package: L7 Personal Protective Equipment COVID-19

Does this objective have an I.T. component? ☐Yes ☒No

Importance: DVR operations take place in 38 locations located throughout the state. DVR has management responsibilities for about 20% of the facilities at which services are provided. The remaining facilities are managed by DSHS or other agencies. Regardless of the responsible entity and particulars of each facility, staff awareness of emergency procedures and prevention strategies and ability to effectively respond to critical incidents are essential to the safety and security of employees and visitors.

Success Measure 2.4.1: Increase the number of employees trained in emergency preparedness and recovery to 100% by June 2022 and annually thereafter.

Action Plan:

- Revise standard operating procedures for emergency preparedness and recovery.



- Develop an emergency preparedness and recovery plan for all standalone DVR facilities, consistent with DSHS and other state policies. The scope of the plan will include accident prevention, emergency response and worksite physical security. Review annually and revise as needed.
- Ensure that staff co-located at DSHS or other agency facilities are aware of emergency plans and procedures for their location.
- Develop emergency preparedness and recovery training materials. Develop and implement a training plan to address training needs for current employees, new employees and annual updates. Provide reports on training completion to supervisors.
- Conduct Physical Security Annual Survey at standalone DVR facilities to determine the type and scale of risk, efficiency of security measures and need for additional security measures, based on security incident trends.
- Communicate regularly with staff about workplace safety, updates to safety plans and training requirements and opportunities.

