



DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

# Strategic Plan 2019-2021

*January 2019*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



At DVR, we are committed to creating great customer experiences while working with customers to address their unique needs and disability-related barriers to employment.

-Robert Hines, Director

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)**, believes that 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.

### Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

#### 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.
- Committed to **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion** in all of its forms to achieve excellence.



## AGENCYWIDE PRIORITIES AND GOALS

This Strategic Plan addresses the Secretary’s priorities for all of DSHS and sets measurable objectives and goals. We frequently monitor our progress to ensure DSHS serves our clients and Washington state to the best of our ability. Every DSHS employee contributes to addressing the priorities and accomplishing the objectives in this strategic plan.

The DSHS Secretary has chosen priorities for the agency based on discussions with staff, clients, stakeholders, the Governor’s Office, legislators, and others. These priorities address current needs and anticipate the future. By working together across administrations 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. The DSHS Secretary has five agencywide priorities:

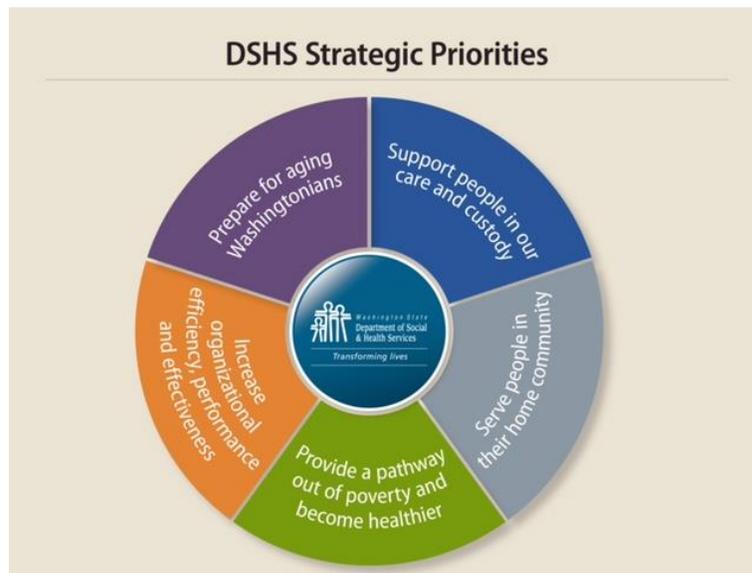
- Prepare for aging Washingtonians.
- Support people in our care and custody.
- Serve people in their home community.
- Provide a pathway out of poverty and become healthier.
- Increase organizational efficiency, performance, and effectiveness.

Each strategic objective in this agencywide plan supports the five broad goals for DSHS:

- Health: Each individual and each community will be healthy.
- Safety: Each individual and community will be safe.
- Protection: Each individual who is vulnerable will be protected.
- Quality of Life: Each individual in need will be supported to attain the highest possible quality of life.
- Public Trust: Strong management practices will ensure quality and efficiency.

Both the Secretary’s priorities and DSHS goals align with:

- Results Washington’s objective of better results for Washingtonians. Results Washington measures are labeled with the following icon. 
- The Governor’s goal of Healthy and Safe Communities.
- The Governor’s goal of Efficient, Effective and Accountable Government.



## OBJECTIVES

Below are the details of DVR's strategic objectives within the Secretary's priorities. The narratives for each describe why the objective is important, what constitutes success, and provide an action plan. Some objectives refer to decision packages. These are funding requests DSHS submits to the Office of Financial Management as part of the state budget process. You will see a decision package number for those objectives. 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, DVR has established the following strategic objectives to support how we will provide a pathway out of poverty and becoming healthier.

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

**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 both 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 55 percent in June 2018 to 65 percent by June 2020.

See Chart V1.1: Percentage of program participants who are successfully rehabilitated, achieving an employment outcome

#### Action Plan:

- Strengthen vocational assessment practices as the foundation for individualized services that meet customer needs, identify and address barriers to employment, and maximize outcomes.



- Provide staff training and support 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.
  - Increase business outreach and engagement to expand employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, in collaboration with Local Workforce Development Boards.
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## **Objective 1.2: Ensure successful transitions into the workforce for students with disabilities.**

**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 support services are no longer available once they leave high school. Youth are often 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 percent 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.
  - Increase collaboration and agreements with education officials, schools, and community partners to assess service needs, evaluate service delivery models, and establish a seamless continuum of services for students with disabilities throughout Washington.
  - Ensure that DVR staff are knowledgeable about and use transition planning and practices that best support positive post-secondary outcomes for youth.
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## **Objective 1.3: Reduce poverty in the disability community in coordination with DSHS and workforce development partners**

**Importance:** Poverty impacts the disability community at rates nearly **double** that of individuals without disabilities. While individuals with disabilities represent approximately 13 percent of the overall Washington working-age population, they make up 26 percent of those living in poverty. DVR customers who obtain employment improve their economic circumstances and are less reliant on public benefits.



However, only about 18 percent of DVR participants who are employed have incomes that equal or exceed 200 percent 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 percent of federal poverty level from 18 percent to 25 percent by June 2020.

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

**Action Plan:**

- 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.
- 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.
- Promote strategies to mitigate the potential loss of essential benefits and services to ensure that advancement in employment leads to upward financial mobility for people with disabilities.

**DSHS STRATEGIC PRIORITY: INCREASE ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY, PERFORMANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS**

**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. If we are to continue 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, DVR has established the following strategic objectives to support how we will increase organizational efficiency, performance and effectiveness.

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**Objective 2.1: Increase customer satisfaction with DVR services by addressing customer and stakeholder concerns and incorporating ideas for improvement.**

**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 (CRPs) across Washington.



To maintain public trust, DVR is committed to acting with integrity in our 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 77.5 percent in June 2018 to 90 percent by June 2020.

See Chart VX.6: Percent of participants who, after closure, report satisfaction with DVR services.

**Action Plan:**

- Use evidence-based and best practices, conduct case reviews to identify practices that need improvement, and 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.
  - Evaluate and address concerns conveyed through Washington State Rehabilitation Council's Customer Satisfaction Survey, focus groups, DVR Advisory Workgroup, and employee surveys.
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**Objective 2.2: Promote equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in the workplace by recruiting, hiring, and retaining a workforce that is inclusive of people with disabilities.**

**Importance:** A diverse and inclusive workforce is at the heart of DVR's mission and the integrity of our work is demonstrated, in part, by the extent to which we employ individuals with disabilities. DVR strives to be a model employer for people with disabilities and recognizes that a diverse workforce can better meet the needs of our customers.

**Success Measure 2.2.1:** Increase the percentage of people with disabilities in DVR's workforce from 17 percent in February 2018 to at least 25 percent by June 2020.

**Action Plan:**

- Ensure that managers are well-versed in targeted recruitment strategies, reasonable accommodations, employee training, mentoring opportunities, and cultural competencies that foster a diverse and inclusive work environment.
- Obtain CDE and CDP credentialing for key staff to support and promote EDI objectives in the workplace.
- Target recruitment efforts to the disability community, organizations that assist people with barriers to employment, and institutions with vocational rehabilitation specialties. Publicize DVR's EDI efforts through media and events.
- Provide full physical and communication access to application and interview processes and the work environment through accommodations such as adaptive technology and equipment, interpreters, modified job duties, and flexible work sites and schedules.

