

DVR *Division of Vocational Rehabilitation*



2020 ANNUAL REPORT

DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Terry Redmon

DVR Interim Director

2020 was a year like no other. The pandemic's impacts on DVR's service delivery tested our ability to overcome adversity. Nevertheless, staff proved we are stronger together. Staff found solace in celebrating the 100th anniversary of the VR program, and discovered innovative virtual technologies to help provide vital services to customers.

Order of Selection (OOS)

DVR entered OOS in 2017. Federal law requires OOS when a VR agency cannot serve all eligible customers. DVR began releasing customers in September 2019, thanks to additional funding. Beginning Nov. 1, 2020, DVR had enough resources to increase the number of customers released per month from the Priority category 2 waiting list to 300. At the close of 2020 State Fiscal Year (SFY), there were 5,703 customers on the waiting list.

Intake and Eligibility Pilot Projects

DVR concluded a pilot project intended to standardize and streamline elements of the eligibility determination process. This work began in 2019. Data collection from the pilot ended, summer 2020, and there are plans in 2021 to implement some process changes state-wide.

Staff Training

DVR put a renewed focus on staff training. DVR hired a regional training team to help coordinate trainings, and University of Washington's Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation began training counseling staff on core VR practices via the Vocational Rehabilitation Institute (VRI). For most of 2020, VRI operated on a remote-delivery model. Training evaluations indicate significant satisfaction among staff. DVR is retooling its training program, aspiring to increase capacity and deliver ongoing training to new staff, reinforce VR principles, and advance professional development.

Business Management Modernization Project (BMMP)

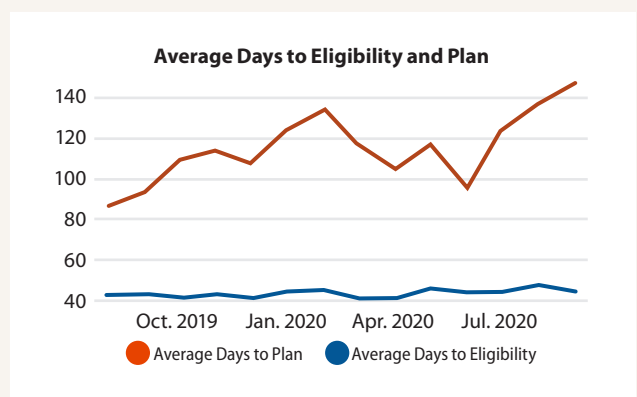
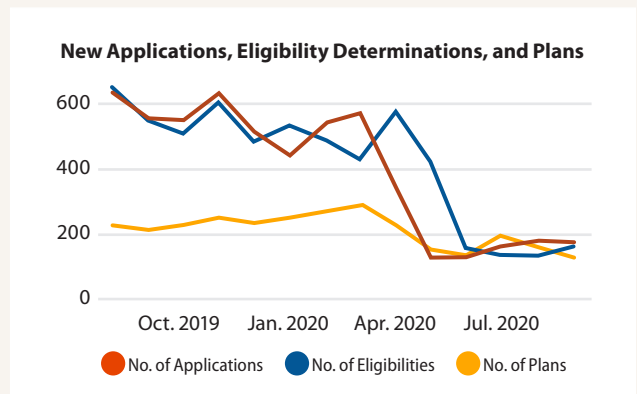
Liberum Consulting helped DVR implement the Business Management Modernization Project (BMMP). Its two phases: acquiring an Electronic Document Management System (EDMS) to transition DVR to paperless, and moving to a new Case Management System (CMS), replacing the 25-year-old legacy version. DVR welcomed Laserfiche, its EDMS implementation partner. EDMS tentatively goes live, spring 2021; CMS tentatively follows, summer 2022.

DVR's COVID-19 Response

DVR deployed a robust COVID-19 response. Operational changes included closing office lobbies and transitioning to remote-service delivery. Approximately 95% of staff teleworked. Only those staff with essential responsibilities remained in the office. As DSHS plans to reopen offices, DVR will assess in-person services and leverage remote-service delivery practices. DVR provided customers essential services via phone, email, and Zoom (telehealth version), and furnished equipment to customers in need. Service delivery reduced significantly with a 70% decline in applications and eligibility determinations.



COVID-19 conditions affected average days to eligibility and plan. To help reduce delays related to DVR's paper-based model, electronic signature options were made available to customers. Decreased employment opportunities, vendor capacity, and avoidance of community-based activities also affected service delivery.



Looking Ahead

In 2021, DVR's priorities will include ensuring quality training for DVR staff, providing innovative and robust services during the pandemic, further integration of DVR services within the workforce development system, and the continued management of DVR's resources benefiting our customers and community.

As always, we could not do this great work without the support of our staff, stakeholders, employers, and partners.

thank you!

HOW DVR SERVICED CUSTOMERS DURING UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

DVR has participated in an impressive number of Zoom meetings since the start of the pandemic—more than 8,300. Teleworking for staff at DVR had not been part of the traditional working model, but within a mere few weeks, DVR mobilized more than 200 staff to work remotely from home. DVR also provided Zoom user accounts for staff.

Because of school closures, DVR expanded its toolbox to include virtual assessment tools for youth, adding You Science and Virtual Job Shadow user accounts for each transition counselor. DVR also added Virtual Job Shadow user accounts for all counselors for use with adult customers, increasing our total staff user accounts to more than 200.

In summer 2020, DVR, in partnership with the Washington State Rehabilitation Council, rolled out a remote services survey to collect customer feedback, which helped identify barriers to accessing services and drew attention to areas warranting improvement.

In response to customer feedback addressing the unavailability of technology to connect for some, DVR allocated for the purchase and provision of laptops and tablets. In addition, DVR continued addressing individual needs in customer plans for employment.

DVR continues striving for excellence. This includes providing more tools for staff and customers, building our resource knowledge for customers, collaborating with our partners and stakeholders on how to improve, and expanding our diversity initiatives to address inequities across the state.

DVR CELEBRATES 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF VR PROGRAM IN UNITED STATES

Starting summer 2020, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation joined forces with the Washington State Department of Services for the Blind and more than a half-dozen other statewide VR organizations and educational institutions, with a goal to develop a virtual program that celebrated the 100th anniversary of the public Vocational Rehabilitation program in the U.S.



The results were fruitful. Approximately 30 individuals brought their lived and rich VR experiences to the program, inspiring and elevating the VR and disability community across Washington State and beyond.

The video program premiered on Oct. 15, 2020. Upwards of 190 unique viewers watched and listened. It was accessible with closed captioning and audio descriptions. To date, the video has received more than 1,100 views.

Watch it at <https://youtu.be/WzUO1Goql6s>

DVR and our VR partners are thankful for the many who celebrated along with us, and for the many who volunteered to share their VR story and contribute to this commemorative program.

VR SERVICES HELPS MAN FIND PURPOSE IN STREET CLEANING TRUCK JOB

Kimmer was one of the many passionate VR customers who shared their VR experience as part of the VR 100th Celebration video program.

He came to DVR in 1992 and was an on-again off-again customer, cycling through jobs with some success, but not with complete job satisfaction.

He would work for a year or so and then lose interest or, unfortunately, lose his job. In 2017, Kimmer found the perfect fit working for Management Services Northwest as a maintenance worker, driving a big street cleaning truck at night cleaning parking lots around town. He was able to combine his interests and experience as a driver and janitor, and his desire to work independently, into this one job.

He has worked full-time successfully for the past three years. In 2019, he had made enough of a living to purchase a mobile home, and very recently bought a new truck he could call his own.

Kimmer's positive demeanor and commitment to working hard is refreshing. He says DVR helped him significantly with resume writing, interview prep, and building his confidence.

In his job working for Management Services Northwest, he says he has finally found purpose and fulfillment. He thanks DVR for helping him discover that purpose by providing him the tools, resources, and encouragement he needed to get there.



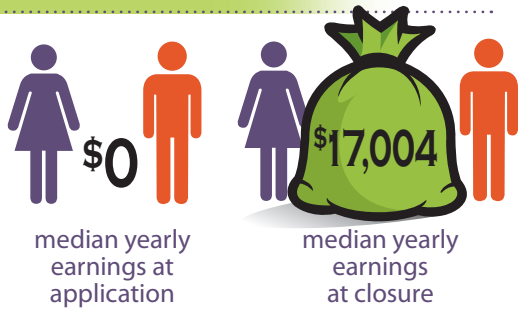
Kimmer

*By Catherine Herring,
Bellingham DVR Supervisor*

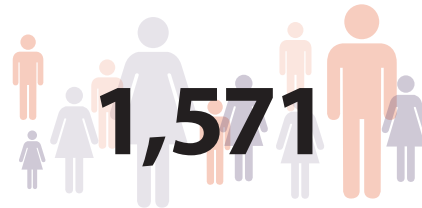
DVR BY THE NUMBERS

(in State Fiscal Year 2020)

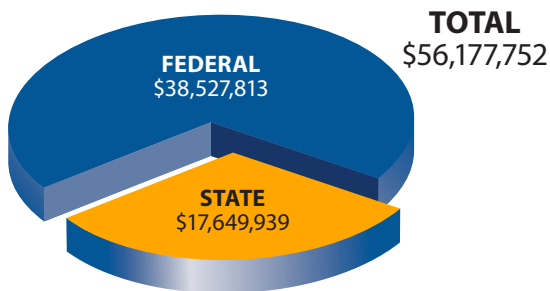
DVR CREATES INDEPENDENCE



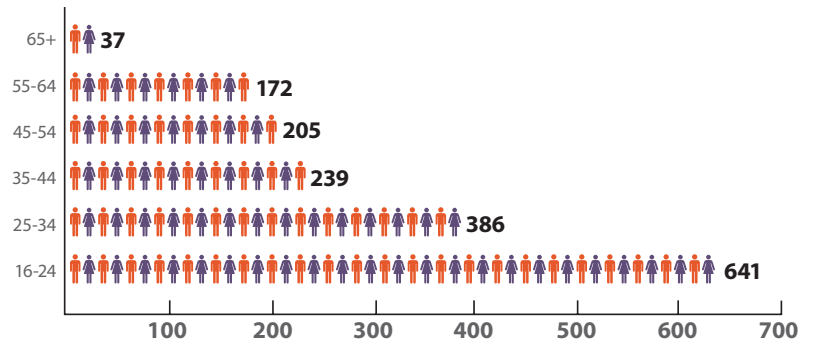
NUMBER OF SUCCESSFULLY EMPLOYED



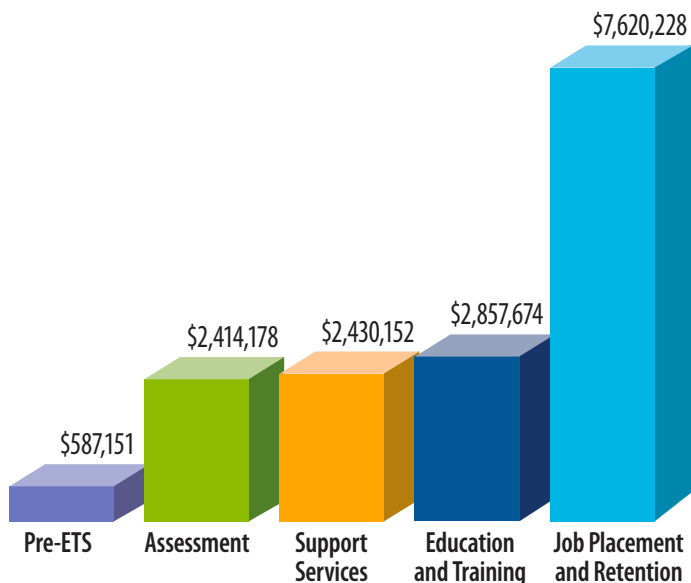
SOURCES OF REVENUE FOR DVR



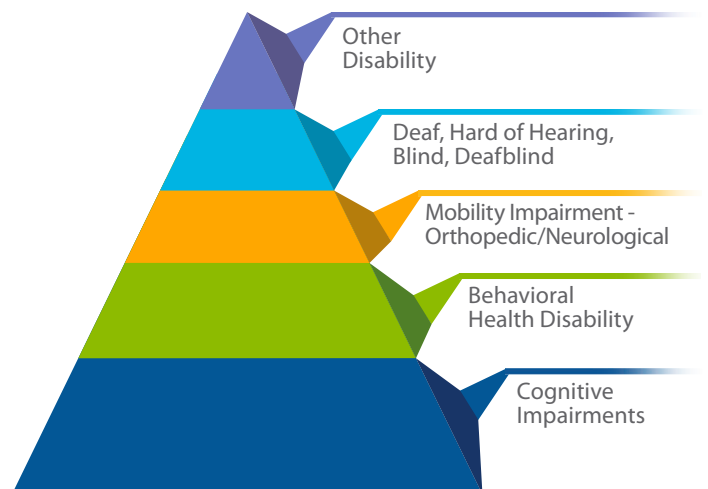
AGE GROUPS OF SUCCESSFULLY EMPLOYED



CASE SERVICE EXPENDITURES



DISABILITY TYPES





Holly

*By Thavy Mom-Hing,
VRC Lead at Vancouver DVR*

PANDEMIC HAMPERS WOMAN'S JOB GOAL

Holly applied for DVR services in 2019. She was a pleasant and soft-spoken young woman who was motivated and determined to secure stable employment and work her way off Social Security benefits.

Holly had little paid-work history. At the beginning of her VR journey, Holly was unsure of the type of employment she wanted to pursue. Upon Holly's completion of vocational assessments and discussions regarding her vocational interests, she was able to identify an employment goal that was well suited to her skills and interests.

Holly and her team, which comprised her Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, guardian, and Community Rehabilitation Program, worked to secure customized employment for Holly with AmFor Electronics in Portland. She started at AmFor on May 1, 2019. At AmFor, Holly worked full-time utilizing her strengths and talents supporting the company's product assembly line. To ensure Holly's

employment success, extensive conversations took place with multiple local interstate transportation providers to develop a reliable transit route guaranteeing Holly's safe and timely arrival to work.

The assistance and coordination of many state and local partners, along with Holly's dedication to her Vocational Rehabilitation Plan for Employment, contributed to her success at securing and maintaining her employment.

Unfortunately, because of the economic impacts of COVID-19, Holly was part of a third round of company layoffs at AmFor, and she ended her job on June 19, 2020.

Holly reapplied for DVR services in order to secure a new job. In September 2020, she started as a Material Handler at SEH America, making \$14.50 per hour. She no longer is dependent on Social Security benefits, and loves her new job and coworkers.

MAN SAYS 'LIFE IS AMAZING' THANKS TO DVR SUPPORT SERVICES

Darnell shared his inspirational journey to employment by being one of the customer voices featured on the VR 100th Celebration video.

Darnell's journey at Division of Vocational Rehabilitation began in summer 2017. At the time he applied for services, Darnell was suffering from severe depression, was unemployed, broke, and homeless.

For more than a decade prior, Darnell struggled with drugs and alcohol, and endured a rollercoaster of highs and lows. At 36, Darnell experienced clarity and entered the Matt Talbot Center Outpatient Program in December 2016.

The outpatient program helped Darnell tremendously, providing him many essential services and resources, including a referral to DVR.

"I could not have imagined the blessing DVR would be to my life," Darnell says. "I remember early on being asked to create a vocational plan without limit and initially thinking that this is too good to be true. Those cynical thoughts have since been steamrolled by feelings of gratitude and humility."

With the support of his DVR counselor, DVR staff, and case manager, Darnell successfully made his plan of becoming a Washington State Certified General Real Estate Appraiser a reality.

Darnell describes the path to becoming a certified appraiser, "long, expensive, difficult, and incredibly intense." Without DVR's help, he says he could not have accomplished any of the requirements.

DVR helped Darnell with significant steps to ensure a successful employment outcome such as earning back his driver's license and completing his Bachelor of Science in Construction Management at University of Washington.

What's more, Darnell is now more than 41 months clean and sober and has started an apparel business, Recovery Over Everything. He remarried. Happy, healthy, and in love—he says, "Life is amazing."



Darnell

*By Susan Diehl,
Central Seattle DVR Counselor*



Darren

By Gilbert Garza,
Toppenish DVR Counselor

RESPIRATORY THERAPIST CREDITS VR SERVICES FOR GOOD FORTUNE

Darren is a respiratory therapist on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic at Memorial Hospital in Yakima.

In early 2020, following a successful internship, Memorial Hospital offered Darren the job. Darren credits DVR for helping him achieve this employment outcome, supporting final testing and work attire costs.

Darren's path to becoming a respiratory therapist was born out of an injury suffered during a previous job. Darren received retraining benefits from Labor and Industries. He enrolled in an online training program. In April 2017, his retraining benefits were exhausted and his case closed. In searching for additional resources, he had heard about DVR and applied for services in May 2017.

Darren demonstrated commitment to his job goal, but it was clear he needed additional financial support. Darren's disability, a lower-back injury, hindered his earning ability and, for the first time, his family required temporary SNAP benefits and Medicaid. Darren was the sole household earner. At home, his wife cared for their son, who has disabilities.

Attending college was difficult for Darren. He was unable to support his family financially. Fortunately, FASFA paid his tuition. However, other school expenses required additional financial assistance. DVR helped support the cost of textbooks, medical equipment, and testing.

Darren excelled in college and maintained a 3.9 GPA. During his internship at Memorial Hospital, he garnered high marks and recommendations from educators and medical providers alike.

In June 2020, Darren cared for COVID patients at triple the rate of capacity. Darren enjoys the challenging and rewarding nature of the work. He and his wife express gratitude to DVR and validate DVR's ability to transform people's lives positively.

DSHS Mission – To Transform Lives

DVR's Mission – Transforming lives by assisting individuals with disabilities to fully participate in their communities through meaningful employment.

DVR's Vision – Dedicated professionals leading the field of vocational rehabilitation, delivering exceptional experiences to every customer, every time.

DVR's 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 **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** in all its forms to achieve excellence



Transforming lives

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Providing Vocational Rehabilitation Services Since 1933

State and Federal funds are used to deliver DVR services. The VR program receives approximately 78 percent in Federal funds and 22 percent in State funds. For detailed information on the dollar amount of Federal funds for the program, please visit <https://rsa.ed.gov/fiscal/grant-awards>