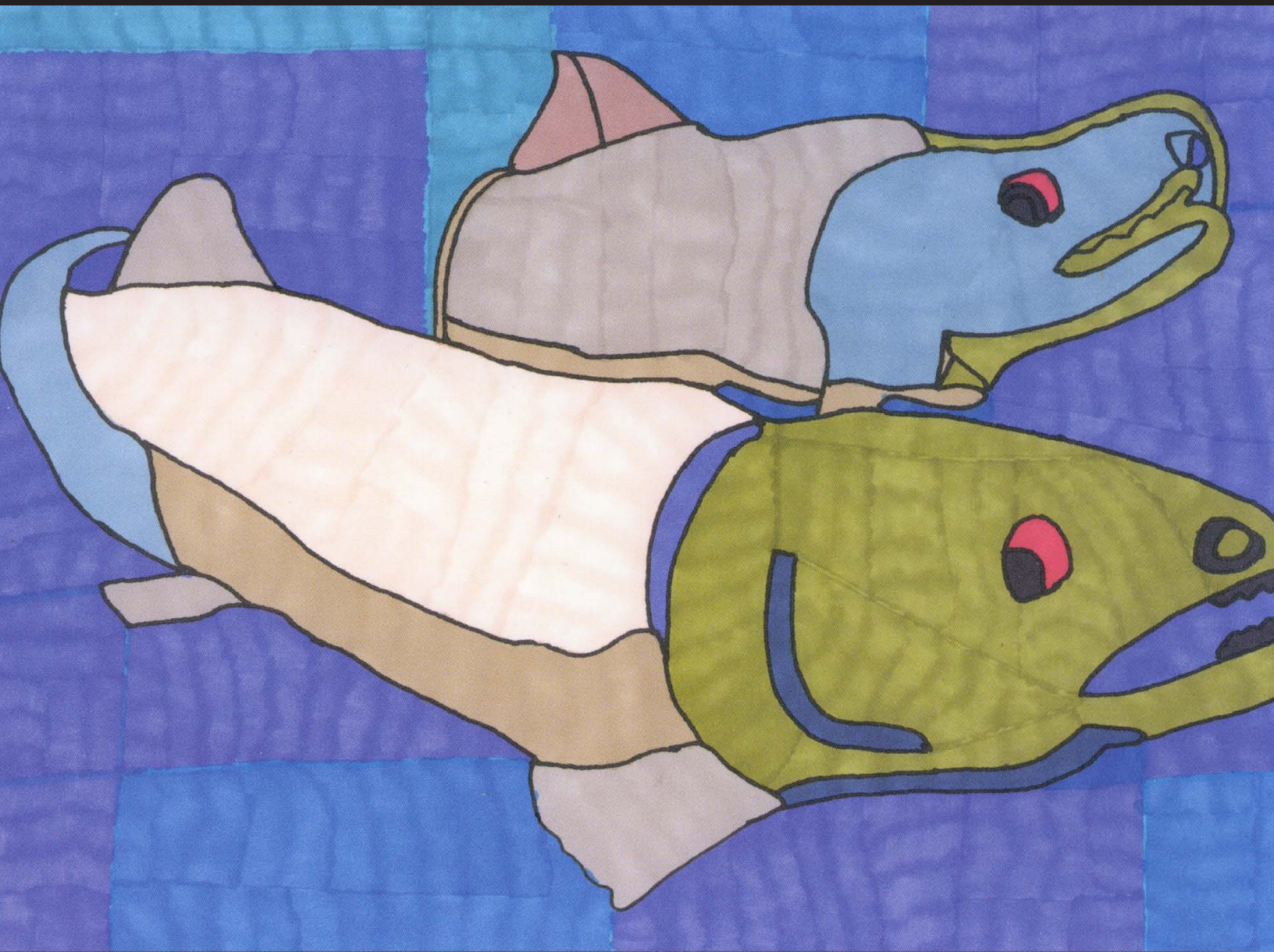


# Governor's Committee on Employment and Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities

## **2009 Annual Report**

Sean Parnell, Governor

Clark Bishop, Labor Commissioner



*"Two Salmon Swimming"*

Artist: Erik Behnke, Homer Alaska

[www.brownbearproducts.biz](http://www.brownbearproducts.biz)



This committee promotes the employment and rehabilitation of Alaskans who have disabilities.



*“Their **belief** in me and my **capabilities** has **sparked** a **deeper** and firmer belief in myself that is with me now and will **move forward** with me in both my professional and personal life. “*

- Kelly McLaughlin  
Sitka

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**Purpose**

The Governor’s Committee on Employment and Rehabilitation, (the Committee) focuses on rehabilitation, assistive technologies (AT), public awareness and the employment of people with disabilities. It recognizes that these are all integral aspects to the successful education, training and employment of people with disabilities.

**History**

The Governor’s Committee was among the first Governor’s advisory committees established following statehood in 1961. It was established and codified by then Governor Egan to promote the employment of people with disabilities under AS 23.15.270.

In response to the 1992 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the State Rehabilitation Advisory Council was appointed in June 1993. On April 11, 1997, the Governor of Alaska, by Administrative Order 171, combined the State Rehabilitation Advisory Council, the Assistive Technologies Advisory Council, and the Governor’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities.



*Above: President George H.W. Bush signs The Americans with Disabilities Act made, July 26, 1990.*

*Left: Courtesy Of University Of Alaska Fairbanks Alaska statehood backers and members of the U.S. Congress celebrate the final passage of the statehood bill in the Senate.*

**Responsibilities**

Provide consumer input and advice designed to “influence system policy change.”



Review, analyze and advise the Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) on the performance of its responsibilities.



Review, analyze and advise DVR on the preparation of its state plan, applications, reports, policies and procedures, needs assessments and evaluations.



In partnership with DVR, develop and review DVR’s goals and priorities.



Jointly conduct the triennial, comprehensive, statewide assessment describing the rehabilitation needs of individuals in the state.



To the extent possible, conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of, and consumer satisfaction with, DVR services and employment outcomes.



Coordinate and consult with other councils in the state, including the Alaska Workforce Investment Board and the State Independent Living Council.



Prepare an annual report on the Committee’s activities.



Jointly with DVR identify a pool of qualified, impartial hearing officers.



Provide DVR consumer advice regarding the planning, implementation and evaluation of activities carried out through the Federal AT grant.



Advise and assist DVR in the preparation of the three-year state AT plan.





# Progress on Goals

## Resource, Evaluation and Planning, (REP)

<http://www.labor.state.ak.us/govscomm/>

*"I was overwhelmed at the responsiveness of these people... I really appreciate what you all have done, and I'm very impressed with this service that you guys are providing."*

- Barry Yocom  
Anchorage



**1. Continue general REP responsibilities, which include resource plan development, consumer satisfaction and member recruitment.**

**Progress: Goal completed and ongoing**

- The resource plan for FFY 2009 was completed and included in this report to the governor.
- Consumer satisfaction surveys were mailed to all DVR consumers whose cases were closed from an individualized plan of employment, (IEP) during 2008. Surveys were mailed to consumers on a monthly basis. The response rate from the survey was 24%. Please see the Executive Summary on page 7 for additional information.
- Efforts to recruit members continued throughout the year. Several individuals applied for appointment and many discussions were held with the Office of the Governor, Boards and Commissions regarding appointments. New appointments were made by Governor Sean Parnell to the following seats: Director of a Section 121 American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Program; Representative of the State workforce investment board; and Representative of business, industry and labor.

*"DVR helped give me a future...to work in the community and help others overcome life's difficulties as I did my own."*

- Tina Sisson  
Palmer

**2. Work with DVR in reviewing any new or reformatted policies.**

**Progress: Goal completed and ongoing**

- The Committee reviewed seven draft policies from the Division. The Division welcomed and participated in active discussions regarding the policies with the Committee. The Committee's suggestions were reviewed and often implemented by the Division.

**3. Participate with DVR in developing and implementing a comprehensive needs assessment.**

**Progress: Ongoing**

- The Committee partnered with the Division in the development and implementation of a triennial comprehensive needs assessment. As part of the needs assessment the Committee hosted community forums at each quarterly meeting to obtain direct input regarding the needs of people with disabilities in the region. The forums have been so successful the Committee has decided to continue holding them even after the needs assessment is completed.



“They have  
been a light  
in a dark  
place...  
a lot of  
motivation.”

- John Clark  
Fairbanks



#### 4. Write new bylaws to reflect new Committee configuration.

**Progress: Goal completed.**

- The bylaws have been amended to reflect the current composition and business practices of the Committee.

#### 5. Provide input to DVR on the State Plan.

**Progress: Goal completed and ongoing.**

- DVR participated in active discussion with the Committee on a draft version of the State Plan. Input from the Committee was encouraged and welcomed by DVR.

#### 6. Educate the State Legislature regarding the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the consumers they serve.

**Progress: Goal completed and ongoing.**

- Members met with their legislators, explained the mission of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and presented them with a copy of the Annual Report.

#### 7. Recognize individuals and businesses that make meaningful differences in the employment of people with disabilities.

**Progress: Goal completed and ongoing.**

- DVR Counselor Mary Sweeney, community rehabilitation provider Nina Rawson and medical consultant Dr. Doolittle were recognized during a quarterly meeting in Fairbanks.

## Assistive Technology (AT) Goals 2009

#### 1. Improve AT marketing; utilizing national AT brochure, work on wide distribution including hospitals, clinics, PCAs, schools, etc.

**Progress: Goal in progress.**

- The brochure is being updated and marketing plans are being developed.

#### 2. Develop strategies to increase AT funding resources.

**Progress: Goal in progress.**

- The AT Committee completed its strategic plan and will be forming an AT Coalition, which will assist in identifying and providing additional funding sources.

#### 3. Develop a high-level statewide AT partnership approach, similar to Colorado's AT partner system.

**Progress: Goal in progress.**

- The Committee met with the coordinator of Colorado's AT Program at the October 2009 meeting in Fairbanks, and unanimously decided to form an AT coalition similar to Colorado's. Members of the AT Coalition have been identified and will be holding their first meeting in November 2009. This will be the core group of the new Alaska AT consortium.

#### 4. Define quantitative AT goals that are tracked as part of our internal benchmarking process.

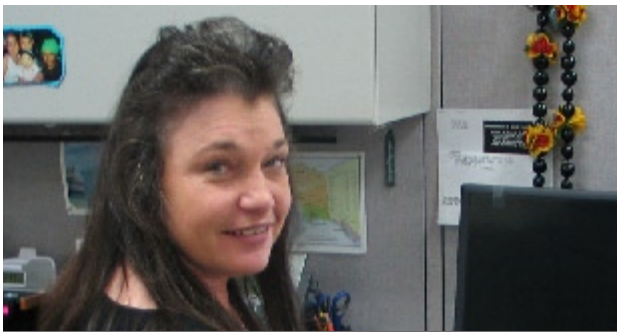
**Progress: Goal completed.**

- Quantitative goals were set and are being tracked by the Committee and DVR through the ongoing grant with ATLA. These goals are also in alignment with the 3-year AT plan and federal performance outcome requirements.



DVR Counselor Mary Sweeney was recognized for her advocacy for people with disabilities.





# Consumer Satisfaction

## Consumer Satisfaction Survey Executive Summary

<http://www.labor.state.ak.us/govscomm/reports/consumer-satisfaction-survery-fy2008.pdf>

In an effort to ensure that DVR is meeting its program responsibilities to its consumers while providing the **best services possible**, the Governor's Committee on Employment and Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities (GCERPD) in collaboration with DVR, conducted an ongoing Consumer Satisfaction Survey. The survey contained a series of statements designed to **measure consumers'** attitudes and **satisfaction** levels. A survey was mailed to all DVR consumers whose cases were closed from an individualized plan of employment (IEP) **during 2008**. This report summarizes the results of those surveys. The complete report is available at:

<http://www.labor.state.ak.us/govscomm/reports/consumer-satisfaction-survery-fy2008.pdf>

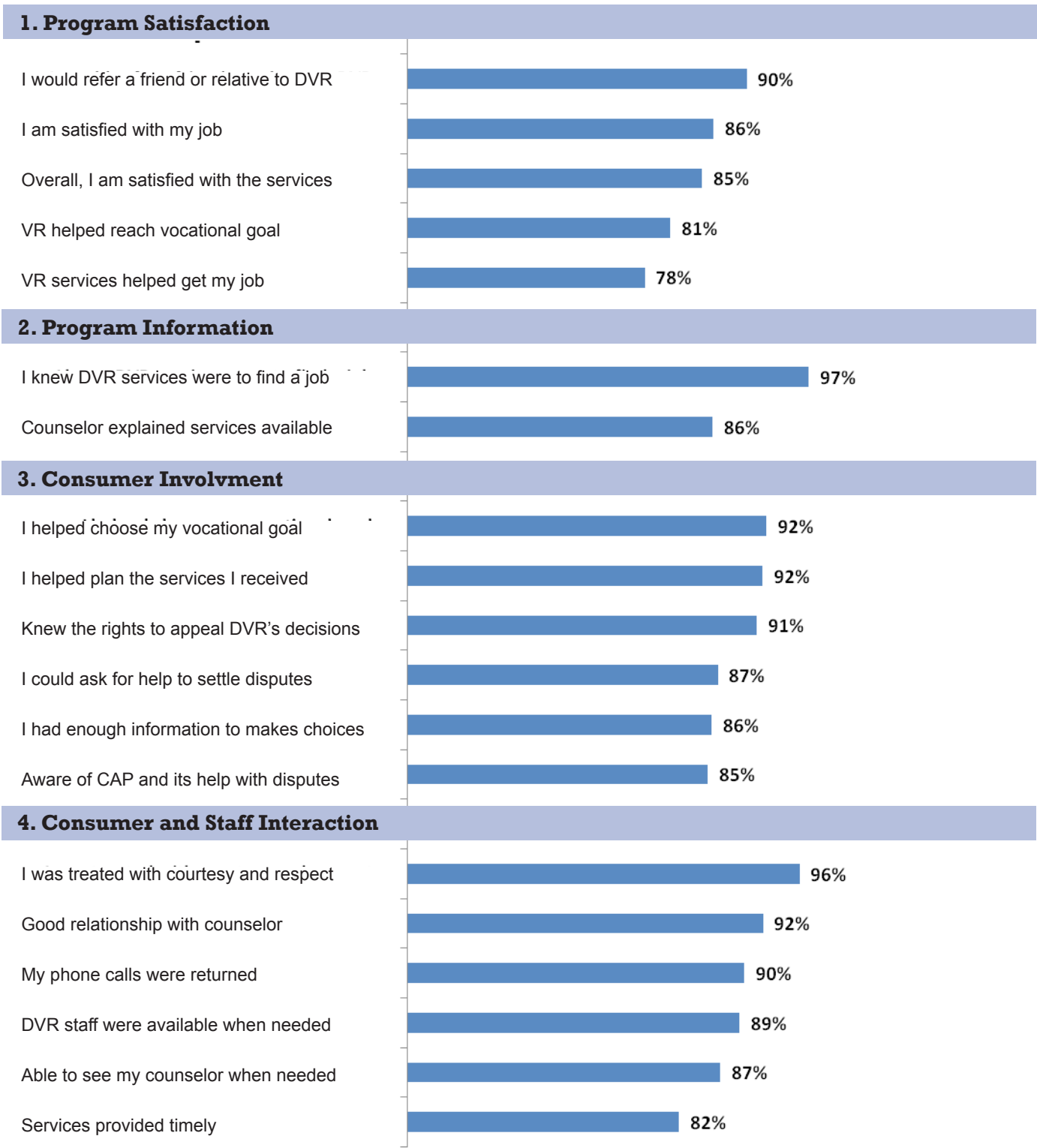
## Key Findings

- 863 surveys were mailed; 11% or 97 were returned undeliverable; 24% or 186 consumers responded.
- Overall satisfaction with vocational rehabilitation services was at 85%, which is an increase from FFY2007. Those respondents who left employed expressed an 88% satisfaction with DVR while those who left unemployed rated their satisfaction at 73%.
- 90% of respondents were willing to refer either friends or family to DVR.
- 85% reported they were aware of the Client Assistance Program (CAP), which represents a 21% increase from the FFY2007 survey.
- Overall, the survey results show an increase in satisfaction over the FFY2007 survey. The most positive responses were in the areas of understanding the purpose of DVR, their treatment, and their involvement in choosing their vocational goal and services.
- The top three items respondents reported they liked about their experience with DVR are: (1) the relationship with their vocational rehabilitation counselor, (2) the help they received, and (3) the DVR program in general.
- 12% of the respondents reported what they disliked the most about their experience with DVR was the time required to move through the vocational rehabilitation process.
- The results are skewed slightly towards urban and employed consumers. The urban consumers greatly outnumber those from the other areas. Those consumers who were employed after vocational rehabilitation services responded at a higher rate than those who were unemployed.



# Consumer Satisfaction Survey 2009 Results

<http://www.labor.state.ak.us/govscomm/reports/consumer-satisfaction-survery-fy2008.pdf>



“I’ve had a lot of **personal loss** in my life, got diagnosed with **diabetes** a few years back... I **couldn’t find a job** for a long time... had **frostbite** this past winter, and down and out, and living at the Fairbanks **Rescue Mission**.

Since I’ve been with **DVR** I quit doing **drugs**, quit **drinking**, got my **self-respect** back, my self-esteem back.

I got a **job** just almost two weeks ago working over at C & R Pipe. When I’m throwing stuff around in the junkyard and I find brand new stuff that people throw away -- I feel that’s what we do in society, **we don’t need to throw people away** anymore, we need to pick them up, bring them back to the place. Even if they have a disability, they still can be a **working part of society**, still a giving taxpayer in society, somebody that will give back to the community.

If I would have kept going the way that I was going **before** I went to **DVR**, I guarantee you I don’t think I’d be standing in front of you right now, I’d probably be in the hospital or dead, one or the other.

...DVR saved my life.”

- Tom Swilling,  
Fairbanks

Photo courtesy of Jason Burke



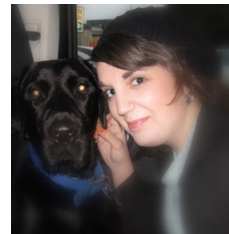
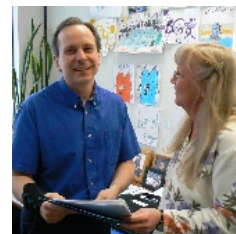
# Goals for 2010

## Resource, Evaluation and Planning, (REP) Goals 2010

<http://www.labor.state.ak.us/govscomm/>

*“After my injury in a motor accident I was not able to do the job I did before the injury... My case manager **believed** in me... She did not think I was just a new folder in her many files. I know that she cares and that is what gave me **hope** and **belief**...”*

- Nermina Fisek  
Anchorage



1. Continue general REP responsibilities, which include resource plan development, consumer satisfaction and member recruitment and orientation.
2. Work with DVR to review any new or revised policies.
3. Participate with DVR in utilizing the information obtained through the comprehensive needs assessment.
4. Provide input to DVR's State Plan.
5. Educate the State Legislature regarding the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the consumers they serve and the State becoming a model employer for Alaskans with disabilities.
6. Promote public awareness of employment of Alaskans with disabilities.

7. Recognize individuals and businesses that make meaningful differences in the employment of people with disabilities.

## Assistive Technology (AT) Goals 2010

1. Develop a high-level statewide AT partnership.
2. Improve AT marketing.
3. Develop strategies to increase AT funding and resources.
4. Report and monitor the provision of statewide AT services.

*“They got me hearing aides...I heard things I've never heard before in my life...like wind, rain and hearing people talk on the bus....or my 10 year-old daughter who talks real soft.”*

- Philip Sohn  
Juneau



# 2009 Training & Resources



## Training Summary

<http://www.labor.state.ak.us/govscomm/>

“It’s saving  
people’s lives and  
bringing them back  
out of the closet or back  
into society  
as a working  
individual”

- Kelly McLaughlin  
Fairbanks

- **Participated in the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) biannual conferences.**
- **Attended the statewide AT conference.**
- **Received training regarding the purpose and responsibilities of State Rehabilitation Councils (SRCs).**
- **Participated in Federal Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Vocational Rehabilitation Field Service training.**

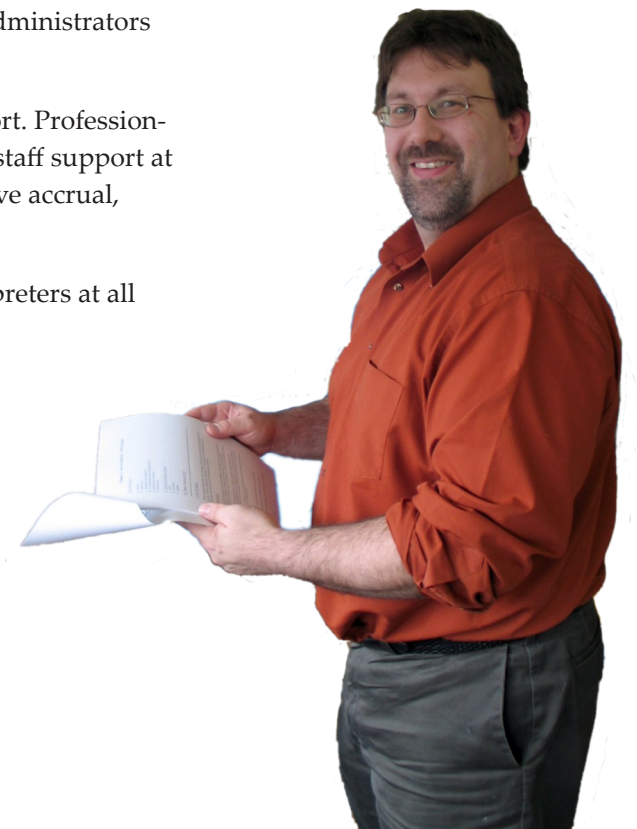
## Resource Expenditures 2009

In addition to the usual meeting expenses, the Committee spent funds on the following:

- Provided real-time captioning at all quarterly meetings.
- Provided sign language interpreters for public input at all committee meetings.
- Provided resources to hold the second statewide semiannual AT conference in Anchorage.

## Resource Plan 2010

- Attend and participate at biannual Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation conferences.
- Have Division staff available for assistance and support. Professional staff support at 50%, (\$58,000), and administrative staff support at 25%, (\$18,000). These totals include annual salary, leave accrual, health insurance and retirement.
- Provide real-time captioning and sign language interpreters at all committee meetings.
- Hold four face-to-face meetings at different locations throughout the state.
- At each quarterly meeting, recognize individuals and businesses that have contributed to the employment of people of disabilities.





# Division of Vocational Rehabilitation State FY2009 – Overview



*Mission: to assist individuals with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment.*

- 342 different Alaskan employers hired DVR clients
- 549 individuals exited the program successfully employed for 90 days or more
- 27 individuals exited as self-employed
- 3,921 individuals participated in the VR program
- 3,004 individuals received information and referral services through orientation
- 2,097 Individualized Plans for Employment were implemented
- 18% of the applicants were youth (age 23 and under)
- 83% of the individuals were significantly disabled with multiple barriers to employment
- Average yearly wages increased from \$4,300 at application to \$27,000 for those completing VR employed; The average hourly wage increased from \$2.08 to \$12.98
- For every dollar spent, \$10.03 will be returned as client income
- \$1,560,000 was spent on training 538 individuals
- A total of \$5,200,000 was spent on direct services to clients
- DVR clients by primary disability type:
  - Physical and orthopedic 38%
  - Psychiatric 36%
  - Cognitive 16%
  - Deafness/Hearing Loss 5%
  - Blindness/Visual Impairment 4%
- DVR clients went to work in these jobs:
  - Service occupations 33%
  - Professional, paraprofessional, or technical 22%
  - Construction 19%
  - Clerical 19%
  - Sales 8%

*“DVR didn’t change my life; it gave me my life back”  
- DVR Client*

## Committee Members

**Ron Boynton**  
CHAIR, Fairbanks, Employer

**Ron Broome**  
Anchorage, Consumer

**James Burton**  
Fairbanks, Consumer

**John Cannon**  
Wasilla, Workforce Investment Board

**Mayfield Evans**  
Anchorage, Workforce Investment Board

**Joyanna Geisler**  
Homer, State Independent Living Council

**Charles Jones**  
Fairbanks, Employer

**SueEllen O’Connor**  
Wasilla - VR Counselor

**Teresa Sarabia**  
Juneau, Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation

**Hermann “Tuna” Scanlan**  
Anchorage, Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation

**Patrick Shallcross**  
Haines, Consumer

**Pam Stratton**  
Anchorage, Client Assistance Program

**Racheluz (Pinky) Tooyak**  
Point Hope, Employer

**Cheryl A. Walsh**  
Juneau, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Director



# Governor's Committee on Employment and Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities



**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

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