

State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee

2012 Annual Report



STATE OF ALASKA

Department of Labor and Workforce Development

DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee

Sean Parnell, Governor

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December 28, 2012

Sean Parnell
Governor of Alaska
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Dear Governor Parnell:

It is with great pride that the Alaska State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC) transmits our 2012 Annual Report. The report highlights the activities of the SVRC and of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in the provision of quality vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities throughout Alaska. This report fulfills the requirements of Alaska Statute 23.15.320 and 34 CFR Part 361.17 (h)(5).

We look forward to working with you and your administration during the coming year to advocate for and to assist Alaskans with disabilities to obtain employment.

Sincerely,



John Cannon
Chairperson, SVRC

CC: Commissioner Blumer

Committee Members

John Cannon

Wasilla
Alaska Workforce
Investment Board

Irma Goodwine

Bethel
State Independent
Living Council

Karla Jutzi

Anchorage
Community
Rehabilitation Program

Teresa Sarabia

Juneau
Tribal Vocational
Rehabilitation

Dave Berube

Anchorage
Client Assistance
Program

Pat Wendt

Anchorage
Business
Representative

Kim McNamara

Juneau
Dept. of Education &
Early Development

Dan Elstad

Juneau
Consumer Advocate

Mary Ann Pruitt

Anchorage
Employer
Representative

Don Roberts

Kodiak
Consumer
Representative

Nancy Russell

Fairbanks
Employer
Representative

Richard Bull

Anchorage
Employer
Representative

Patrick Shallcross

Haines
DVR Recipient

Cheryl Walsh

Juneau
Division of Vocational
Rehabilitation Director

Miok Wolbers

Anchorage
Rehabilitation Counselor

The Alaska State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC) is comprised of volunteers from around the state who demonstrate a commitment to assist Alaskans with disabilities to achieve their goal for employment.

Appointed by the governor, the SVRC serves both as an advisor and partner to the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). Its members help to shape policy through participation in strategic planning, needs assessment, consumer satisfaction surveys and ongoing program evaluation.

The SVRC reports annually to the governor and to the Rehabilitation Services Administration on the status of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program.

The committee includes people with disabilities, community rehabilitation program employees, representatives from independent living, special education and Tribal VR programs, advocates, VR participants and business leaders.

Prior SVRC members who served during this reporting period, but have completed their service terms:
David Schneider, Wasilla; Don Ford, Dillingham; Don Levine, Juneau; Jim Burton, Fairbanks.

Strategic Plan

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Mission

To assist individuals with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment.

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is committed to continuously improving the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services to Alaskans who are in need of, and who are receiving, vocational rehabilitation services.

DVR utilizes a strategic plan to put into action this concept of continuous improvement. The strategic planning team is comprised of the DVR management team and members of the SVRC including the chair, the

representative from the Client Assistance Program, the Tribal VR programs and the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC).

DVR, along with the leadership of the SVRC, has implemented an on-going three-year strategic planning process. The four goals listed below were identified during the 2010 - 2012 planning cycle and provide the organizational foundation for the work of DVR and for the SVRC as well.

Goal 1: Provide High Quality Services

DVR will deliver high-quality vocational rehabilitation services to people with disabilities to assist them to obtain employment consistent with their career goals. This goal reflects DVR's continued focus on improving the VR service delivery system with the objectives and strategies identified by the CSNA.

Goal 2: Provide Highly Skilled Staff

DVR will recruit, employ, retain and train the most qualified and highly skilled rehabilitation staff. This goal reflects the value DVR places on well-trained staff and the serious need for succession planning with the anticipated loss of key staff in the near future.

Goal 3: Improve Organizational Systems

DVR will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational systems. This goal reflects DVR's commitment to organizational effectiveness through the continual analysis and improvement of agency systems and resources including both the delivery of VR service and administrative functions.

Goal 4: Distinguish Role in Workforce System

DVR will distinguish its role in the workforce system and leverage partnerships to maximize resources and support for employment of individuals with disabilities. This goal is intended to strengthen our connection to other programs that serve individuals with disabilities and to develop relationships with employers.

State Employment

The State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC) and the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation are committed to providing high-quality services that lead to careers that fairly compensate Alaskans with disabilities based on their talents, skills and abilities. Alaska DVR ranks second in the nation among similar agencies for the mean hourly wage of program participants who obtain competitive employment and is ranked fifth for the percentage that have employer-provided health insurance. DVR staff and the SVRC are proud of these rankings, yet strive to raise the average wage to offset the high cost of living in Alaska and improve the standard of living of individuals served by DVR.

The State of Alaska is currently the top employer of DVR participants and has long been recognized as an excellent employer for people with disabilities. It has a wide variety of employment opportunities and offers living wages with benefits that are vital to individuals with disabilities.

Most DVR participants are hired by state agencies as a result of the competitive hiring process, although

some are selected as a result of Alaska's statutorily created provisional hire program AS 39.25.150(21).

Governor Sean Parnell, in honor of Disability Employment Awareness Month, proclaimed that "the State of Alaska strives to be a model employer of qualified people with disabilities and has established a State as a Model Employer Task Force consisting of members from the Governor's Council

on Disabilities and Special Education, the State Division of Personnel and Labor Relations, the State Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator's office,

and the State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation."

DVR, with support from the SVRC, is pleased to be a member of the State as a Model Employer Task Force. The task force seeks to develop strategies to increase the pool of qualified applicants with disabilities through targeted recruitment and outreach efforts. The task force will review best practices and innovative strategies in other programs designed to provide reasonable accommodations. We will strive to create an inclusive and accessible work environment for workers with disabilities while providing equal opportunity, cost savings and enhanced productivity.

Alaska DVR ranks second in the nation among similar agencies for the mean hourly wage of program participants who obtain competitive employment.

"Without the programs established by DVR, I would still be struggling and looking for my place somewhere in this life. I now have direction. I have a focus. I have goals, dreams and aspirations."

- DVR Participant

Stories About Successful State of Alaska Employees

(who also just happen to have a disability)

Nicole - Solving crimes based on forensic evidence has become a highly sought after career, made popular by television shows such as "CSI." Although many are interested, few actually gain employment in this field. Nicole is an exception. Her previous legal work experience, combined with her interest in science, proved to be a winning combination for a job as a forensic evidence technician with the State Crime Lab. She feels she has a great career with opportunities for advancement. DVR assisted her initially to stabilize her medical situation. The benefits provided by the state will help her to maintain her health.

Cody - Cody injured his back on his job as a mechanic and needed to make a career change. By working together with a DVR counselor and one provided with workers' compensation benefits, he was able to secure an Office Assistant II position with the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities after completing an on-the-job training program. He is pleased to have health insurance and a retirement savings program.

Gen - Imagine trying to find a job in a new country where you are not fluent in the language. Now imagine having to communicate primarily using pen and paper or sign language. This was Gen's situation when she moved to Juneau with her husband in 2009. After applying unsuccessfully for a few positions, Gen was told about DVR. DVR helped

Gen replace the pen and paper with a portable device that allows people to communicate by typing back and forth. "If not for DVR, I never would have known these types of devices existed. It makes it so much easier to talk with my coworkers." After her next interview, Gen was hired by the

Division of Personnel using the provisional hiring program. They observed her work for four months and then hired her permanently without hesitation. Gen earned a promotion to a supervisory position six months later.



Gen at her desk. A blue portable communication device is on her desk to the left.

DVR at a Glance

"The most important thing about DVR is that it helps you right where you are at."

- DVR Participant

The individuals who represent DVR's caseload are of all ages and from all walks of life. Although each person has his or her own unique story, looking at aggregate numbers provides an understanding of the overall scope of the VR program in Alaska.

Vocational Rehabilitation Outcomes for FY2012

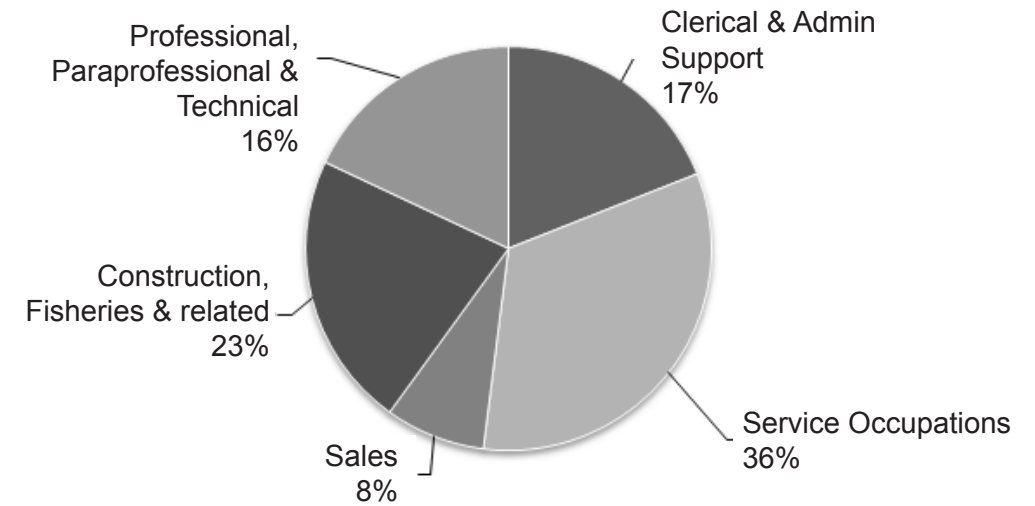
- 4,103 individuals participated in the DVR program.
- 420 Alaska employers hired DVR participants.
- 637 individuals exited the DVR program employed, which is a slight increase from the 634 closed in FY2011.
- 82 percent were employed by the private sector, 12 percent by federal, state or local governments including school districts and 6 percent were self-employed.
- For those individuals exiting employed, the average hourly wage increased from \$3.71 at application to \$14.10 at closure.
- 1,553 individuals applied for DVR services.
- 3,197 individuals received information and referral services through DVR's orientation.
- 2,240 individuals received DVR services under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

Who DVR Serves

- 95 percent of DVR participants were considered to be significantly disabled with two or more functional limitations to employment.
- 65 percent were Caucasian, 19 percent were Alaska Natives, 8 percent were Black, 4 percent were Hispanic or Latino, 2 percent were Asian and 2 percent were Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian.
- 21 percent of the applicants were youth (age 23 and under).

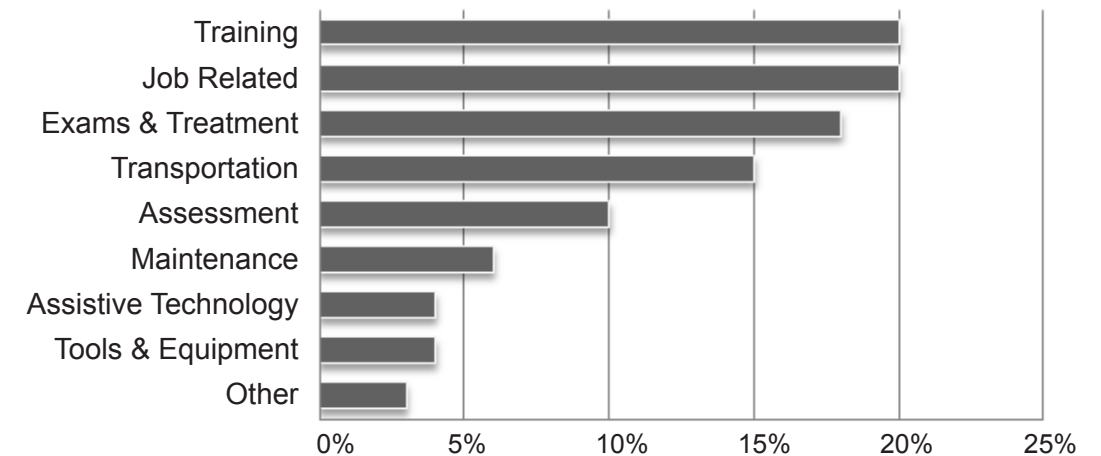
For a more complete picture of DVR's participants, see "The 2010 Comprehensive Needs Assessment" at www.labor.alaska.gov/dvr/about_us/Comprehensive-Needs-Assessment-2010.pdf

Occupations of DVR Participants

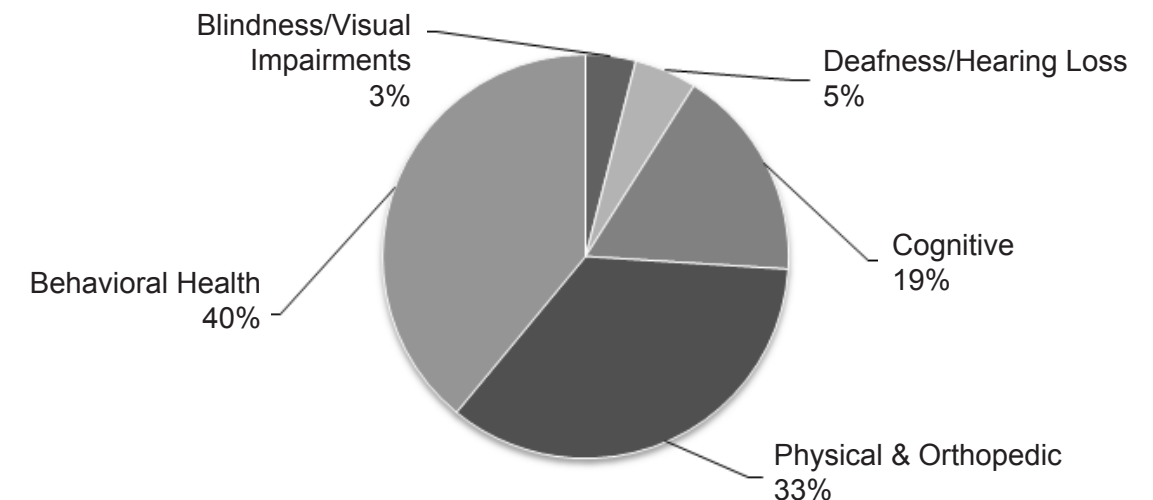


Purchased DVR Services

(\$5.5 million)



DVR Participants by Disability



Survey of Participants Who Exit DVR Services After an Individualized Plan of Employment (IPE) has Been Signed

The SVRC collaborates with DVR to conduct an ongoing survey of DVR participants who exit DVR after an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) has been signed. The report is available at:

www.labor.state.ak.us/svrc/reports/consumer-satisfaction-survey-fy2011.pdf

Survey Highlights

DVR is a consumer driven organization where the participant's self-involvement in the vocational rehabilitation process and informed consumer choice are considered important for success. To that end, between October 1, 2010 and September 30, 2011, 265 surveys were mailed out and 703 surveys were emailed.

Treating the Consumer with Respect

Of those returning their survey responses, 91 percent felt they were treated respectfully. A similar percentage of respondents felt they had a good working relationship with their counselor, that DVR staff was available to help them when needed and that their phone calls were returned promptly.

Informed Consumer Choice and Involvement in the DVR Process

Of those responding, 94 percent reported being involved in the development of their vocational goals, while 89 percent felt that DVR services were instrumental in helping them get or keep their jobs.

Referral of Others

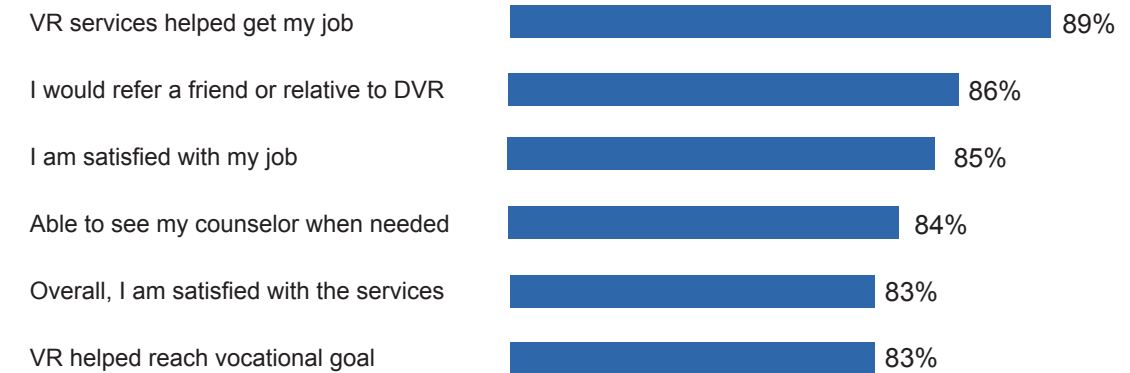
Overall, 86 percent would refer a friend or family member to DVR for services. Many of our referrals come from prior consumers. It is important that they feel that whenever they do, their friends and family will be treated fairly and respectfully.

"I came to Alaska almost a year ago. My mental and physical condition was not great. I can truthfully say without the help and guidance of DVR, along with all the personal attention I have gotten, I would still be in a terrible position."

- DVR Participant

All Respondents - Survey Categories

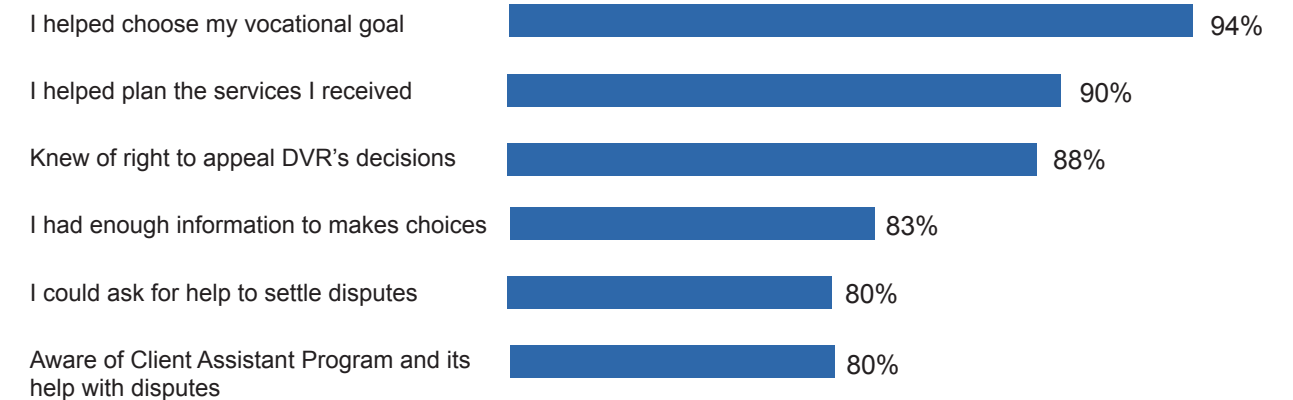
1. Program Satisfaction



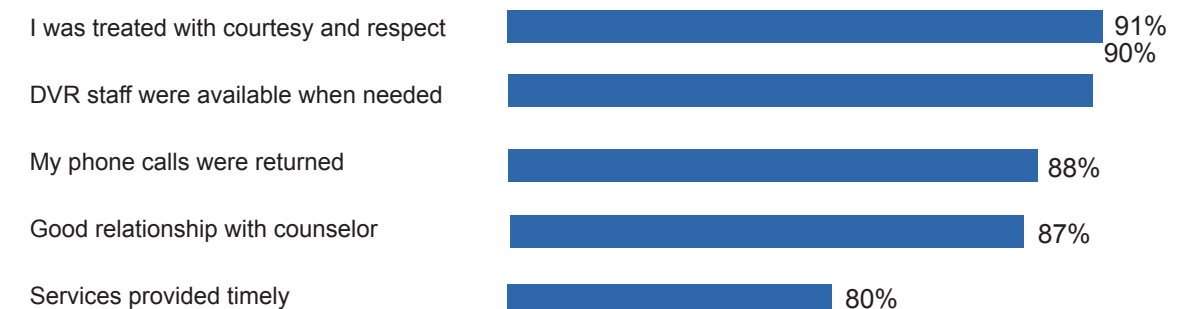
2. Program Information



3. Consumer Involvement



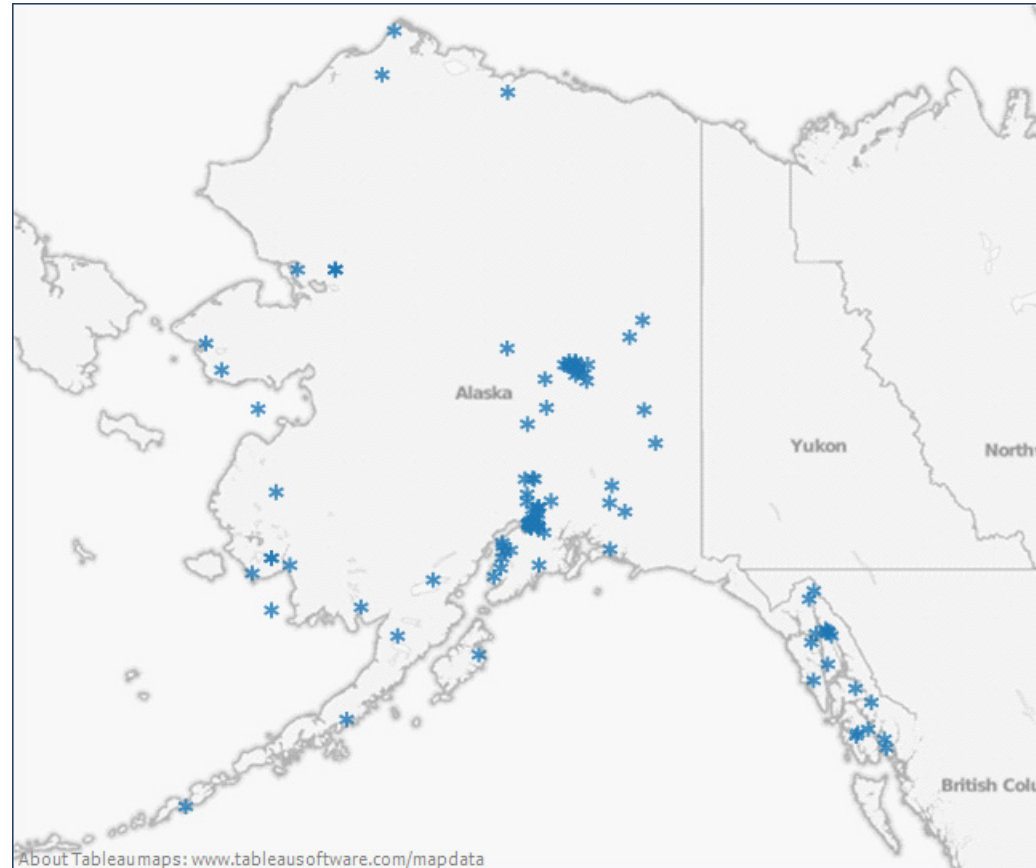
4. Consumer and Staff Interaction



DVR Participants

Geographic Location of Alaskans Served by DVR

Source: DVR Management Information System



The map above shows where DVR services were delivered throughout Alaska in federal fiscal year 2012. The strongest client base is along the primary road corridors of the Kenai Peninsula and from south central Alaska (Anchorage/Wasilla/Palmer) to the interior (Fairbanks). Southeast Alaska is represented with offices in Juneau, Sitka and Ketchikan.

“My case manager... has always been there for me, always just there to encourage me. And we’ve written a really nice plan that I can see actually having a decent future where I will be able to provide for my family and myself and give back to the community.”

- DVR Participant

“They kept believing in me when everybody else threw me aside.”

- DVR Participant

The Committee Seeks Your Input

The State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee invites you to:

Apply for Membership

If you care about issues pertaining to disability and employment, the SVRC encourages you to apply for committee membership.

You may apply online at: gov.alaska.gov/parnell/services/boards-commissions/apply-online.html.

You may also apply by sending a completed Boards and Commissions application, resume and a brief letter explaining your desire to serve the State of Alaska, to:

Office of Governor Sean Parnell

Attention: Jason Hooley, Director of Boards and Commissions
P.O. Box 110001 Juneau AK 99811-0001

Contact the Boards and Commissions office:

Call: 907-465-3500

Fax: 907-465-8110

E-mail: Boards@Alaska.Gov

Attend a Meeting or Public Forum

All State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee meetings and forums are open to the public. Meeting dates are available at labor.alaska.gov/svrc/calendar.htm. Notification of meeting times and agenda are posted 30 days prior to meetings at notes3.state.ak.us/pn/pubnotic.nsf.

More information about the SVRC is available at labor.alaska.gov/svrc, including minutes from previous meetings, and DVR participant and stakeholder public testimony.

Share Your Thoughts and Ideas with SVRC

Call: Voice/TDD 907-269-3570 or 1-800-478-4378

Write: Chair, State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
619 Ship Creek Avenue, Suite 331
Anchorage AK 99501-1677

Fax: 907-269-3632

E-mail: Gary.Waller@Alaska.Gov

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Sean Parnell, Governor

Dianne Blumer, Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development

Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

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