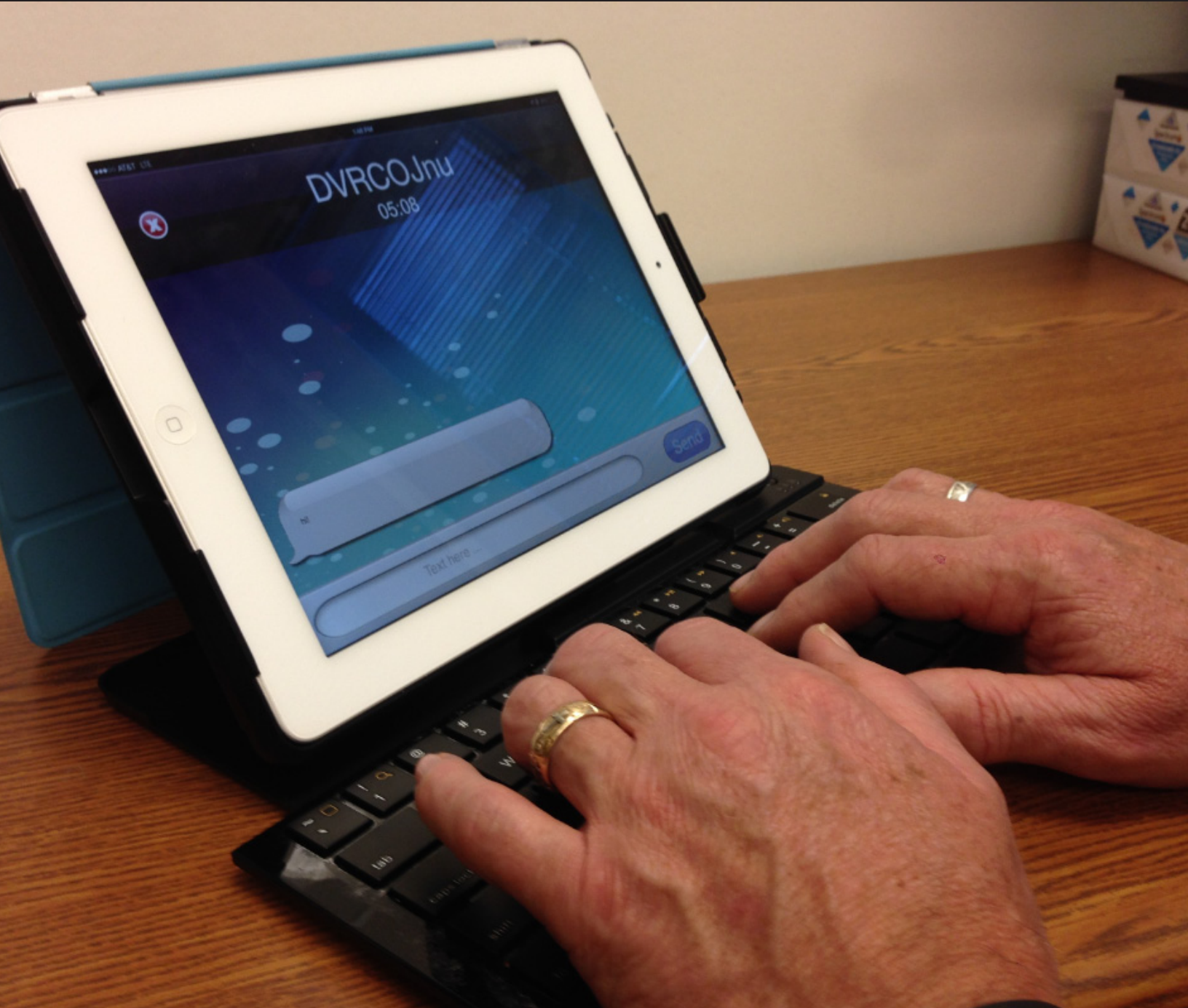


# Alaska State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee

## **2013 Annual Report**



*Image: iPad with keyboard running a text-to-text communication application for use with and by people who are deaf or hard of hearing.*

# STATE OF ALASKA

## Department of Labor and Workforce Development

DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee

**Sean Parnell, Governor**

801 West 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite A  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-9981  
V/TTY: (907) 465-2814  
FAX: (907) 465-2856

December 24, 2013

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

Dear Governor Parnell:

The Alaska State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC) is proud to transmit the 2013 annual State Rehabilitation Council report. In Alaska, the SVRC functions as the State Rehabilitation Council. The report highlights the activities of the SVRC and of the Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in the provision of quality vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities throughout Alaska. The report fulfills the requirements of Alaska Statute 23.15.320 and 34 CFR Part 361.17 (h)(5).

We look forward to working with the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in the coming year to advocate for and to assist Alaskans with disabilities obtain employment.

Sincerely,



Mary Ann Pruitt  
Chairperson, SVRC

cc: Commissioner Blumer

# Committee Members

## **Mary Ann Pruitt**

CHAIR  
*Anchorage*  
Business  
Representative

## **Teresa Sarabia**

*Juneau*  
Tribal Vocational  
Rehabilitation

## **Dave Berube**

*Anchorage*  
Client Assistance  
Program

## **Kim McNamara**

*Juneau*  
Alaska Dept. of  
Education &  
Early Development

## **John Cannon**

*Wasilla*  
Alaska Workforce  
Investment Board

## **Dan Elstad**

*Juneau*  
Consumer Advocate

## **Don Roberts**

*Kodiak*  
Consumer  
Representative

## **Nancy Russell**

*Fairbanks*  
Business  
Representative

## **Richard Bull**

*Anchorage*  
Business  
Representative

## **Patrick Shallcross**

*Haines*  
Division of Vocational  
Rehabilitation Recipient

## **Cheryl Walsh**

*Juneau*  
Division of Vocational  
Rehabilitation Director

## **Miok Wolbers**

*Anchorage*  
Rehabilitation Counselor

## **Bob Purvis**

*Sitka*  
Community Rehabilitation  
Program Representative

## **Vacancies**

Parent Training and  
Information Center  
Representative

State Independent Living  
Council Representative

Business Representative

The Alaska State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC) is composed 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 committee includes people with disabilities, community rehabilitation program employees, representatives from independent living, special education and Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs, advocates, VR participants and business leaders.

The SVRC submits this report annually to the governor and to the Rehabilitation Services Administration on the status of the DVR program.

*Prior SVRC members who served during this reporting period, but have completed their service terms or resigned are Karla Jutzi, Pat Wendt, Barbe Neeson, Suzie Klein and Irma Goodwine.*

# Strategic Plan



## **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Mission**

To assist individuals with disabilities to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment.

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's 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 uses a strategic plan to enact continuous improvement. The strategic planning team is composed of the DVR management team and representatives from the SVRC, the Client Assistance Program, Tribal VR programs and the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC).

DVR, along with the leadership of the SVRC, has implemented an ongoing three-year strategic planning process. The four goals listed below were identified during the 2013-2015 planning cycle and provide the organizational foundation for the work of both DVR and the SVRC.

### **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 triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). The CSNA can be found at: [www.labor.state.ak.us/dvr/about\\_us/Comprehensive-Needs-Assessment-FY2013.pdf](http://www.labor.state.ak.us/dvr/about_us/Comprehensive-Needs-Assessment-FY2013.pdf)

### **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 maintain/improve the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational systems. This will include implementing advancements in technology as resources allow, analyzing current business practices to improve service delivery system and ensuring critical applications/systems are current.

### **Goal 4: Provide Leadership in the Workforce System**

This goal is intended to strengthen our connection to other programs that serve individuals with disabilities. DVR will continue to collaborate with other agencies to improve the delivery of VR services and represent the needs of people with disabilities



# Serving Alaskan Businesses

The Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) recently established a “Business Team” to further develop the “dual customer approach” sought by our funding agency, the U.S. Department of Education’s Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). The team focuses on the needs of both individuals with disabilities and businesses seeking qualified employees. The team consists of the division’s assistant chief and field staff directly engaged with businesses in Anchorage and Fairbanks.

“DVR’s on-the-job training service gave us a clear understanding of their referral’s abilities before we even hired the applicants.”  
- GCI Manager of Recruitment and Staffing

The primary goal of the business team is to enhance the division’s effectiveness and capacity statewide to meet the needs of our dual customers. This includes piloting strategies to work directly with businesses who target the recruitment of persons with disabilities such as with Walgreens, Home Depot, Sears, the State of Alaska and the Federal Government. For 2013, the Business Team has implemented procedures for coordinating statewide business leads within our system, including better use of our case management system, AWARE. In addition, the Business Team has increased the direct engagement

with businesses to establish relationships with key human resource leads who are specifically interested in hiring individuals with disabilities. Team members are represented on the Anchorage Society of Human Resource Managers (ASHRM) and the Anchorage and Fairbanks Chambers of Commerce. They are reaching out to a number of larger Alaska chain businesses and federal contractors to assist them in meeting new employment requirements related to individuals with disabilities under the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Federal Contract Compliance Program (OFCCP).

The Business Team is also exploring ways to expand the use of the State of Alaska’s Provisional Hire program, giving state hiring managers greater access to qualified workers with disabilities.

Although the team is new, it is already having a significant impact on the development of recommendations and implementation of new strategies while continuing to seek and respond to new opportunities.

# SVRC Activities



In partnership with DVR, the SVRC engages in a variety of activities to help ensure the quality of services provided to Alaskans with disabilities to assist them to get and keep good jobs. A sample of the activities conducted by the SVRC in federal fiscal year 2013, from October 1, 2012 to September 30, 2013, include:

- Convened meetings in Juneau, Bethel, Fairbanks and Anchorage and heard 51 individual public testimonies on their experience with the DVR program.
- Conducted public forums in Juneau and Bethel. The forum in Juneau focused on developing meaningful opportunities for Alaskans with disabilities for employment associated with organized labor and trade associations. The forum in Bethel focused on developing meaningful employment opportunities, including subsistence, for Alaskans with disabilities in rural and remote Alaska.
- Heard from Bethel community members interested in marketing native arts and crafts online.
- Toured Yuut Elitnaurviat (The People's Learning Center) in Bethel.
- Heard presentations from: the State Independent Living Council on its interest to collaborate with the SVRC; DVR's Community Rehabilitation Program specialist on how DVR is working to improve quality assurance of Community Rehabilitation Program services; the DVR chief of services, summarizing DVR's team structure to support specialized populations' service needs; and the new DVR Business Team on how it serves Alaska businesses.
- Assisted in the preparation and updating of the DVR State Plan and the State Plan for Assistive Technology.



*From left to right: SVRC members Cheryl Walsh, Teresa Sarabia, Karla Jutzi, Pat Wendt, Don Roberts and Irma Goodwine with visiting speaker John McIntyre, Association of Village Council Presidents.*

# DVR at a Glance

“My DVR counselor gave me confidence and a positive attitude to better myself and situation.”  
- 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 vocational rehabilitation program in Alaska.

## Vocational Rehabilitation Outcomes for FY2013

- 3,738 individuals participated in the DVR program.
- 387 different Alaskan employers hired DVR participants.
- 598 individuals exited the DVR program employed at an average hourly wage of \$12.78.
- 84% were employed by the private sector, 10% by federal, state or local governments, including school districts, and 6% were self-employed.
- 1,546 individuals applied for VR services and an additional 1,372 individuals received information and referral services through DVR’s orientation.
- 2,192 individuals received VR services under an Individualized Plan for Employment.

## Who DVR Serves

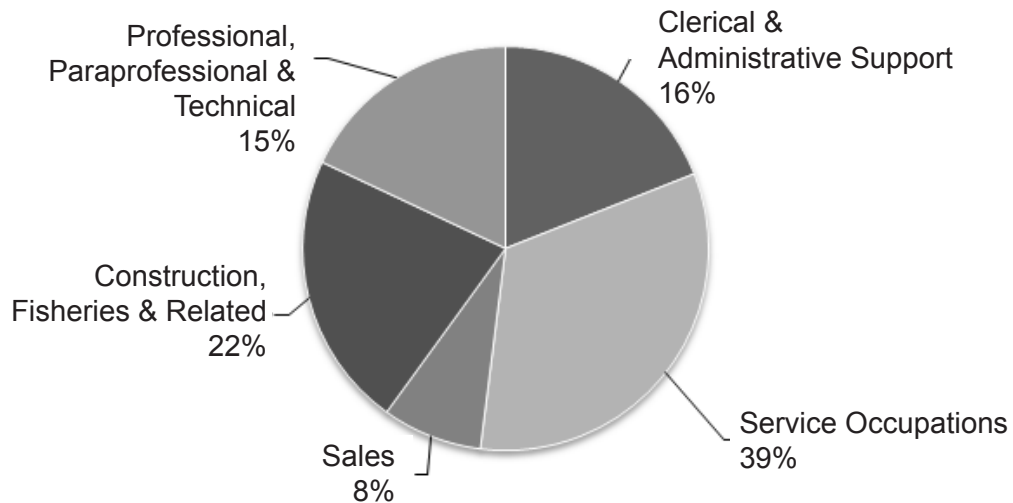
- 95% of DVR participants were considered to be significantly disabled with two or more functional limitations to employment.
- 72% were Caucasian; 23% were Alaska Natives; 9% were Black; 3% were Asian and 2% were Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian.
- 5% of the above identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino.
- 21% of the applicants were youth (age 23 and under).

For a more complete picture of DVR’s participants, please see “The 2013 Comprehensive Needs Assessment” at: [www.labor.state.ak.us/dvr/about\\_us/Comprehensive-Needs-Assessment-FY2013.pdf](http://www.labor.state.ak.us/dvr/about_us/Comprehensive-Needs-Assessment-FY2013.pdf)

“DVR helped me summon the courage to try to be someone else after my surgery when I thought all was lost. My identity was being an audiometric technician and my DVR counselor and DVR helped me see I could be someone else almost just as well.”

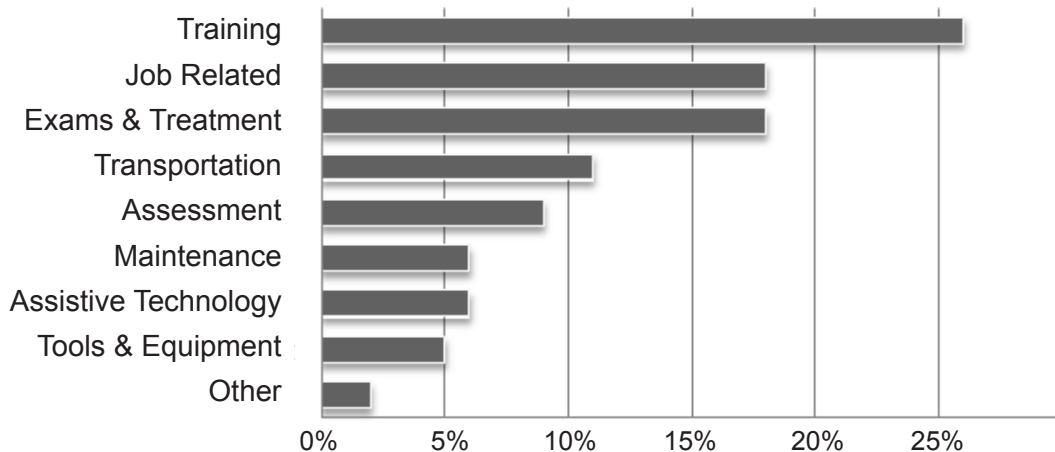
- DVR Participant

## Occupations of DVR Participants

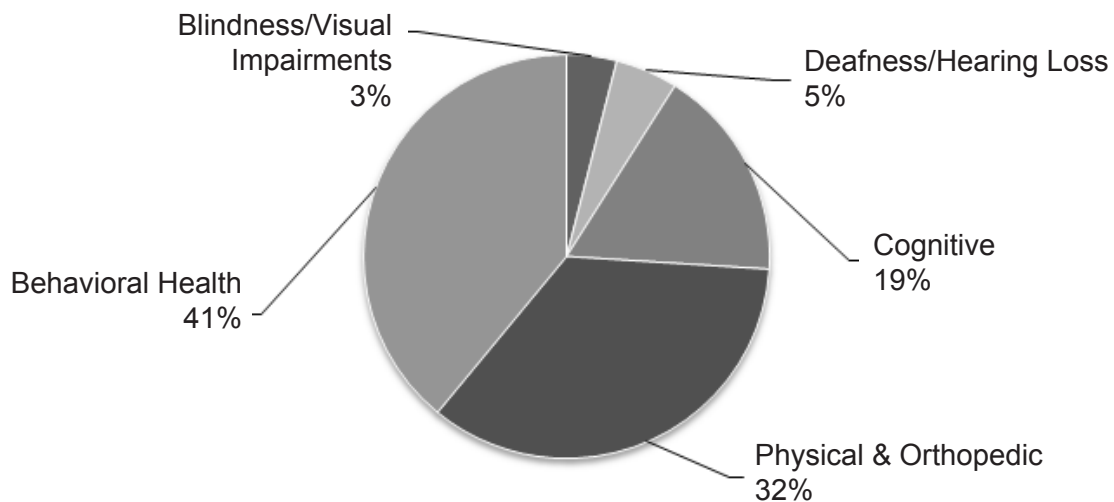


## Purchased DVR Services

(\$3.96 million)



## DVR Participants by Disability





# Consumer Satisfaction

## Survey of Participants Who Exit DVR Services

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.alaska.gov/svrc/reports/consumer-satisfaction-survey-fy2012.pdf](http://www.labor.alaska.gov/svrc/reports/consumer-satisfaction-survey-fy2012.pdf)

### Survey Highlights

DVR is a consumer driven organization where a participant's self-involvement in the vocational rehabilitation process and informed consumer choice are considered important for success. To that end, in federal fiscal year 2012, 271 surveys were mailed out and 732 surveys were emailed.

- **Treating the Consumer with Respect**

Of those returning their survey responses, 93% 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**

95% of responders reported being involved in the development of their vocational goals. 88% felt that DVR services were instrumental in helping them get or keep a job.

- **Referral of Others**

Overall, 88% 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 make referrals, their friends and family will be treated fairly and respectfully.

"It is my opinion that without DVR services I would still be a drain on society as a whole, costing tax payers money, tying up law enforcement, and a blight on the community in general. Those are problems of the past. Now, with my DVR counselor, I have a chance at a productive future."

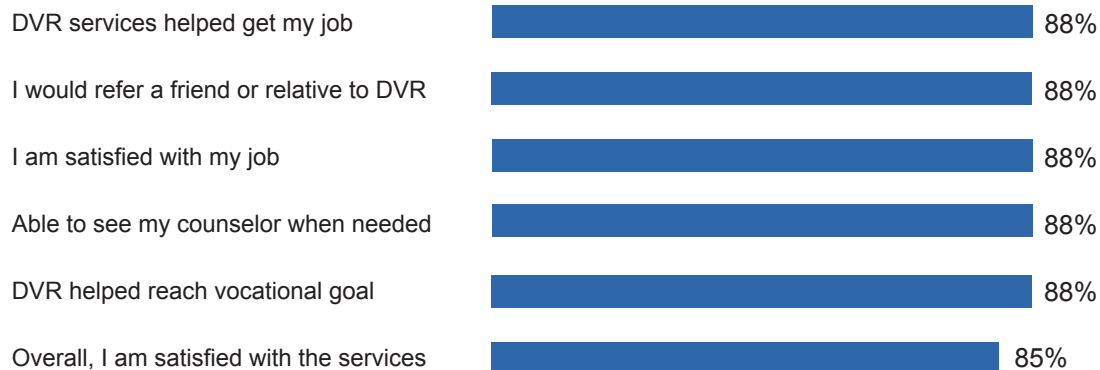
- DVR Participant

“Since meeting my DVR counselor and her staff I have found a new sense of myself. A new belief that I am not broken or disabled but just need to find a different way of going about things in my life.” - DVR Participant



## All Respondents - Survey Categories

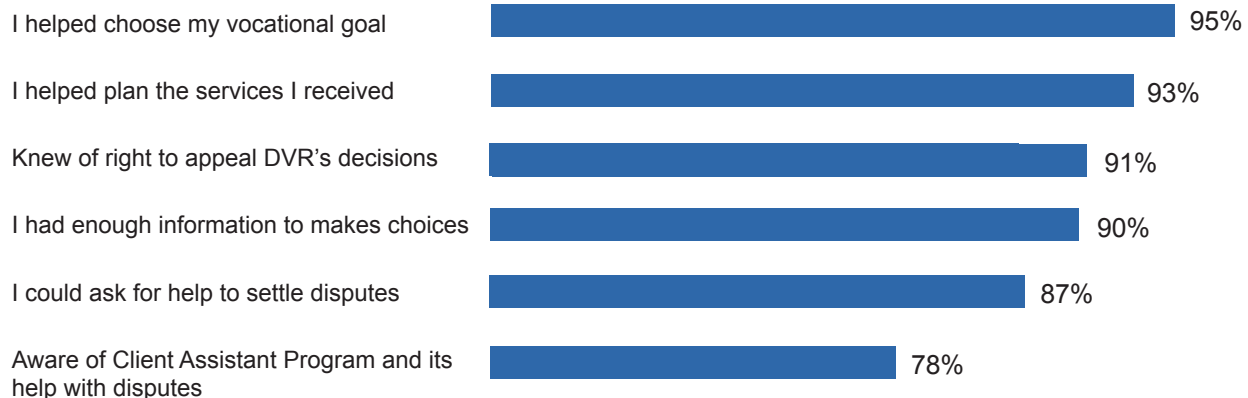
### 1. Program Satisfaction



### 2. Program Information



### 3. Consumer Involvement



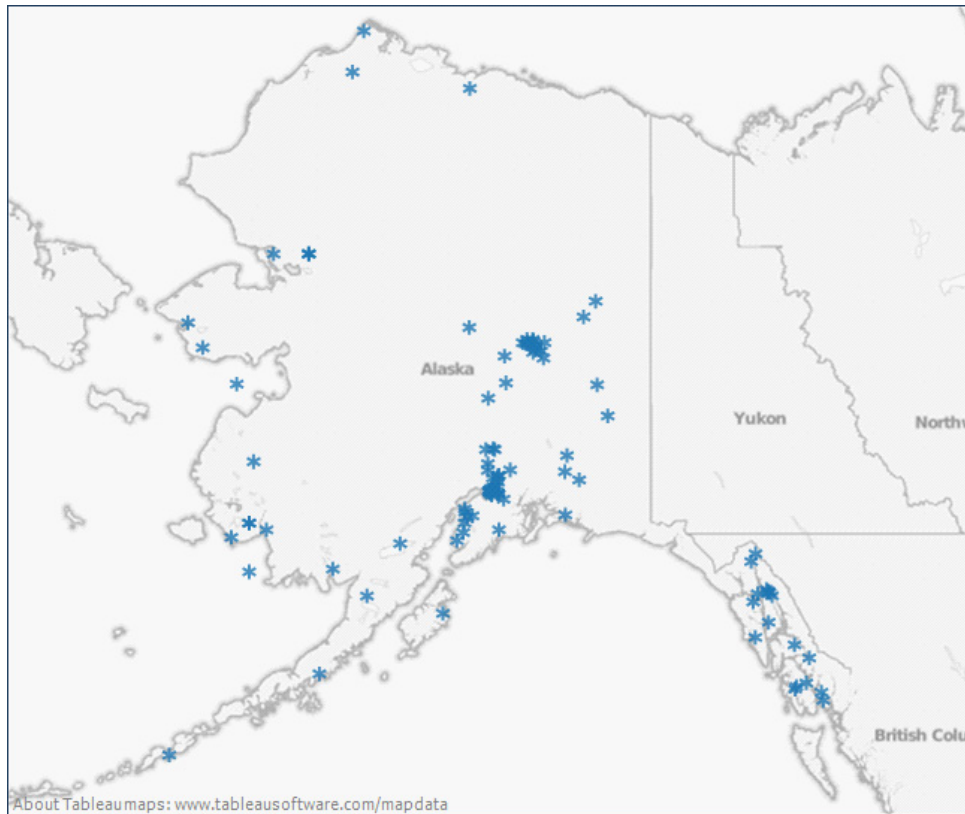
### 4. Consumer and Staff Interaction



# 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, from October 1, 2011 through September 30, 2012. DVR has offices in Anchorage, Eagle River, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kenai, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Sitka and Wasilla and serves rural Alaska using traveling counselors.

“After orientation at DVR, I was assigned a DVR counselor and he immediately went to work in getting me the vocational program I needed to be successful. Subsequently I was hired at a major employer here in Alaska and have remained successfully employed ever since. Today, my life is different. I have held three positions at the major employer; moving successfully through the ranks. I could not and would not have achieved all of this without the support of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.” - *DVR Participant*

“I am very grateful the State of Alaska takes such great care of us that are unexpectedly disabled then turns us around and help us be better than we thought we could be after such devastation.” - *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 a seat on this committee.

You may apply online at: [gov.alaska.gov/parnell/services/boards-commissions/apply-online.html](http://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: Elizabeth Giardina, Director of Boards and Commissions  
P.O. Box 110001 Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Contact the Boards and Commissions office:

**Call:** 907-269-7450

**Fax:** 907-269-7461

**E-mail:** [Boards@Alaska.Gov](mailto: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](http://labor.alaska.gov/svrc/calendar.htm). Notification of meeting times and agenda are posted 30 days prior to meetings at [aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/](http://aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/).

More information about the SVRC is available at [labor.alaska.gov/svrc](http://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 907-465-2814 or 1-800-478-2815

**Write:** Chair, State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee  
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
801 West 10th Street, Suite A  
Juneau, AK 99801-9981

**Fax:** 907-465-2856

**E-mail:** [Jason.Caputo@Alaska.Gov](mailto:Jason.Caputo@Alaska.Gov)

# **Alaska State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee**

## **2013 Annual Report**

Sean Parnell, Governor

Dianne Blumer, Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development

### **Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development**

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

801 West 10th Street, Suite A

Juneau, AK 99801-1894