

Alaska State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee

2015 Annual Report



Committee Members

Mary Ann Pruitt

CHAIR
Anchorage
Business
Representative

Teresa Sarabia

Juneau
Tribal Vocational
Rehabilitation

Dave Berube

Anchorage
Client Assistance
Program

Sam Jordan

Juneau
Alaska Dept. of
Education &
Early Development

Dan Elstad

Juneau
Consumer Advocate

Lindsay Davison

Chugiak
State Independent
Living Council

Barrie Brent

Anchorage
Business
Representative

Kenneth Schoenlein

Willow
Consumer
Representative

Bob Purvis

VICE CHAIR
Sitka
Community Rehabilitation
Program Representative

John Cannon

Juneau
Division of Vocational
Rehabilitation Director

Stacy Niwa

Anchorage
Rehabilitation Counselor

Mary Elam

Eagle River
Parent Training and
Information Center
Representative

Vacant Seats

- Consumer
- Business Representative

The Alaska State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC) is composed of volunteers from around the state who are appointed by the Governor to both advise and partner with the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). Members help shape policy by participating in strategic planning, needs assessment, consumer satisfaction surveys and ongoing program evaluation.

Members include 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.

Each year, the SVRC submits this report on the status of the DVR program to the Governor and to the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

Prior SVRC members who served during this reporting period, but have completed their term of service or resigned include: Margie Medeiros.

DVR Strategic Plan



Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Mission

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

The SVRC and DVR continuously work to improve the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services to Alaskans who are in need of, and who are receiving, vocational rehabilitation services. A keystone of this work is an ongoing three-year strategic planning process which was initiated by DVR and SVRC leadership. The strategic planning team includes the DVR management team, SVRC members, the Client Assistance Program, Tribal VR programs and the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC).

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 and assist them with obtaining employment that is 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

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.

Recognizing Businesses

The Business Recognition (BR) subcommittee developed guidelines to recognize employers who make an exceptional effort to hire people with disabilities and/or offer them work experiences.

Employers are grouped into different geographic regions. From each region, the SVRC awards one large employer of 200 employees or more and one small employer of fewer than 200 employees.

Award Guidelines

The guidelines include nomination criteria and strategies to award winners at an event with high visibility to other businesses, especially hiring managers and human resource professionals.

First Awards Presented

The SVRC partnered with the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education to present its first awards at the Society of Human Resource Manager's annual conference in Anchorage, Alaska on September 25, 2015. Hundreds of human resource professionals from across Alaska attended.

The Fire Island Rustic Bakeshop won the Anchorage Small Employer Award. The Anchorage Large Employer Award went to Walmart's Human Resources Manager, Scott Bushee. DVR staff also presented Mr. Bushee's award to him at an Anchorage Walmart, in front of other Anchorage Walmart managers.

Anchorage Small Business Winner **Fire Island Rustic Bakeshop**



DVR Director John Cannon, Fire Island Rustic Bakeshop co-owner Janis Fleischman and SVRC Chair Mary Ann Pruitt.

Anchorage Large Business Winner **Walmart's Scott Bushee**



DVR Business Specialist Gloria Lewellyn, Anchorage area managers and Scott Bushee, Walmart Market Human Resource Manager.

SVRC Activities



In partnership with DVR, the SVRC engaged in various activities during federal fiscal year 2015 from October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015 to help ensure the quality of DVR's services.

SVRC Activities Federal Fiscal Year 2015

- Established an award series recognizing Alaskan employers who, through their actions, policies and procedures, recognize the value employees with disabilities bring to their business and who make exceptional efforts to employ people with disabilities. The first awards were presented at the Society of Human Resources Manager's Conference in Anchorage on September, 2015.
- Collaborated with DVR on the development of the State Plan and the State Plan for Assistive Technology.
- Collaborated with DVR on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), which included surveying the satisfaction of all individuals who had an open case and providing input on the methodology and results of the CSNA.
- Reviewed and gave input into the ongoing consumer satisfaction survey of individuals who received services under an Individualized Plan for Employment.
- Held meetings in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau and Kenai to hear from partner agencies on their experience working with the local DVR office, hear presentations from local business and economic development representatives and to hold public forums where consumers shared their experiences with DVR services.
- Conducted outreach efforts to recruit new members to the SVRC.
- Educated and provided information on DVR and the employment of people with disabilities to the Alaska State Legislature.
- Convened a one-day meeting focusing on Assistive Technology (AT). Participants included AT providers, the AT Subcommittee, individuals who use AT, and others.
- Heard presentations about regional economic development and programs that assist Alaskans with disabilities from: the Fairbanks Northstar Borough Chief of Staff and Economic Development Special Assistant to the Mayor, the Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation, the Alaskan Mental Health Trust Authority, the Alaska Center for the Blind director, the Mayor of Kenai and the "Tapestry" program director.

SVRC Subcommittee Activities

The State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC) has five standing subcommittees: Executive; Program Evaluation; Assistive Technology; Planning; Policy, Public Relations and Resources. The SVRC also formed an ad-hoc Business Recognition subcommittee last year. Below is a summary of each subcommittee's activities.

Executive

Chair: Mary Ann Pruitt

The executive subcommittee held monthly teleconferences where it reviewed the work of the other subcommittees and planned the SVRC's quarterly meetings.

Program Evaluation

Chair: David Berube

The program evaluation subcommittee met almost every month to review consumer feedback sources, including the consumer satisfaction survey data and transcripts of public testimony given at SVRC quarterly meetings around the state.

After reading the public testimony transcripts, the subcommittee found a possible disconnect between the expectations of individuals coming in for VR services and what services were actually available. They recommended that DVR consider additional staff training, possibly bringing in other agencies to provide information on other available support services. DVR is considering these suggestions.

The subcommittee also reviewed the consumer satisfaction survey questions and suggested some small changes, which were then approved by the full SVRC in May, 2015. DVR reviewed the proposed changes and made revisions as appropriate.



From left to right: Mark Dale, Lenny DiPaolo, John Cannon, Teresa Sarabia, Mary Ann Pruitt, Bob Purois, Stacy Niwa, Dave Berube and Lindsay Davison.



Assistive Technology

Chair: Bob Purvis

The role and purpose of this subcommittee is to provide consumer input and feedback on how Federal Assistive Technology (AT) Act funds are used and spent in the state of Alaska. The AT subcommittee brings formal recommendations to the Committee (SVRC) for further actions.

The Federal AT Act funds are currently administrated by DVR and passed to an implementing agency. The implenting agency is Assistive Technology of Alaska, (ATLA). ATLA is a non-profit agency based in Anchorage.

ATLA staff provide services statewide. Monthly teleconference meetings are attended by SVRC subcommittee members, the ATLA Director, Mystie Rail and the DVR AT Coordinator, Jason Caputo. The DVR AT Coordinator tracks grant progress, provides informal input to DVR and ATLA and also brings issues to the full SVRC as needed.

The AT subcommittee planned the annual one-day meeting with the full SVRC. This meeting focuses on assistive technology issues within the state.

“I’m very thankful for all you did for me. I am very satisfied with my newfound career of life coaching that I have because of you!”

- DVR Participant

Planning

Chair: Mary Elam

The planning subcommittee works with DVR on the preparation and update of the DVR State Plan, the triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and this SVRC Annual Report.

Policy, Public Relations and Resources

Chair: Teresa Sarabia

The policy and public relations subcommittee reviews changes to DVR policy and helps promote SVRC quarterly meetings in the communities where the meetings are held.

Business Recognition

Chair: Dan Elstad

The business recognition subcommittee developed guidelines on presenting awards to employers across Alaska who make an exceptional effort to offer work experiences and employment opportunities to DVR participants. See page three for greater detail.

DVR at a Glance

“Always treated with respect.”

- DVR Participant

The individuals served by DVR 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 State Fiscal Year 2015

- 607 individuals exited the program employed with an average hourly wage of \$14.61.
- 1,758 new individuals applied for services; an additional 2,810 individuals received information and referral services.
- 369 Alaskan employers hired DVR program participants.
- 84% of the individuals were employed in the private sector, 11% were employed in federal, state or local government and 5% were self-employed.
- 3,802 individuals received services from the VR program.
- DVR trained 398 DVR program participants at an average cost of \$2,512 per participant.

Who DVR Serves

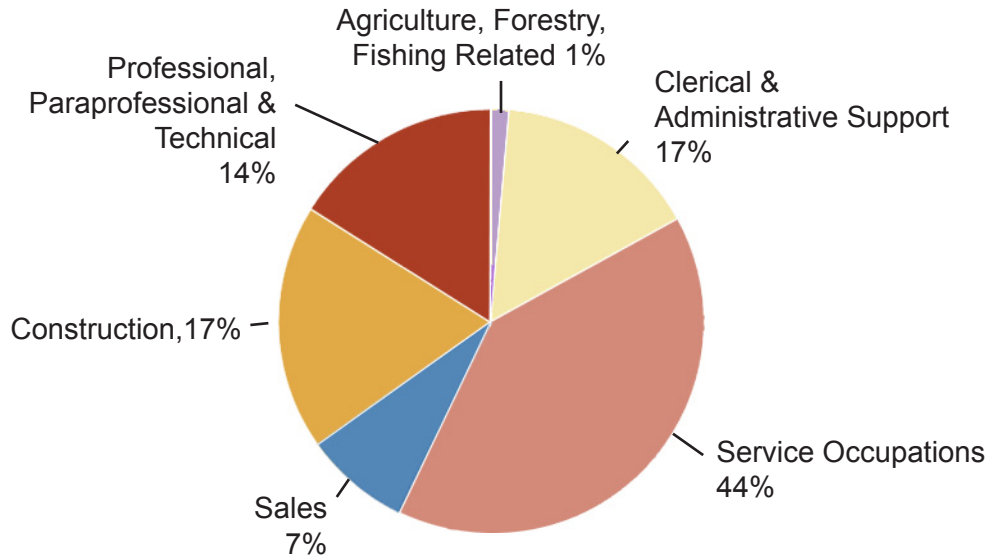
- 95% of the individuals receiving services were significantly disabled with multiple barriers to employment.
- 25% of the applicants were youth (through age 24).
- 73% were Caucasian; 22% were Alaska Native; 9% were black; 5% were Hispanic or Latino; 3% were Asian and 2% were Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian (participants may identify as one or more ethnic groups).

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

“More than satisfied, I can honestly say. I don’t think they could have been any more helpful than they were. They were great to deal with, responsive, and most helpful.”

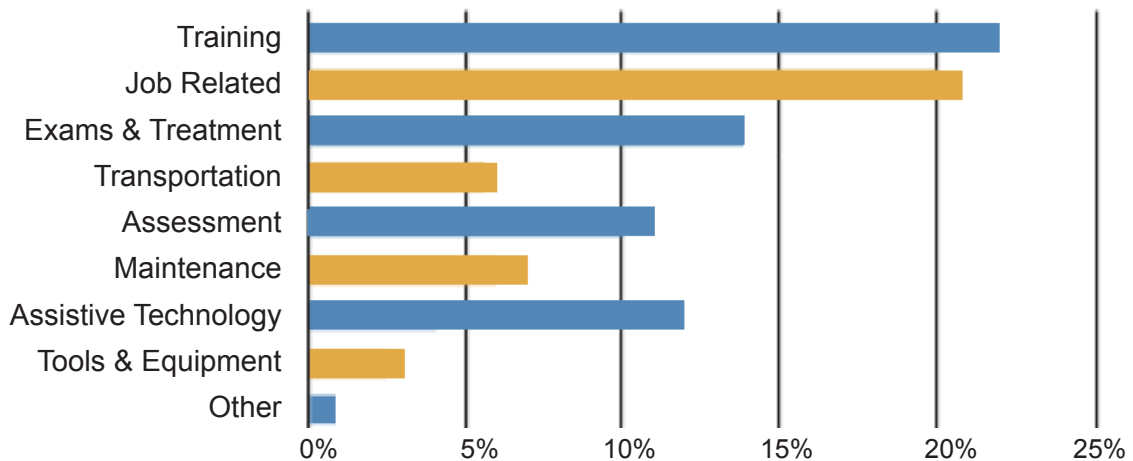
- DVR Participant

Occupations of DVR Participants

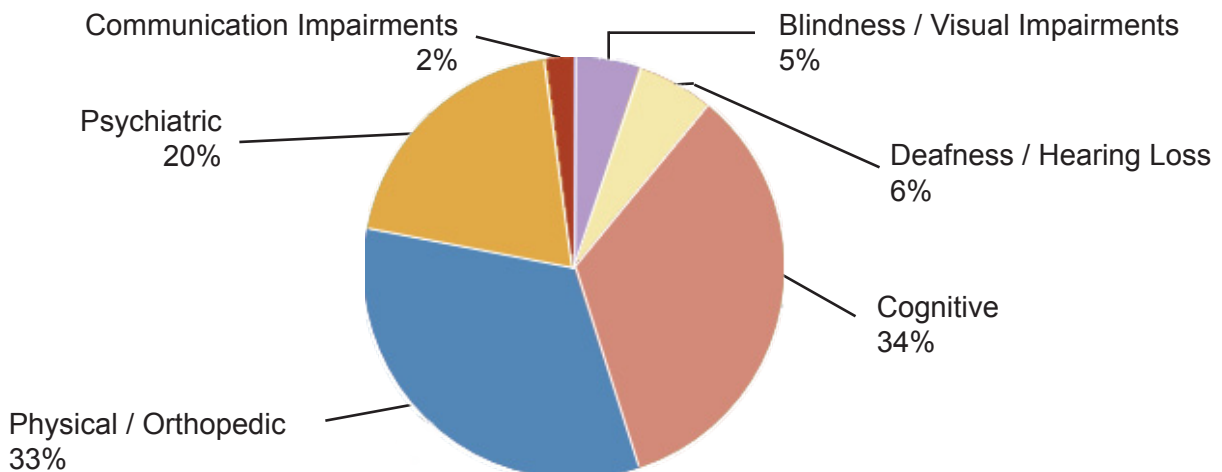


Purchased VR Services

(\$4.5 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.

Survey Highlights

DVR is a consumer-driven organization where a participant's self-involvement in the vocational rehabilitation process and informed choice are important for success. Keeping the participant in mind, several changes were made to DVR's satisfaction surveys this year. These changes were made effective May, 2015 and the revised survey has been used since that time.

Readability: The reading level was reworked and slightly adjusted to ensure participants could comfortably interpret and answer all the questions without confusion. To streamline responses and avoid duplication, the number of questions was reduced from 23 to 10. This change also pared the survey down to one page which makes it easier and faster for a participant to complete.

Delivery Methodology: Previously, DVR mailed consumer satisfaction surveys to participants that did not have an email address. This delivery method proved to have a very low response rate and was not cost effective. All surveys are now sent to the participant's email address using the online survey tool, SurveyMonkey. Approximately 75% of DVR participants who exited the program have a valid email address.

Data: Since the survey underwent significant changes in May, 2015, the data represented here only applies to participants who exited the DVR program from May 1, 2015 through September 30, 2015. 346 surveys were emailed during this timeframe.

Treating the Consumer Participant with Respect

87% of responding participants felt DVR staff were polite and helpful throughout the time their case was open. A similar percentage of respondents felt questions and requests were replied to promptly.

Informed Choice and Involvement in the DVR Process

80% of responders were pleased with their involvement in the decision making process that led to their plan for employment. 93% believed the goal of DVR was to help them find employment or stay employed.

Referral of Others

Overall, 80% of respondents would recommend Alaska DVR to others.

"I can't think of any improvements, not even one! Thank you for your services as I would not have succeeded without them!"

- DVR Participant



All Respondents - Survey Categories

1. Program Satisfaction

I would recommend DVR to others. 80%

Overall, I am satisfied with the services. 78%

2. Program Information

I knew the goal of DVR was to help me find employment or stay employed. 93%

DVR staff helped me understand the services available to me by DVR and other agencies. 82%

3. Consumer Involvement

I was aware of my right to disagree and was informed about the process to appeal DVR decisions and about the Client Assistance Program. 87%

I was pleased with my involvement in the decision making process that led to my plan for employment. 80%

Alaska DVR helped me understand my abilities so that I could choose a job consistent with my strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, capabilities, interests and informed choice. 78%

4. Consumer and Staff Interaction

DVR staff replied promptly to my questions, requests and informed me of changes. 89%

DVR staff were polite and helpful on an ongoing basis throughout the time I had an open case. 87%

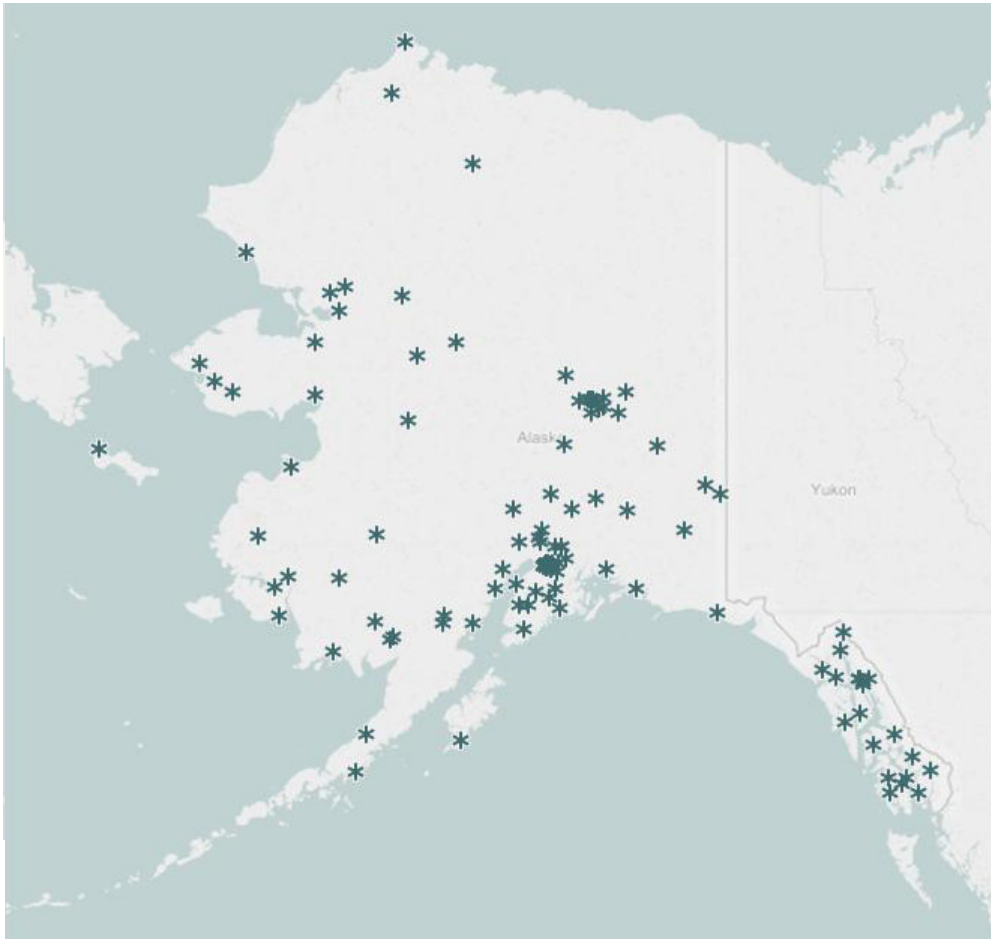
"My counselor is excellent in his position because he has been highly trained and updated. I am hopeful to return to school after the shoulder of mine is replaced and will continue the road to achievement for my goals which have been set through our Alaska DVR. It is actually the only place on Earth where I actually made a dean's list academically and for this I am truly thankful to my team that I have assigned to me."

- DVR Participant

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 2015, from October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2015. DVR has offices in Anchorage, Eagle River, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kenai, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Sitka and Wasilla, and serves rural Alaska with traveling counselors.

“I actually came here today to be an interpreter for the deaf. I wouldn’t be where I am today and be able to do what I am doing without their support. [DVR] helped me figure out how to achieve what I wanted to do. I was able to work with a mentor to learn sign language and I did independent study and I had pretty much weekly contact with my DVR counselor.

- 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: <http://gov.alaska.gov/Walker/services/boards-commissions/apply-info.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 Bill Walker

Attention: Director of Boards and Commissions
550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1700, Anchorage, AK 99501

Contact the Boards and Commissions office:

Call: 907-269-7450

Fax: 907-269-7461

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 aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/.

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 907-465-2814 or 1-800-478-2815

Write: Chair, State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
PO Box 115516
Juneau, AK 99811-5516

Fax: 907-465-2856

E-mail: Jason.Caputo@Alaska.Gov

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Bill Walker, Governor

Heidi Drygas, Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development

Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

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