

Alaska State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee

# 2025 Annual Report



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

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NOTE: This report covers the Federal Fiscal Year 2025 (FFY25), however, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's data compiled for this report reflects State Fiscal Year 2025 (SFY25).

# From the SVRC Chair and DVR Director

## **Building a Stronger, More Connected Alaska**

As the Director of the Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the Chair of the Alaska State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC), we are honored to jointly present the 2025 SVRC Annual Report. Over the past year, our focus has remained steadfast on assisting individuals with disabilities to get and keep good jobs, serving our participants with excellence and integrity. The accomplishments highlighted in this report are a testament to the unwavering dedication of DVR staff, and the strength, determination, and successes of the Alaskans we have the privilege to serve.

Connection and partnership define our work, and we believe the strength of our Division and the growth of Alaska's workforce is enhanced by our ability to learn from the people we serve. This means maximizing connections, hearing from partners and participants, and working together to improve employment opportunities for Alaskans with disabilities, while supporting the businesses which employ them.

The SVRC and DVR continue to work in close partnership, guided by a shared belief that Alaskans with disabilities who are provided with appropriate vocational rehabilitation services will have the opportunity to thrive in the workforce. Together, we are creating pathways that lead to meaningful work and stronger communities.

In the year ahead, we look forward to strengthening these relationships, continuing to listen, and collaborating to expand opportunities for Alaskans with disabilities, and the employers who make these opportunities possible.



*SVRC Chair, Nate Kile*



*DVR Director, Kathryn Duder*



# About the Committee and Members

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

A majority of SVRC members are people with disabilities and include representatives from community rehabilitation program service providers, the Independent Living Council, the Department of Education and Early Development, Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) programs, advocates, VR participants, and business leaders.

Each year, the SVRC submits this report on the status of Alaska DVR to the Governor and to the United States Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration.

## **Nate Kile**

### **CHAIR**

*Anchorage*  
Consumer

## **Dave Bérube**

### **VICE CHAIR**

*Anchorage*  
Client Assistance Program

## **Breanna Brian**

*Anchorage*  
Parent Training and  
Information Center

## **Michael Christian**

*Fairbanks*  
State Independent Living  
Council

## **Kathryn Duder**

*Anchorage*  
Director, Division of  
Vocational Rehabilitation

## **Bryan Gearry**

*Anchorage*  
Consumer

## **Sarah Huntsinger**

*Eagle River*  
Community Rehabilitation  
Program

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*Wasilla*  
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Vocational Rehabilitation  
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Consumer

## **Amanda Race**

*Fairbanks*  
Section 121 / Tribal Vocational  
Rehabilitation

## **Marcus Sanders**

*Anchorage*  
Business

## **Simone Sanders**

*Anchorage*  
Alaska Dept. of Education &  
Early Development

## **Trevor Shaw**

*Ward Cove*  
Business

## **Leila Taylor**

*Anchorage*  
Consumer

## **Vacancies**

- Business
- Alaska Workforce Investment Board

# DVR Strategic Plan



## Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Mission

To assist individuals with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment.

The SVRC and DVR continuously work to improve the delivery of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to Alaskans with disabilities. A keystone of this work is an ongoing, three-year strategic planning process, which is the responsibility of DVR leadership and the SVRC. This process uses data captured from the triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) report. The results of the CSNA are used to develop DVR's strategic goals.

The strategic planning team includes the DVR management and leadership teams, SVRC members, the Client Assistance Program, and Tribal VR programs. The goals listed below were identified for the 2024-2027 planning cycle and provide organizational direction and focus for DVR. Specific teams are tasked with duties that will ensure these goals are met. These assigned tasks are reviewed and updated quarterly.

## Strategic Plan Goals

### Goal 1: Service Delivery

DVR will deliver high quality vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities to assist them in obtaining employment consistent with their employment goals.

This goal reflects DVR's focus on continuous improvement of the VR service delivery system based upon the needs of Alaskans with disabilities as identified by the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA).

### Goal 2: Staff Development

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 need for succession planning with the anticipated loss of key staff in the future.

### Goal 3: Quality Assurance

DVR will continuously evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational systems and identify opportunities to develop innovative solutions for necessary changes.

This goal reflects DVR's commitment to continuous programmatic improvement and organizational efficiency.

### Goal 4: Prioritize Alaska Business Needs

DVR will prioritize the needs of Alaskan businesses while leveraging other workforce partners.

This goal represents DVR's responsibility to the dual customer model as well as ensuring employment services are provided through other components of the Workforce development system.



# DVR at a Glance

Individuals served by DVR represent demographics as vast as Alaska itself. Although each individual has their own unique story, looking at aggregate numbers can help provide the community with an understanding of DVR's overall reach and impact on Alaskans with disabilities.

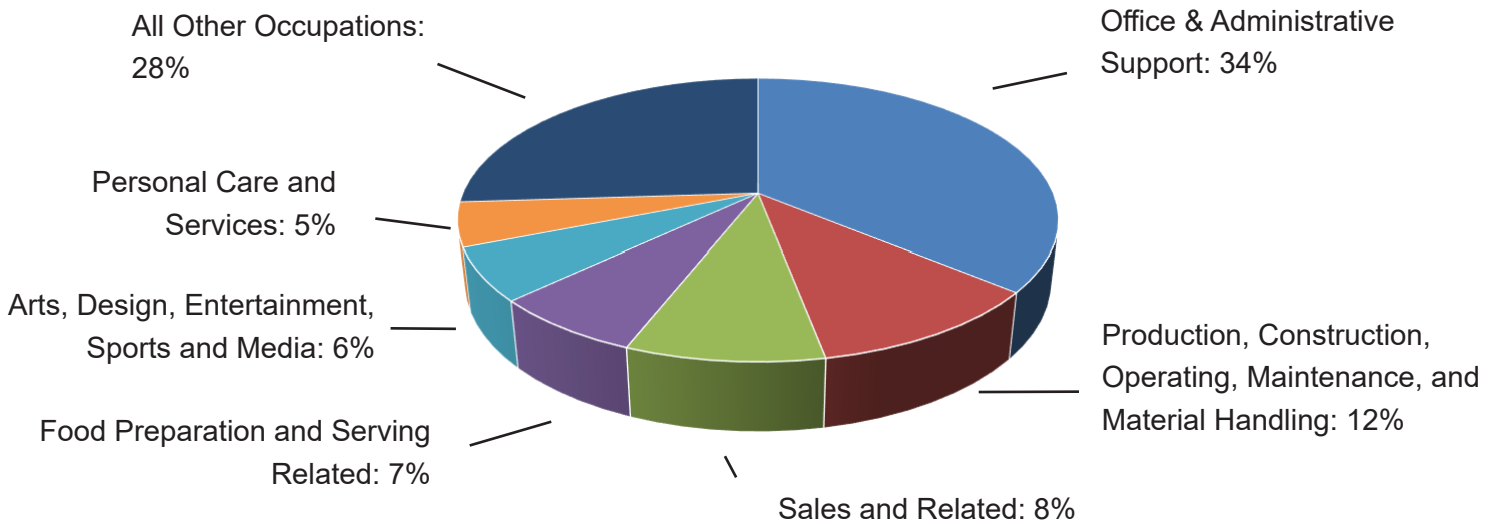
## **Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Outcomes for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2025**

- \$3,600,372 was spent on individuals in the VR program
  - 1,997 individuals received services from the VR program
  - 881 new individuals applied for services
  - 1,292 individuals received information and referral services
  - 288 individuals exited the program employed with an average wage of \$20.51/hr. The average wage increased by \$0.53 from last year. In SFY 2025, Alaska's minimum wage was \$11.91
  - Of the 288 individuals that exited the VR program:
    - 218 were employed in the private sector
    - 56 were employed in Federal, State, or Local government
    - 4 were self-employed
- \$1,977,476 was spent on Pre-Employment Transition Services provided to students with disabilities under the Potentially Eligible program
  - Students served under the Potentially Eligible program were from 116 Alaskan communities and 81% of those students live in rural Alaska
  - 1,436 Students with Disabilities received services from the Potentially Eligible program
  - 46 Students with Disabilities received services from the VR program
  - \$114,887 was spent on Pre-Employment Transition Services provided students with disabilities under the VR program
  - \$2,092,363 was the total amount spent on Pre-Employment Transition Services under both the VR and Potentially Eligible programs

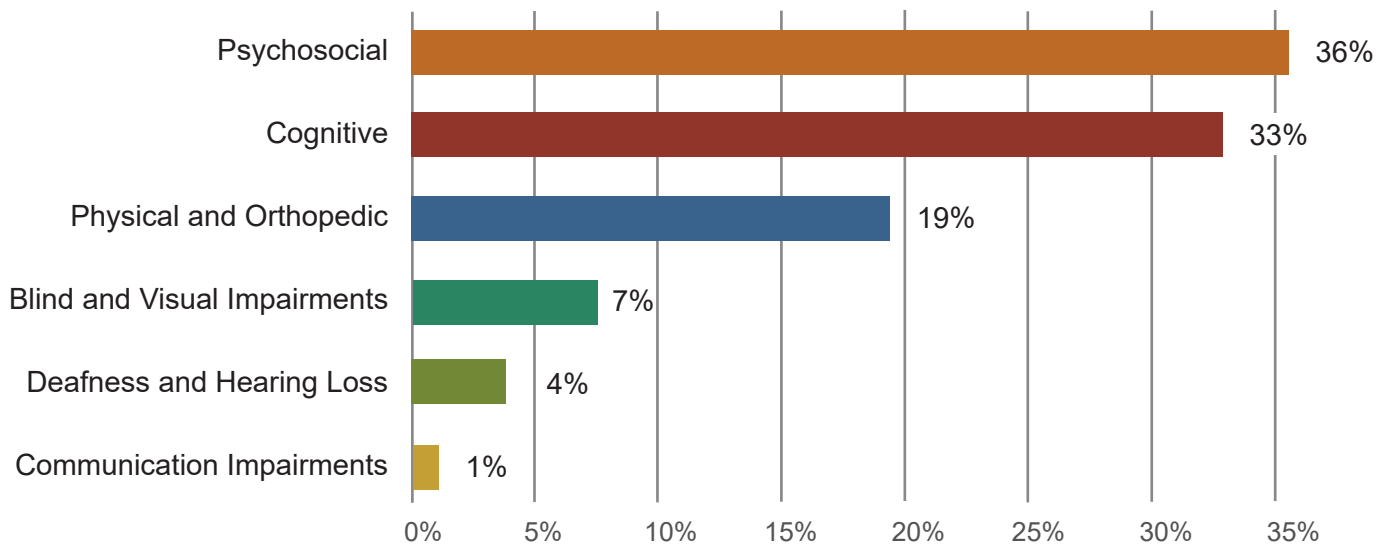
## **Who DVR Serves**

- 97% of individuals receiving services experience a significant or most significant disability with multiple barriers to employment
- 60% were Caucasian; 24% were Alaska Native; 11% were Black or African American; 3% were Asian, and 2% were Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian (note: participants may identify as one or more racial groups)
- 1,482 Students with a Disability (age 14-21) received Pre-Employment Transition Services from both the VR and Potentially Eligible programs, representing services to students from 116 different communities across Alaska

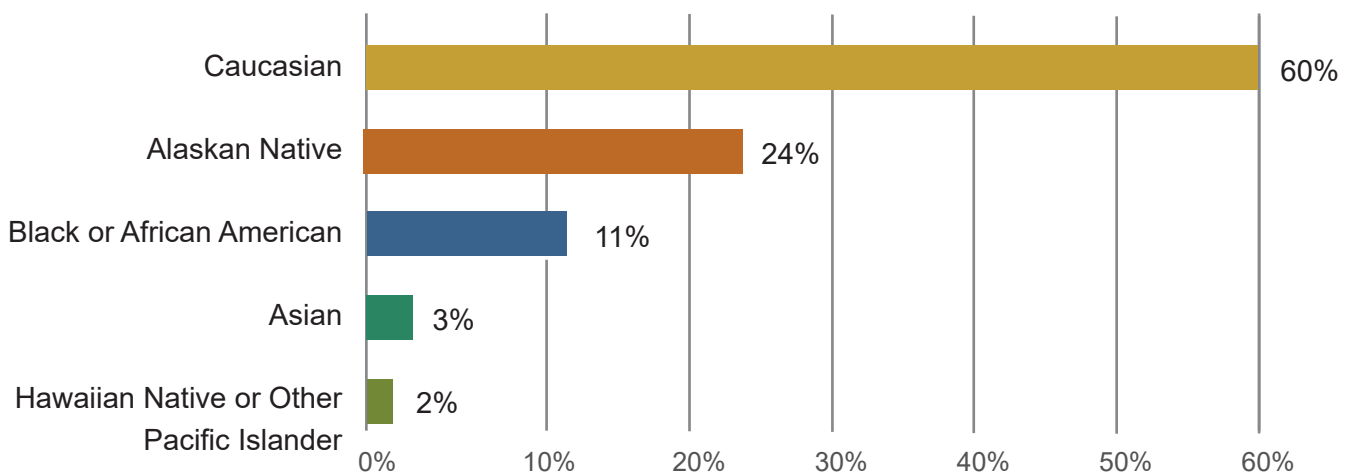
## Occupations of DVR Participants SFY 2025



## Disabilities of DVR Participants SFY 2025



## DVR Participants by Race SFY 2025





# DVR Purchased Services SFY 2025

The federal agency that oversees DVR is the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). RSA identifies five major service category focus areas provided to individuals with disabilities:

## Career Services

Career Services focus on identifying each individual's needs as their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is developed. These services include labor market information, vocational

assessments, diagnosis and treatment, and counseling and guidance. Career Services are designed to help individuals prepare for, obtain, or retain employment.

## Training Services

Training Services assist individuals achieve their vocational goals by providing opportunities to gain skills, education, and credentials that support self-sufficiency. Services may include college/university enrollment (junior, four-year, and graduate levels), occupational/vocational training, on-the-job training, and apprenticeships. The goal of Training Services is to increase the likelihood of competitive, integrated employment through education and skill development.

### Participant Quote from Public Testimony

"They are a responsive, dependable, hardworking team who has demonstrated the commitment to help their participants find a great career."

## Other/Supportive Services

Other/Supportive Services are available to participants who are receiving career or training services and are intended to reducing barriers to employment. These may include support for transportation, personal assistant services, maintenance, rehabilitation technology, reader services, and interpreter services.

## Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Under the VR Program

Pre-ETS under the VR program are specialized services

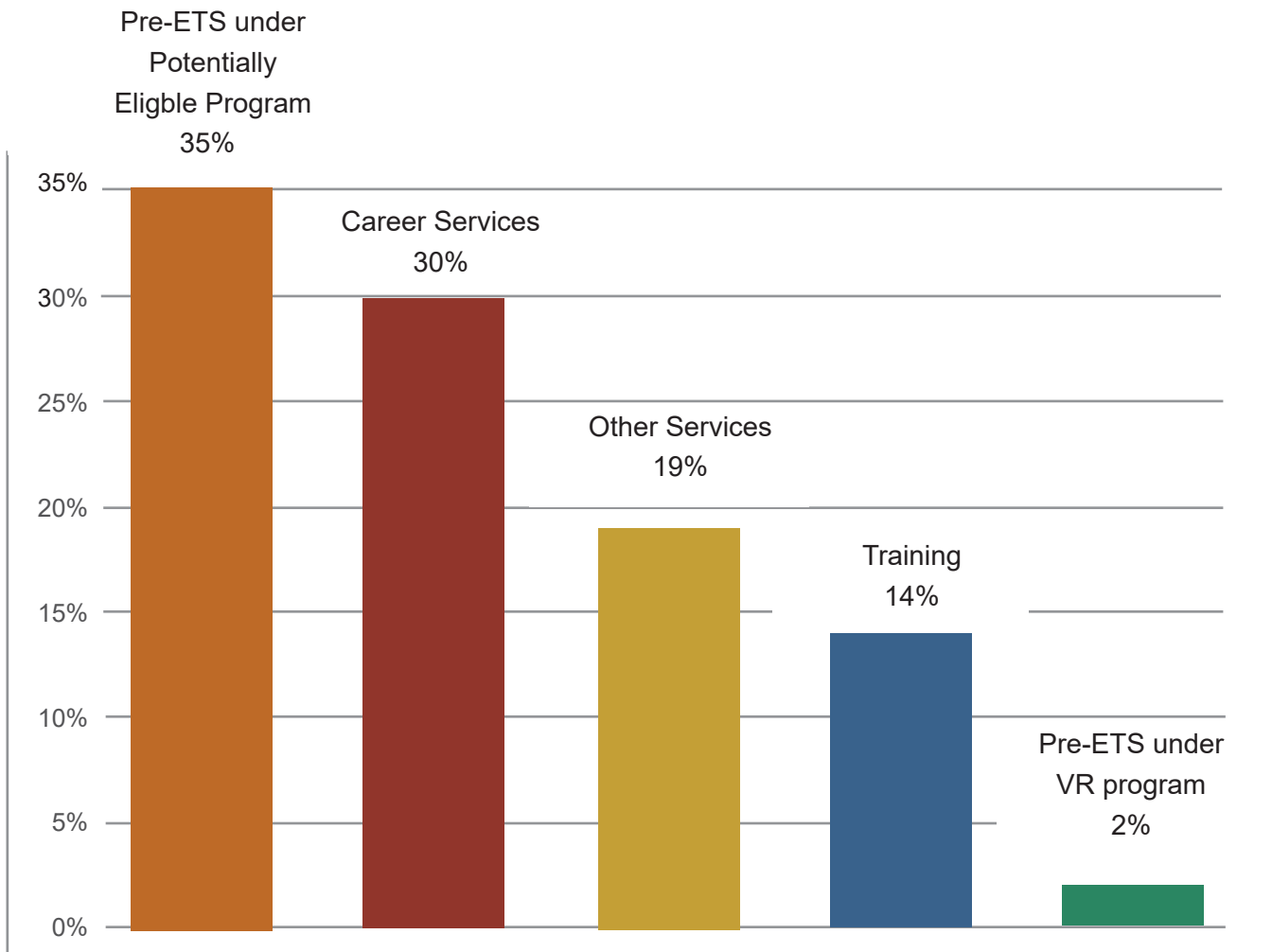
designed to help Students with Disabilities (SWD) transition from education to post-secondary education or employment. These services are available to SWD ages 14-21 who have applied for VR services and are enrolled in an educational program such as high school, college, or other recognized educational program. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as Amended, identifies five Pre-ETS activities: Job Exploration Counseling; Work-Based Learning Experiences; Counseling on Enrollment Opportunities in Post-Secondary Education; Workplace Readiness Training and Independent Living; and Instruction in Self Advocacy.



## Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Under the Potentially Eligible program

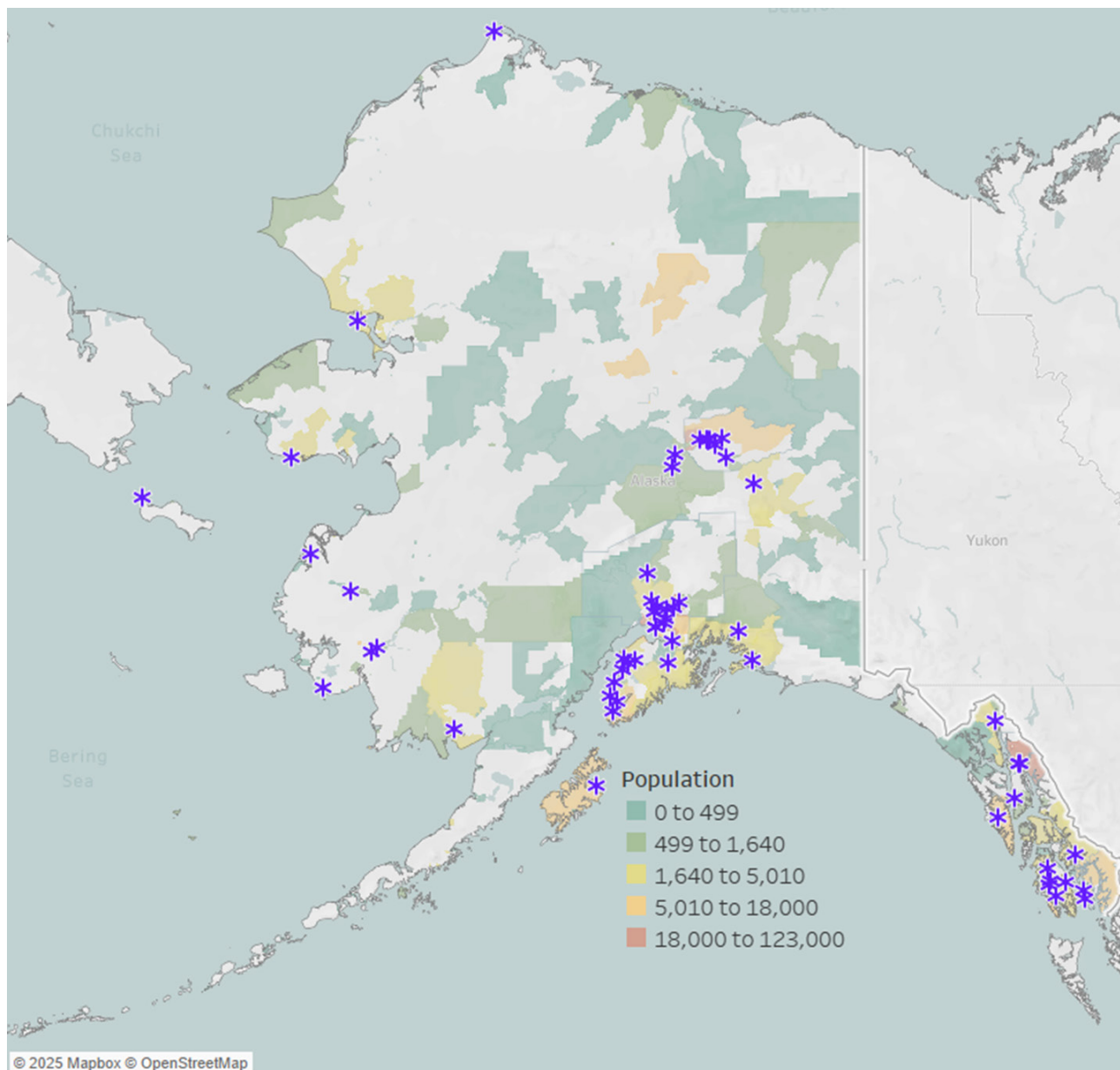
Similar to Pre-ETS under the VR program, the Potentially Eligible program provides Pre-ETS to Students with Disabilities (SWD) ages 14-21 who have not applied for VR services and are potentially eligible for VR services. These students are currently enrolled in an educational program such as high school, college, or recognized educational program and receive Job Exploration Counseling; Work-Based Learning Experiences; Counseling on Enrollment Opportunities in Post-Secondary Education; Workplace Readiness Training and Independent Living; and Instruction in Self Advocacy.

### Purchased Services SFY 2025 (\$5.57 million)



# Locations of Alaskans Served SFY 2025

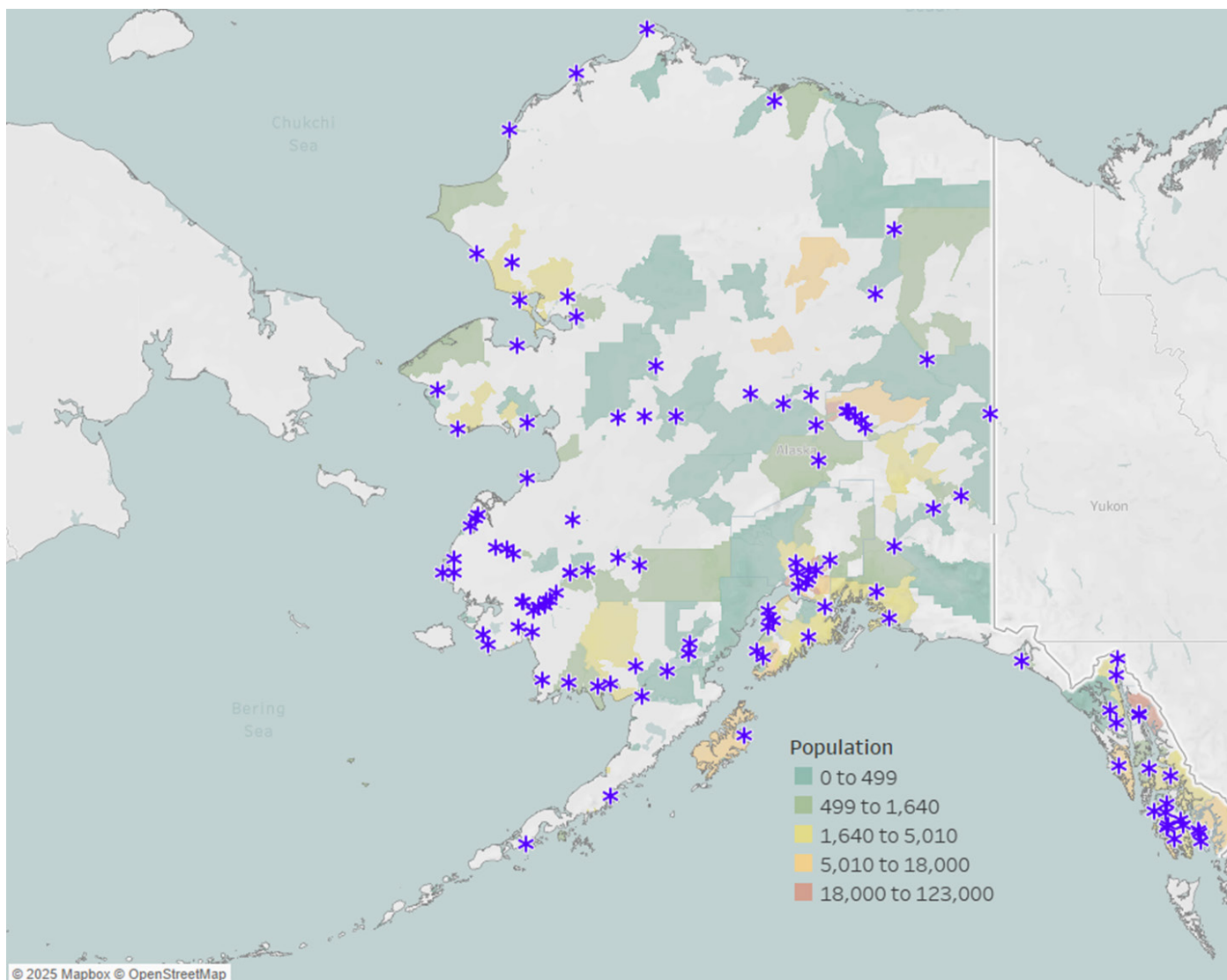
## 1,997 Individuals from 57 Communities Were Served by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program



**Vocational Rehabilitation Program:** These are individuals who have applied for Vocational Rehabilitation Services and have been assigned a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to assist them in achieving competitive integrated employment.

# 1,482 Students with Disabilities from 116 Communities Were Served by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program

(Potentially Eligible and Vocational Rehabilitation Program)



**Potentially Eligible Program:** Pre-Employment Transition Services are services provided only to Students With Disabilities (SWDs) who are not applicants of the VR program, but who are considered to be potentially eligible for VR services. These services are provided to SWDs who are 14-21 years old and currently enrolled in an educational program such as high school, college, or recognized educational program.



# Consumer Satisfaction

## Survey of Participants Who Exit DVR Services

The State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC) oversees an on-going consumer satisfaction survey for DVR participants who were closed after developing an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

### Consumer Satisfaction Survey Highlights

DVR is a consumer-driven organization that values each participant's active involvement and informed choice during the vocational rehabilitation process. The satisfaction survey helps DVR understand participant experience in four key areas: Consumer and Staff Interaction, Consumer Involvement, Program Information, and Overall Program Satisfaction.

Surveys are sent monthly to participants with valid email addresses using SurveyMonkey. Currently, 97% of participants who meet the survey criteria have a valid email address, a 2% increase from last year. The average monthly response rate is 3.2%.

### Respectful and Responsive Service

Eighty-four percent of respondents agreed that staff replied promptly to their questions and kept them informed of changes, which is a 10% increase from last year. Even more encouraging, 95% felt staff were polite and helpful throughout their case, an astounding 19% increase compared to the previous year.

### Informed Choice and Active Participation

Participants also reported feeling more involved in determining their employment goals, including 84% who were pleased with their involvement in the decision-making process that led to their IPE, a 7% increase from last year. Eighty-four percent felt that Alaska DVR helped them understand their abilities so that they could choose a job consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, capabilities, interests, and informed choice, an increase of 10% from the prior year. Ninety-five percent felt aware of their right to disagree, and 79% of respondents felt that DVR staff helped them understand VR and other available services, increases of 11% and 5%, respectively.

### Program Satisfaction and Recommendation

Overall, 79% of respondents were satisfied with the DVR program and the services they received, representing an 8% increase from last year. Notably, 89% said they would recommend Alaska DVR to others, representing a significant 18% increase from the previous year.

### Review and Continuous Improvement

Survey results are reviewed quarterly and shared with regional Rehabilitation Managers to recognize successes and identify areas for improvement. Feedback from participants continues to help DVR strengthen services and ensure that Alaskans with disabilities receive the highest quality VR services possible.





## All Respondents SFY 2025 - Survey Categories

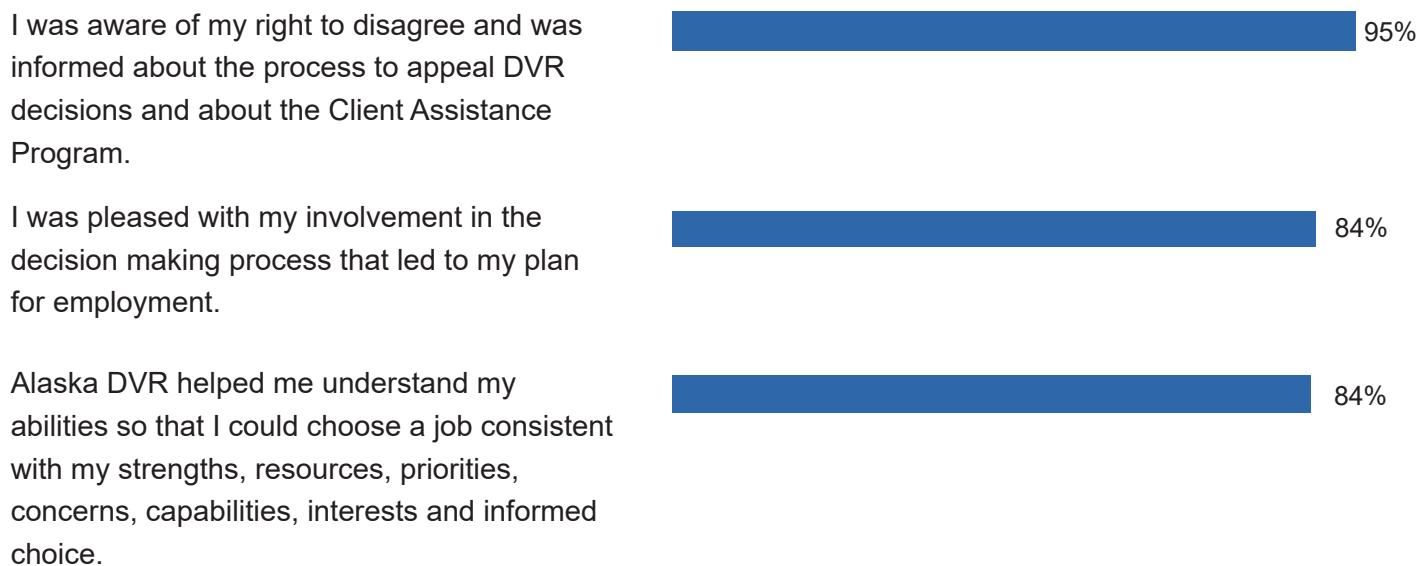
### 1. Program Satisfaction



### 2. Program Information



### 3. Consumer Involvement



### 4. Consumer and Staff Interaction



# SVRC Expenditures and Resources

## SVRC 2025 Expenditures

The SVRC FFY 2025 funds were expended to support quarterly meetings. Four quarterly meetings were held via video conference. Meeting costs included the use of a court reporter and the provision of accessibility options for the public and members with disabilities.

## 2026 Resource Plan

FFY 2026 funds will be used to support the SVRC's quarterly meeting expenses, including a court reporter and to provide for the accessibility needs of the public and members.



DVR staff Luke Hobbs and Mahala Coker representing the Division at the Embracing AK Disabilities Expo during the Alaska State Fair in Anchorage.



In partnership with DVR, the SVRC engaged in a broad range of activities during FFY 2025 (October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025), to help ensure the quality of DVR's services.

## SVRC Activities FFY 2025

- The SVRC collected public testimony from around the state via email, phone, and written letters. Over the course of the year, invitations to provide public testimony were sent to DVR participants who had an open case and were determined eligible for services or had their case closed within the last 12 months.
- Four meetings were held via video / teleconference. Each meeting focused on different regions: Anchorage, Mat-Su and rural, Northern, and Southern.
- A comprehensive review of the DVR website was conducted, and recommendations were provided to enhance its user-friendliness and accessibility.

### Guest Speakers

At each meeting, reports were given by the DVR Director, the Chief of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, DVR Rehabilitation Manager(s); and from the following partner members: Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation, the Alaska Workforce Investment Board, the Client Assistance Program, the parent training organization "Stone Soup Group," and the Alaska Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education. There were also a variety of guest speakers from disability, community, tribal, and workforce development agencies.

### Recommendations to DVR

- Key recommendations from the website review included:
  - *Elevate critical information:* Increase the prominence of resources for parents and teachers.
  - *Improve site navigation:* Reduce clutter and excessive text to create a less overwhelming user experience.
  - *Alternate formats:* Explore integrating video content to better serve users who prefer visual or auditory learning.
- DVR fully implemented all suggested improvements. Subsequent user-testing and a review by the Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired clearly indicated significant improvements to usability and accessibility.
- The SVRC unanimously approved their continued support for DVR's declination of supported employment grant funding.

# SVRC Subcommittee Activities

The State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee's (SVRC) previous year's streamlining of its subcommittees from five to four to make them more efficient for Subcommittee Chairs to manage has proven successful. Below is a summary of each subcommittee's role and activities.

## Executive

The Executive subcommittee's role is to help all members and subcommittees work effectively as a team. The Executive subcommittee comprises the chair of the SVRC, the vice chair, and the chairs of the other subcommittees.

The subcommittee held monthly teleconferences where members reviewed the work of the SVRC as a whole, assigned work to the other subcommittees, and planned the SVRC's quarterly meetings. The DVR Director attended these meetings as a non-voting member, providing high-level updates on DVR priorities and initiatives.

## Policy and Program Evaluation

The purpose of the Policy and Program Evaluation subcommittee is to provide guidance and recommendations to DVR on their policies and to analyze the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's functions, services, and outcomes. This past year, DVR has had minimal policy updates. The subcommittee, along with the full SVRC, reviewed the Consumer Satisfaction Survey results.

## Assistive Technology

The Assistive Technology (AT) subcommittee provides "consumer-responsive and consumer-driven" input and feedback on how the federal AT Act funds are used in the state of Alaska. The goal of the AT Act is to help individuals who experience a disability get the AT needed to improve their quality of life and independence, by such things as greater independence and decreasing barriers. The AT subcommittee brings formal recommendations to the SVRC for further actions.

This past year the AT subcommittee met virtually with Assistive Technology of Alaska's (ATLA) Director, Mystie Rail, and the DVR AT Coordinator, Jason Caputo, every two months.

## Planning and Membership

The Planning and Membership subcommittee's role is to collaborate with DVR on the preparation and renewal of the WIOA Combined State Plan, the triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, and DVR's Strategic Plan, as well as recruiting new SVRC members. This subcommittee held meetings via videoconference where it reviewed member recruitment efforts for vacant committee seats, planned for when seats would become vacant, and strategized how the SVRC could reach potential members with diverse perspectives, disabilities, and geographic locations while maintaining high-quality, active members.

Quality recruitment continues to be a priority for the SVRC.



The Committee partnered with the Alaska Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education to request the following proclamation from Alaska Governor, Mike Dunleavy:

WHEREAS, Alaska Statute recognizes the first full week of October as Alaska Employ People with Disabilities Week to celebrate and foster the integration of Alaskans with disabilities into our State's workforce; and

WHEREAS, this observance highlights the talent and value individuals with disabilities add to our workplace and our communities, and reaffirms Alaska's commitment to every citizen; and

WHEREAS, competitive and unified employment provides individuals with a sense of pride, financial security, stable living conditions, access to quality health management, and increased independence; and

WHEREAS, Alaska is an Employment First State, and our state agencies prioritize competitive and assimilated employment for all Alaskans. The State is committed to being a model employer by attracting qualified individuals with disabilities to contribute their knowledge and talents as public employees; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act, empowers Alaskans with disabilities to pursue employment earnings and savings, while allowing them to continue to qualify for vital public benefits; and

WHEREAS, the State of Alaska celebrates and recognizes the talents and contributions of individuals with disabilities in the workplace and reaffirms its commitment to promoting awareness about disability employment opportunities, acknowledging that doing so is a critical part of our efforts to build an inclusive community and strong economy throughout Alaska.

NOW THEREFORE, I, Mike Dunleavy, GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF ALASKA, do hereby proclaim October 5 - 11, 2025 as Employ People with Disabilities Week in Alaska and urge all Alaskans to observe this week with appropriate programs and activities and encourage employers to hire qualified Alaskans with disabilities and to advance the important message that individuals with disabilities are valued in Alaska's workforce.







# Public Testimony Examples

*Public testimony was collected at each of the committee's quarterly meetings. Below are a few examples of FFY2025 testimonies:*

"I was able to build up my confidence and gain the skills I'd need to succeed at work. My counselor and the support staff were always on my side. Because of their support I was able to get a job that I feel fulfilled in AND I was able to purchase a home in 2024. Without them helping me along the way I might not be where I'm at in my journey."

"DVR is a God-send. Everyone there has made me feel comfortable and reassured that no matter the situation I may be in, there is a way to assist me in my endeavors. My case manager has kept good and constant communication with me from the first time I met her. Doors and opportunities have opened for me thanks to all the hard work and dedication of DVR employees. They are truly making dreams come true. Thank you for helping me set and realize my goals, and give me the confidence to strive for those goals."

"In my experience it is very scary trying to figure out what to do after completing treatment for addiction. Finding a job that can provide enough resources to pay for living expenses is critical to maintaining sobriety. I am so lucky to be eligible for services from the DVR and Job Center."

"I wholeheartedly recommend working with DVR if you are job searching. They have a remarkable team and staff dedicated to supporting Alaskan's gain employment and a great career."

"DVR has been wonderful in helping me get back into the workforce. The staff is genuine, kind, caring. They go above and beyond to make sure people are comfortable. I'm finally feeling like a useful member of society, again. It feels tremendous!"

"What DVR has done for me..."

- **Created a Bridge:** This program facilitated my intellectual advancement, bridging the gap between my incarceration and career goals.
- **Provided Accountability:** Regular meetings have kept me accountable for the progress I've made.
- **Educational Achievement:** I am nearing the completion of my AAS in Information Technology, thanks to the program's support.
- **Maintained Productivity:** The program has helped me stay productive and focused as I work towards my goals.
- **Ensured Stability:** It has provided me with the stability to remain positive about my future endeavors and focus on being a contributing member of the community.
- **Sustained Purpose:** The program has helped me maintain my purpose and hopes for a more positive and fulfilling mental state."

# 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 at: <https://gov.alaska.gov/services/boards-and-commissions/apply-for-a-board-appointment/>

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 the Governor

Attention: Director of Boards and Commissions

P.O. Box 110001, Juneau, AK, 99811-0001

For more information, contact the Boards and Commissions office:

**Call:** 907-269-0006

**Fax:** 907-269-7463

**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 <https://labor.alaska.gov/svrc/svrc-meeting-calendar.html>. Notification of meeting times and agenda are posted 30 days prior to meetings at <https://aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/>.

More information about the SVRC is available at [www.labor.alaska.gov/svrc](http://www.labor.alaska.gov/svrc).

### Share Your Thoughts and Ideas with SVRC

**Call:** Voice/TDD 907-465-2814 or 1-800-478-2815

**Mail:** Chair, State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

PO Box 115516

Juneau, AK 99811-5516

**E-mail:** [dol.svrc@Alaska.Gov](mailto:dol.svrc@Alaska.Gov)

# **Alaska State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee**

## **2025 Annual Report**

Michael J. Dunleavy, Governor

Catherine Muñoz, Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Labor  
and Workforce Development

**Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development**

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

PO Box 115516

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**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

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