



When Washingtonians with disabilities  
go to work, everybody wins

2011 Washington State  
Rehabilitation Council



## The Mission

To support all individuals with disabilities to receive culturally competent vocational rehabilitation services which support their realization of power and pride and exceed their expectations.

## The Vision

The Washington State Rehabilitation Council honors the unique, collective and diverse voices of individuals with disabilities to support the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and its customers to achieve employment outcomes by providing guidance, direction and recommendations to increase the quality and availability of vocational rehabilitation services.

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# GREETINGS

## from the WSRC Chair

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Dear Governor Gregoire and Commissioner Rutledge,

As the Chair of the Washington State Rehabilitation Council, it is my pleasure to submit this report of our activities in 2011 for your review.

I believe that motivated jobseekers with the proper training and skills can defeat the barriers created by disabilities. I am also confident that the employers of Washington State will not hesitate to utilize the talent, dedication and innovation of people with disabilities to succeed in an increasingly competitive global economy. To prove that point; in Federal Fiscal Year 2011, The Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation supported 2,765 jobseekers with disabilities in finding employment. However, as important as what those new employees proved to others, was what they discovered about themselves.

A friend of mine once set out to climb Mt. Rainier. Despite her training, effort and the support of friends and family, she did not reach the summit. I thought she might be discouraged by having turned back until she told me. "I may not have reached the summit of the mountain, but I reached my summit." Like my friend, everyone should have the opportunity to reach their personal summit.

This year the members of the Washington State Rehabilitation Council took on challenging work and demonstrated leadership in our partnership with the Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. I am proud to be associated with such an effective group of people.

Sincerely,

Mike Hudson,  
Chair, Washington State Rehabilitation Council

# GREETINGS

## from the WSRC Executive Director

Dear Governor Gregoire and Commissioner Rutledge,

I am writing to submit the annual report of the Washington State Rehabilitation Council for your review. The report addresses work completed by the Council from January 1, 2011, through December 31, 2011. We are required by Title 1, Section 105 (c) (5) of the Rehabilitation Act to provide this report to you. The members who have served on the Washington State Rehabilitation Council in 2011 have distinguished themselves. At a time when the people of our state are facing economic uncertainty and reevaluating what the role of government will be, our Council members continue to support the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to meet the challenge of increasing employment among the people with disabilities it serves.

Beyond achieving mandates and being capable, focused, and collaborative partners with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, our members understand that the larger purpose of our work is to advance a cultural shift that empowers Washingtonians with disabilities to realize their full potential as they define it.

In 2011 the Washington State Rehabilitation Council has been effective and unabashed in serving the people of Washington, the spirit of the Rehabilitation Act, and especially that broader cultural shift. That is why I am honored to work in service of their mission.

Sincerely,

Joelle Brouner  
Executive Director, Washington State Rehabilitation Council



# GREETINGS

## from the DVR Director

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Dear Governor Gregoire and Commissioner Rutledge,

It is my honor to write about the partnership between the Department of Social and Health Services Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DSHS/DVR) and the Washington State Rehabilitation Council (WSRC) in 2011. Although there have been a number of shared activities between DVR and WSRC, the major partnership endeavor for 2011 foremost in my mind is the customer satisfaction survey.

DVR and WSRC worked together to complete a customer satisfaction survey. WSRC members developed the questions which were reviewed and approved by DVR Leadership. DVR and WSRC identified the populations of customers that the survey would focus on and determined who would conduct the survey- DSHS Research and Data Analysis Unit. While the results of the survey have not been thoroughly assessed, the preliminary indications are very positive regarding the provision of information and treatment of customers by DVR staff.

DVR and WSRC also partnered on updating the DVR State Plan by facilitating public forums to gather feedback from stakeholders. DVR's stakeholders- community partners, Tribal VR programs and contractors, provided information regarding DVR's performance on activities identified in the State Plan. This partnership was crucial in modifying the State Plan on time.

Washington State continued to experience a very difficult economic environment during 2011; nonetheless, DVR increased employment outcomes for our customers. DVR put more customers to work than the year before. WA DVR has seen an increase in outcomes for consecutive years now, a testament to the fine work DVR staff are doing day in and day out. Assisting customers with getting and keeping jobs is essential to improving the State's economic picture. DVR, in partnership with WSRC, continues to focus on providing DVR customers the best services available.

Sincerely,

Andres Aguirre  
Interim Director  
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

## Introduction

Since October 2008, when the housing bubble burst and an already weak national economy became even more uncertain, America has begun to understand just how tenuous circumstances can be for unemployed people. Even those who secure work after being unemployed for a short period face hardship. Those enduring long-term unemployment face choices that may once have been unimaginable.

Unfortunately, many Washingtonians with disabilities are familiar with the consequences of long-term unemployment. According to the American Community Survey in 2009, an estimated 38.7 percent (plus or minus 1.68 percent) of Washingtonians with disabilities between the ages of 18 and 64 were employed. Disproportionate unemployment among working age Washingtonians with disabilities persists for various reasons including (but not limited to): inaccessibility of the workplace, barriers to completing job functions without reasonable accommodations, less access to education, and bias. While experiencing prolonged poverty has never been easy, it is getting even harder for the poorest people in Washington State.

Since 2007 Washington State has faced an unprecedented budget shortfall of \$18 billion. To meet that challenge, Governor Gregoire has led an aggressive effort to find efficiencies and to consolidate business, technology, and personnel functions. Budgets have been cut on six successive occasions. Services have been reduced or eliminated.

The reduction or elimination of basic services has hurt Washingtonians. Many with disabilities are facing the loss of multiple services that support their health or safety. With diminishing access to other supports and services, overcoming barriers to employment is more difficult and urgent.

**“With diminishing access to other supports and services, overcoming barriers to employment is more difficult and urgent.”**

The Washington State Workforce Development System is comprised of 16 component programs (RCW 28C.18) which continue assisting people on their journey to employment. The Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is the only one of those programs created for the sole purpose of increasing employment of eligible jobseekers with disabilities.

## Policy Partnership with a Purpose

Within the Rehabilitation Act there are three vocational rehabilitation programs established: General Rehabilitation programs (our policy partner which operates under the name of the Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation [DVR] in our state. DVR serves eligible jobseekers with various disabilities); Rehabilitation programs serving people with low vision and blindness; and, Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs (which are administered by sovereign tribal nations within the US.) The Washington State Rehabilitation Council (WSRC) and DVR have a partnership built on two common goals:

1. We want more Washingtonians with disabilities to be employed; and,
2. We want DVR to provide effective, equitable services in a timely manner.

Title 1, Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act defines the responsibilities of the WSRC and DVR to our partnership. The WSRC's collaboration is with the General Vocational Rehabilitation program in Washington State.

We are producing this report because, according to Title 1, Section 105 (c) (5) of the Rehabilitation Act, the WSRC is responsible for reporting to Governor Gregoire, Rehabilitation Services Administration Commissioner Rutledge, and the public on the work completed in service of this policy partnership in 2011.

## The Establishment of State Rehabilitation Councils

Many advocates over decades have worked to highlight and resolve issues that contribute to disproportionately high unemployment of people with disabilities. The current policy partnership between the WSRC and DVR is the direct result of effective advocacy by people with disabilities at a national level who have been long committed to the success of the publicly funded vocational rehabilitation program.

That commitment was most evident when a cross-section of advocates for disability rights mobilized to support the passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act was the first disability civil rights law to be enacted in the United States. The victory was diminished when the Department of Health, Education and Welfare delayed issuing the enacting regulations needed to implement the law.

By April of 1977, frustration mounted and disability rights advocates took direct action by leading sit ins in Washington DC, New York, and San Francisco to pressure Health, Education and Welfare to issue the regulations. While the protests in Washington DC and New York were short lived, advocates in San Francisco persisted. They occupied the offices of Health, Education and Welfare for four weeks. As a consequence Joseph Califano, the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, endorsed the regulations. The Rehabilitation Act is the federal law that establishes the publicly funded vocational rehabilitation program as we know it today.

The advocacy did not end in 1977. Since that time disability rights advocates have continued to work in service of a system that affords customers of the Vocational Rehabilitation program to be more engaged in creating a plan to be employed. During the reauthorization process of the Rehabilitation Act in 1993, advocates built on their tradition of effectiveness. They persuaded Congress to create State Rehabilitation Councils (under Title 1, Section 105) as a mechanism to support people with disabilities receiving vocational rehabilitation services to take an active role in shaping those services.

## The Washington State Rehabilitation Council

The Washington State Rehabilitation Council (WSRC) was established in 1994 by Executive Order 04-04. The WSRC is a 16 member, Governor appointed board of volunteers. Our members represent stakeholder groups including individuals with disabilities who are current or former customers of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; representatives of business, industry, and labor; a representative of the Client Assistance Program; Division of Vocational Rehabilitation staff; representatives of disability advocacy groups; parent education organizations; and partners from Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs. We also have members representing the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the State Independent Living Council.

The mission and vision that guide our policy partnership are:

### **Mission**

To support all individuals with disabilities to receive culturally competent vocational rehabilitation services which support their realization of power and pride and exceed their expectations.

### **Vision**

The Washington State Rehabilitation Council honors the unique, collective and diverse voices of individuals with disabilities to support the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and its customers to achieve employment outcomes by providing guidance, direction and recommendations to increase the quality and availability of vocational rehabilitation services.

The responsibilities of the WSRC in its policy partnership with DVR are defined under Title 1, Section 105 (c) (1-8) of the Rehabilitation Act. Later in this report those responsibilities, and the way the Council met them in 2011 will be explored.

## The Functions of the Washington State Rehabilitation Council

To achieve our mission and to advance the likelihood that our vision will be realized, the WSRC undertakes specific functions defined in Title 1, Section 105 (c) (1-8) including:

- Eliciting feedback from current customers of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to assess and analyze satisfaction with vocational rehabilitation services;
- Advocating for actions to improve service delivery for customers of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation;
- Providing advice, guidance, and recommendations to the Department of Social and Health Services on matters impacting the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's capacity to serve customers in a manner that aligns with the Rehabilitation Act;
- Contributing to the development of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's State Plan (a document required under federal law by the Rehabilitation Services Administration to identify the goals and priorities guiding service delivery for a three-year period) and tracking its implementation;
- Analyzing program and performance data to assess the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's performance on federal standards and indicators, and;
- Collaborating with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to develop and conduct comprehensive needs assessments and surveys of customer satisfaction.

Assembling and sustaining a dedicated, capable team is essential to assuring the Council is able to perform these functions in pursuit of our mission.

## Council Operations

### Council Structure

Although the Council operates as a unified body, most of our work is distributed among five committees. The Committees are:

- Executive
- Customer Satisfaction and Program Evaluation
- Employer and Rehabilitation Partnerships
- Member Participation and Recruitment
- Planning, Policy and Advocacy

**Executive Committee-** is responsible for tasks including strategic planning, preparing a resource plan for negotiation with DVR, making decisions about Council agendas, budget and staffing. The chair of the Executive Committee assures that each committee chair is making progress on work plan goals.

**Customer Satisfaction and Program Evaluation Committee-** is responsible for several key Council mandates. It sponsors quarterly customer forums and summarizes feedback from those forums for DVR leadership. Members of this committee review and discuss DVR program and performance data and receive basic information about fair hearings. In 2011 this committee was responsible for designing and completing the customer satisfaction survey.

### **Employer and Rehabilitation Partnerships**

**Committee-** examines how DVR builds inroads to employers and job opportunities for customers. This committee considers the strategies DVR employs to increase the visibility of the organization and the customers it serves within the community of employers.

### **Member Participation and Recruitment**

**Committee-** conducts surveys of Council members throughout their service to gauge emerging Council needs and to assure that member input is driving the Council work process. This committee also recruits new members.

**Planning, Policy and Advocacy Committee-** is responsible for drafting the WSRC contribution to the State Plan required by the Rehabilitation Services Administration. Together with DVR, this committee also co-sponsors public forums in communities across the state to receive public input on proposed changes to the State Plan when it is in draft form. In instances when changes to state law are proposed which may impact DVR, or when the Rehabilitation Act is facing reauthorization, the Planning, Policy and Advocacy Committee tracks developments and provides written comment on behalf of the Council.

Each January committees develop work plans. The plans identify the tasks they will complete during the year, assign who will take the lead on a task, and assign a timeline for completing the work.

### Member Appointments

The skill and dedication of our members make or break our success. Fifteen members served on our Council in 2011. The Rehabilitation Act requires that more than half of our Council members are people with disabilities. Most of our Council members who have disabilities have, at one point or another, utilized vocational rehabilitation services in Washington State or another state. A candidate for membership must meet the criteria for the position he or she is seeking. Membership criteria are specified under Title 1, Section 105 (2)(b)(i-xi) of the Rehabilitation Act.

In addition to assuring that candidates meet membership criteria, our Council staff and Member Recruitment & Support Committee members seek to recruit members who:

- Enjoy working in teams;
- Bring germane knowledge, applicable skills, or unique abilities to membership;
- Are motivated to serve and actively participate in our work; and,
- Reflect the political, geographic, economic, and cultural diversity of the people of Washington State.

The Council recruits a pool of candidates for membership by: publicizing upcoming vacancies in our quarterly newsletter and on our website; announcing vacancies at each customer forum; sharing recruitment information with community partners; targeting recruits who are affiliated with specific boards, state agencies, or organizations; and, leveraging the networks of existing members. Candidates submit their applications for Council membership directly to the Governor's Office. The Governor appoints members who serve at her pleasure. Our members serve for a term of three years. Members are eligible to seek reappointment to a second consecutive three year term if they wish.

In 2011, Governor Gregoire appointed Charity Marie Drummond as a representative of the State Independent Living Council on the WSRC. She reappointed Jim Larson to a second term representing business and industry.

### Member Training

To contribute effectively to our mission, Council members have to learn or demonstrate an understanding of subjects ranging from: the Rehabilitation Act, the vocational rehabilitation process, subject specific information about the stakeholder experience or group they represent issues of concern to people with disabilities, and the political environment in which DVR operates. Successful members are also familiar with how to work well in groups and how to break projects into manageable steps.

We do not expect members to bring all this knowledge to the process.

The WSRC makes an ongoing effort to help members gain the skill and subject matter expertise to succeed in their work. When a new member is appointed he or she receives a "Quick Reference Guide to the WSRC." Each year we also provide an orientation to Council work and augment our orientation with the option to complete the online training modules created for State Rehabilitation Councils by the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

In addition to providing this basic foundation we encourage members to provide informal mentorship for their colleagues if they possess expertise. When possible we also invite people who are not Council members to present salient information. Here are some examples of training opportunities WSRC members participated in, in 2011:

- **On January 20, 2011**, Michael Bailey, Board President of the National Disability Rights Network, joined the Council to discuss where advocates might find hope during difficult times and how to approach our work in a manner that reflects our values;
- **On January 20, 2011**, through funding provided by the Technical Assistance and Continuing Education grant (TACE) Paul Dziedzic, Coordinator of the Rehabilitation Leadership Institute at the Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation at the University of Washington, helped the Council identify strategic opportunities in our policy partnership with DVR for the coming year;
- **On April 28, 2011**, the full Council discussed Good to Great and the Social Sectors: a Monograph of Good to Great by Jim Collins. We explored whether Mr. Collins' approach to quality improvement would have applicability within DVR;
- **On April 28, 2011**, members were joined by Carl Johnston, Darcy Haughian, and Jennifer Bean. These DVR supervisors and staff provided insight for our members about the particular strengths and challenges of providing services in the Northwest corner of Washington State;
- **On April 29, 2011**, WSRC members were joined by a panel of Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation leaders from three programs including: North Intertribal Vocational Rehabilitation program; the Lummi Nation's Vocational Rehabilitation program; and, the Colville Confederated Tribes Vocational Rehabilitation program who taught us about the scale of barriers to employment in a tribal context;
- **On April 29, 2011**, members reviewed and discussed an article entitled, "Motivational Interviewing and Vocational Rehabilitation: A Review With Recommendations For Counselors and Administrators" (Manthey, Jackson, and Evans-Brown)JRA; Vol.42, Number 1, Spring 2011. The article reviews DVR's broad organization-wide implementation of Motivational Interviewing as a counseling tool. One of the authors, Peg Evans-Brown, and Teesha Kirschbam, a vocational rehabilitation counselor in the Mount Vernon office, discussed Motivational Interviewing as a communication tool.
- **On July 21, 2011**, Don Brandon, Director of the Northwest ADA Center (also a member of our Council) trained colleagues about the new regulations for the ADA Amendments Act;
- **On August 9, 2011** Mike Hudson attended a two day intensive training about motivational interviewing lead by Teresa Moyer, Ph. D;
- **On October 20, 2011** John Dickson, Area Director of the WorkSource based in Spokane, informed the Council about the services they offer;
- **On October 21, 2011** Bob Huven of the Client Assistance Program trained Council members about issues that lead to closure at application;

- **On October 21, 2011** David King, Lead Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor at DVR's Colville office, helped the Council understand the particular challenges associated with providing vocational rehabilitation services in a rural remote context;
- **On October 21, 2011** our members Susan Kautzman and Jim Larson trained fellow members on Community Rehabilitation Programs and the services they provide; and,
- **From October 22-October 28, 2011** Jana Finkbonner represented the Council at the meeting of the Conference of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) in Chandler, Arizona. While there she attended training provided by the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) and other training sessions including but not limited to training about transition from high school to work.

With the exceptions of the August 9 motivational interviewing training and the CSAVR conference in October, these training opportunities were provided to members during quarterly meetings to mitigate costs for additional travel. The Council did not compensate any trainer for his or her time. We appreciate the expertise they generously shared with us.



## Profiles of Members who served on the WSRC in 2011



**Jeffrey Abe-Gunter**, of Spokane, representing labor

Jeff has served on the WSRC since spring of 2004. He brings a mix of passion and pragmatism to his service with the Council. His active listening skills, approachable manner, and notable sense of humor make him stand out as a leader who brings people with divergent points of view together. In his professional life, Jeff works as a case resource manager for the Division of Developmental Disabilities in Spokane. His practical knowledge of the Developmental Disabilities service system, and his knowledge of collective bargaining, are also assets to the Council.



**Andres Aguirre**, of Olympia, representing the DVR Administration (ex-officio member)

Andres has been serving as the Interim Director of DVR since February of 2010. He continues to distinguish himself as a leader who is open to dialogue and input from others. He is the first Director of DVR to give time on the agenda of the Senior Leadership Team (the top decision makers within DVR) for the WSRC. Andres worked as a vocational rehabilitation counselor, unit supervisor, and program manager in the state office before serving as the director of the organization. In 2004, he served in Iraq as a member of the National Guard.



**Valerie Arnold**, of Elma, representing the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)

Valerie has a long interest and commitment to public education. She worked as a teacher for many years before bringing her talents to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. During her first term of service Valerie has developed an impressive familiarity with how vocational rehabilitation works. Valerie devotes her professional efforts to special education policy. Her strengths on our Council include drawing attention to what is at the heart of spirited discussions.



**Don Brandon**, of Mountlake Terrace, representing business and industry

Don is the director of the Northwest ADA Center. He brings a breadth and depth of knowledge about supporting successful reasonable accommodation for workers with disabilities and their employers. He supports his Council colleagues to consider an employer's perspective on vocational rehabilitation and often brings questions that would otherwise not be considered in Council deliberations. In 2011, Don trained Council members on changes resulting from the passage of the American with Disabilities Amendments Act.



**Sandra Carr**, of Spokane, representing the State Independent Living Council

Sandra concluded her service as a member of the WSRC in September of 2011. Since being appointed in the spring of 2004, Sandra considered the mission of the Council from a range of perspectives. She understands the vocational rehabilitation service system as a customer and as a professional who provides vocational evaluations. Sandra is passionate about the success of people who are Deaf or hard of hearing and also about assuring that people with psychiatric disabilities and their families receive the information and support they need to succeed.

**Charity Marie Drummond**, of Seattle, representing the State Independent Living Council

Charity was appointed to the WSRC in late September and has yet to participate in our work. We look forward to getting to know her and utilizing her skills.



**Jana Finkbonner**, of Bellingham, representing Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation

Jana works as the director of the North Intertribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program. She is an enrolled member of the Lummi Nation. Jana represented our Council at the Conference of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) in Arizona in September 2011. Jana also convened a panel of Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors from three nations to address the WSRC at our April meeting in Bellingham. Jana and her colleagues helped us understand the complexity of the barriers facing customers of Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs in our state.



**Vickie Foster**, of Seattle, representing current or former customers of vocational rehabilitation

In every group there needs to be someone who keeps it real. Vickie reminds us not to get hung up on jargon and to remember that we are considering decisions that matter on the ground. Never the first one to talk, Vickie gives all perspectives a fair hearing before weighing in with a down-to-earth perspective. In 2011, Vickie served on the Member Recruitment and Participation Subcommittee. Outside of her work with the Council, Vickie is an active volunteer on fair housing issues and issues regarding guardianship.



**Rudy Hernandez**, of Burien, representing Vocational Rehabilitation Professionals currently working in the field

Rudy has worked in the field of vocational rehabilitation for more than 16 years. He supervises the DVR office in SeaTac. Prior to focusing on employment for people with disabilities, Rudy worked to as a geriatric social worker specializing in serving older Latinos. He is also a Vietnam veteran. In 2011, Rudy chaired the Member Recruitment and Participation Subcommittee. He took a particular interest in welcoming new members and helping his colleagues understand the realities of providing VR services in the field.



**Mike Hudson**, of Bellingham, representing business and industry

Mike was elected by his Council peers to serve as our Chair in 2011. He became very interested this year in motivational interviewing, a counseling technique that DVR has embraced and encouraged its staff to adopt. He also invited the Council to consider how people with disabilities might use social media to craft more effective job searches. Outside of his Council leadership, Mike works for the Association of Washington Business, which is our state's chamber of commerce. He has a leadership role with the AWB Institute, an arm of the organization that focuses on workforce development policy and partnerships. Mike is an action-oriented person; he cares whether or not the vocational rehabilitation system works, because he wants the people it serves to achieve their potential as they define it. Mike has an extensive background in marketing and working with credit unions. He served in the National Guard for 17 years.



**Jerry Johnsen**, of Seattle, representing the Client Assistance Program

Jerry has worked as the director of the Client Assistance Program for 32 years. His breadth of experience with the vocational rehabilitation system in Washington State is helpful to his colleagues as the Council works to put the issues we learn about in context. Jerry is a passionate advocate who cares deeply about assuring that those serving DVR customers understand the relation between the Rehabilitation Act and the way services are delivered. He provided training for our members on issues that emerge when DVR is making eligibility determinations. Outside of his work with the Council and the Client Assistance Program, Jerry is an avid cyclist and photographer and has many other civic commitments.



**Susan Kautzman**, of Grandview, representing providers of Community Rehabilitation services

Susan is inclined to think first about what people and systems can do. She works for a Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) called EnTrust Community Services. She has a longtime commitment to supporting people with developmental disabilities to navigate service systems. Her depth of knowledge about vocational rehabilitation mixed with her practical streak is a powerful tool for the Council because when we are deliberating, she can help us move from the philosophical aim of a recommendation to a useful implementation strategy. Susan chaired the Council's Planning, Policy, and Advocacy Committee in 2011.



**Jim Larson**, of Olympia, representing business and industry

Jim Larson is the President and CEO of Morningside, a Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP). He has been working to increase employment for Washingtonians with developmental disabilities for 38 years. Jim first served on the WSRC from 1994 to 2000. After stepping away for seven years, he rejoined our ranks in 2008. Jim facilitates our quarterly customer forums. He brings one part Oprah one part timekeeper one part peddler of cookies and coffee three parts compassionate, sensitive listener; and a dash of sly comedian to the role of facilitating a public process. In 2011 served as the chair of the Employer and Rehabilitation Partnerships Committee.



**Vanessa Lewis**, of Tacoma, representing Washington PAVE, our state's parent education organization

Vanessa asked good questions about how DVR does its work. She enjoys listening to customers who attended the quarterly forums and demonstrated a particular talent for drawing out those who might have otherwise gone unnoticed. As a seasoned systems advocate with expertise in helping families of school-age children with disabilities developing Individual Education Plans, Vanessa is uniquely equipped to help the Council consider the challenges which transition-age students face in going to work.



**Martin McCallum**, of Olympia, representing the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

Martin has served on the WSRC since spring of 2004. He served as our Council Chair in 2008. He has always been an active leader chairing a subcommittee. In 2011, Martin chaired the Customer Satisfaction & Program Evaluation Committee. Under his leadership the committee designed and managed a major project surveying DVR customer satisfaction. Martin has worked in the field of workforce development for more than three decades and is a true civil servant. His great attention to detail and ability to understand how work products will be received by the public and state leadership is useful.



**Leandro Razo**, of Grandview, representing current or former customers of vocational rehabilitation

Leandro served his first year as a Council member in 2011, during which time he took in a great deal of information. He served on the Customer Satisfaction & Program Evaluation Committee where he weighed in offering thoughts about the customer satisfaction survey project. In addition to bringing the perspective of someone who has received vocational rehabilitation services, Leandro understands service delivery because he studied Human Services at Eastern Washington University.

## Resource Plan

Council operations are funded by taxes collected from state and federal taxpayers. The funds are allocated for DVR's use then, as required by Title I, Section 105 (d) 1 of the Rehabilitation Act, which states,

*"The Council shall prepare, in conjunction with the designated State unit, a plan for the provision of such resources, including such staff and other personnel, as may be necessary and sufficient to carry out the functions of the Council under this section. The resource plan shall, to the maximum extent possible, rely on the use of resources in existence during the period of implementation of the plan."*

The WSRC Executive committee prepares a proposed resource plan and enters into negotiation with DVR to secure those resources.

On May 26, 2010, the Council submitted its proposal in the amount of \$204,810. Andres Aguirre, DVR's Interim Director, approved the proposal. He also agreed that DVR would pay for the cost associated with acquiring the technical assistance necessary to conduct a survey of DVR customer satisfaction. Our Executive Committee appreciates the good faith and collaborative spirit with which DVR entered the negotiation.

## Council Meetings

Title 1, Section 105 (4) (f) requires that the Washington State Rehabilitation Council meet at least four times a year. It says,

*"The Council shall convene at least 4 meetings a year in such places as it determines to be necessary to conduct Council business and conduct such forums or hearings as the Council considers appropriate. The meetings, hearings, and forums shall be publicly announced. The meetings shall be open and accessible to the general public unless there is a valid reason for an executive session."*

The Rehabilitation Act also authorizes a State Rehabilitation Council to pay for the costs of travel, lodging, meals and reasonable accommodations needed to conduct Council business. Title 1, Section 105 (4) (g) states,

*"The Council may use funds allocated to the Council by the designated State unit under this title (except for funds appropriated to carry out the client assistance program under section 112 and funds reserved pursuant to section 110(c) to carry out part C) to reimburse members of the Council for reasonable and necessary expenses of attending Council meetings and performing Council duties (including child care and personal assistance services), and to pay compensation to a member of the Council, if such member is not employed or must forfeit wages from other employment, for each day the member is engaged in performing the duties of the Council."*

The State of Washington has been hard hit by the Great Recession. In 2010, our State Legislature passed Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 2671. The bill which was originally due to sunset on June 30, 2011, was continued, and remains in effect. It precludes Class 1 Boards who receive any state funding from meeting in person and from providing reimbursements to our members for costs they incur while doing Council business without receiving an exemption in advance from the Office of Financial

Management. The WSRC is designated as a Class 1 Board by the Governor's Office. Four times we sought and received an exemption to the policy in 2011. We met:

January 20-21, 2011-in Olympia  
April 21-22, 2011-in Bellingham  
July 21-22, 2011-in Tacoma  
October 21-22, 2011-in Spokane

## WSRC Meeting Preparation

Each quarter, with input from the Executive Committee, Council staff compiles a comprehensive meeting mailing. As a standard practice the mailing includes: quarterly meeting agendas, minutes from the previous meeting, and public notices; committee work plans, conference call minutes and any draft work under way in committees; DVR performance data, summarized non-confidential fair hearing information, information about developments from in state partners (such as other component programs within the Department of Social and Health Services [DSHS] our designated state agency, other departments or organizations providing comparable benefits), correspondence documenting key in state developments; articles or updates on national issues in vocational rehabilitation, and any information which will be presented or voted on during the meeting (that we are aware of in advance). The mailing is sent along with a meeting planning summary 10 days before the meeting.

## WSRC Meeting Structure

The WSRC meets for two full days each quarter. We reserve the first day for committee work, in-depth analysis of issues or training topics, and for the quarterly customer forum. The second day of the meeting is reserved for the work of the full council. During this time we consider motions, and receive reports from DVR, the Client Assistance Program, agencies or entities represented on the Council, and committees. We sometimes also include shorter general presentations on the second day of the meeting.

## 2011 Meeting Proceedings

In 2011 WSRC placed greater emphasis on engaging community partners, additional workforce development partners, other boards with missions related to increasing opportunity for Washingtonians with disabilities, and advocates. The following recap of our meeting proceedings reflects the strides we made collaborating with and learning from partners while assuring that efforts were not being duplicated.

### January 20-21, 2011-in Olympia

The Council holds elections each January. In 2011, the Council elected Mike Hudson, of Bellingham, representing business and industry, to be our Council Chair; and Don Brandon of Mountlake Terrace, also representing business and industry, to be the Council Vice-Chair. This is the first time that the Council has had representatives of business and industry serving as both Council Chair and Vice Chair.

We commenced the year with two goals: to accomplish our mandates; and to demonstrate that we understand why those mandates matter in the lives of Washingtonians, particularly those with disabilities seeking services from DVR. During the January meeting we invited two guests, one to address each goal. Paul Dziedzic, Coordinator of the Rehabilitation Leadership Institute at the Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation at the University of Washington; and, Michael Bailey, author of *Special Education: A Parent's Guide to Children's Success* and Board President of the National Disability Rights Network.

Paul Dziedzic led us in a process of identifying strategic opportunities in our policy partnership with DVR which resulted in establishing the following priorities:

1. Developing a shared understanding with DVR about which data points and other information will guide our dialogue about program evaluation and improvement for 12 to 18 months;
2. Educating decision makers about the important role comparable benefits, particularly community-based mental health services, play in achieving rehabilitation;
3. Conducting a survey to obtain customer input about how to improve VR services and;
4. Advocating for the budgetary and programmatic integrity of DVR.

We invited Michael Bailey to reflect with us about how we assure that our values remain evident as we pursue our responsibilities. He helped us explore our own values by sharing how he arrived at the principles that guide his policy advocacy. Bailey's moral compass regarding disability advocacy is centered on breaking down social isolation and segregation, challenging low expectations, and the notion that disability is unnatural. He did not mince words. Bailey stated, "If a policy does any of those three things, it should be condemned."

In reflecting on the content of Council meetings in 2011, Vanessa Lewis, who is in her second year of representing Washington PAVE on the WSRC, liked the balance struck at the January meeting by bringing guests with different perspectives on our work.

#### **April 21-22, 2011-in Bellingham**

At the beginning of the year the Council encouraged staff to invite a varied mix of partners to our meetings in addition to DVR. On April 29, with the leadership of Jana Finkbonner, the representative of Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) on the WSRC, members were joined by a panel of TVR leaders from the Lummi Nation's Vocational Rehabilitation Program, the North Intertribal Vocational Rehabilitation program, and the Colville Confederated Tribes Vocational Rehabilitation program, who illuminated the issues faced by the customers they serve.

There are 73 TVR programs operating in the US in 2011. These programs have had the opportunity to apply for funding since 1978. The Rehabilitation Services Administration provides funding through five-year grants. At the end of each grant, programs that wish to continue providing services may reapply for funding in a competitive process. There are 29 federally recognized tribes in Washington State, eight of which have vocational rehabilitation programs.

The panelists highlighted the scale and complexity of barriers to employment facing the Native Americans with disabilities they serve, for example:

- In 2005 the average Washington State unemployment rate was 5.5 percent, while the average rate for Native Americans in our state was 50 percent; and,
- From 2007-2008 the high school dropout rate for all Washington students was 21.4 percent. For Native American students it was 40.8 percent.

Despite these factors which further disadvantage customers served by TVR programs, they persist and often succeed. Part of TVR success can be attributed to a service model that allows them to serve people (and in some cases their families) holistically. Tribal VR programs can support customers to participate in spiritual ceremonies and other cultural activities that DVR cannot pay for.

Our guests explained what it was like to provide vocational rehabilitation services while working with multiple tribal cultures, languages, religious beliefs, and attitudes about people with disabilities. In some tribal communities people with apparent disabilities are supported by family and are less encouraged to engage in broader community activities. That is beginning to change. For example, a new group of people with disabilities is coming together at the Lummi Nation. They are openly identifying as people with disabilities.

Unlike the general community of people with disabilities in Washington State, in Native American communities those with less apparent disabilities are more likely to be in leadership positions.

Given the barriers TVR customers face, collaboration with a range of partners and resources, including DVR, is critical. Panelists from Bellingham expressed having a good relationship with DVR, but encourage ongoing communication.

Developing and sustaining mutual respect in the collaborations between TVR programs and DVR is important to the success of co-enrolled (meaning the customer has chosen to be served simultaneously by DVR and a TVR program) customers. Typically, DVR staff has more formal education than TVR counselors do. TVR counselors frequently possess relationships and cultural fluency that DVR counselors may not. The skills of each partner strengthen the customers' rehabilitation process.

Members of the WSRC fill out meeting evaluations and rate the value or impact of specific agenda items. In 2011, this panel presentation received the highest rating for content and value from our membership. WSRC members appreciate the diligence and impact of the eight Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs operating in our state at: Colville, Chehalis, Cowlitz, Lummi, Samish, Yakama, North Intertribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program, and South Puget Intertribal Planning Agency.

### **July 21-22, 2011-in Tacoma**

In July, Don Brandon, the Council Vice-Chair, who also directs the Northwest ADA Center, provided an introduction for his Council colleagues to the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act. The Northwest ADA Center provides technical assistance at no cost to government entities, job seekers and employers about reasonable accommodation in four states. During his presentation Mr. Brandon taught us what the new regulations say about service dogs and safe harbors. Susan Kautzman and Jana Finkbonner found the information they received from this presentation to be a highlight of 2011 because of its practicality and supporting documentation.

Later in the meeting we invited our Council Member Martin McCallum to review the input offered by stakeholders to Senator Patty Murray's staff regarding a Workforce Investment Act (WIA) reauthorization draft bill under consideration in the US Senate. Mr. McCallum is a policy analyst and a staffer of our state's Workforce Investment Act Board.

In his remarks to the Council, Mr. McCallum provided an explanation of the many programs included in WIA. He drew connections between the services those programs, including DVR, provide and the important impact they have on real people looking for work or educational opportunities. Mr. McCallum went on to explain the ways the draft reflected awareness of the needs of people with disabilities beyond the Title containing the Rehabilitation Act, and detailed the substantive comments. Several Council members identified this presentation as outstanding and applicable to our work for the clarity, breadth, and depth of the information provided.

Also in July the Council was joined by Dona Fuerst, DVR Training Manager; and Stephen Roldan, Statewide Coordinator for the Deaf for DVR. They discussed a training designed to increase the cultural competence and skill of DVR staff and the staff of Community Rehabilitation Programs to provide effective vocational rehabilitation services to hard of hearing, late deafened, Deaf, and deaf-blind customers. The training, which will be available in various locations over the course of several years, is a significant investment. To roll out the training initiative, DVR invested funding to support a regional conference called "Northwest Training Forum on Building Bridges to Successful Employment for People Who Are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing & Late Deafened." The conference, which took place on September 13-15, was a success. Learning about his initiative was notable to our members because in the last eighteen months we have seen an uptick in attendance and comment from people with hearing loss or deafness at our quarterly customer forums. The comments they offer reflect the challenges they experience in negotiating the service system. We are pleased that DVR is addressing these concerns by offering training.

### October 21-22, 2011-in Spokane

The members of the Employer & Rehabilitation Partnerships Committee invited Toby Olson, Executive Secretary of the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment (GCDE) to share information about the Disability Employment Initiative Grant that his board was awarded by the US Department of Labor. GCDE will receive \$1.8 million over three years for the purpose of supporting adult jobseekers with disabilities who are receiving Social Security benefits to access training and employment. The project will serve eligible people in Grays Harbor, King, Mason, Pacific, Snohomish and Thurston Counties. Participants will have access to a Disability Resource Coordinator, a Community Work Incentive Coordinator, and a Mental Health Peer Counselor. The Association of Washington Business (our state's chamber of commerce) will provide soft skills training certification and become an Employment Network which accepts Ticket to Work on behalf of its 7,500 member businesses. There will be work to identify the future hiring needs of local businesses and will train a pool of qualified applicants with disabilities to fill positions.

We were also joined by John Dickson, the Spokane Area Director of the Employment Security Department. Mr. Dickson left a career as an engineer to pursue his passion for workforce development in the community he grew up in. During his time with us, Mr. Dickson highlighted the resources and services available to job seekers at the WorkSource Center. He also shared data about the numbers of jobseekers with disabilities served there in 2010.

The minutes for each quarterly meeting are available for review on the Council website at: <http://www.wastrehabcouncil.org/MeetingMinutes.html>

## Efforts Made by the WSRC in 2011 to Consider Vocational Rehabilitation Services Statewide

The WSRC is responsible for considering systemic issues in the vocational rehabilitation service system statewide. When selecting the locations for quarterly meetings we try to strike a balance between keeping costs down and assuring that members have the necessary information to cultivate and sustain a statewide perspective regarding vocational rehabilitation services. As a standard practice, at least one of our four meetings is in Eastern Washington each year. In 2011, the Council met in Bellingham and Tacoma, two communities we rarely visit. The last time we met in Tacoma was October of 2006. 2011 was the first time we have ever met in Bellingham. Meeting in remote rural areas increases cost of travel and because the customer base is smaller in those communities we have sought to include information about the realities of smaller communities in other ways. One example of our commitment to understanding the issues facing DVR customers living outside urban areas was inviting David King to address the Council in October.

Mr. King is currently the only vocational rehabilitation counselor working for DVR serving people in Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens Counties. He brings a rare mix of training, experience, and skill to working with people who are living in rural remote communities without a large base of industry. Before turning his attention to vocational rehabilitation, David King worked with people facing addiction. He also served people with psychiatric disabilities in crisis. He has Bachelors and Masters Degrees in Social Work and also completed a Masters degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. A true rehabber at heart, Mr. King, "Can't think of a disability that would stop someone from going to work... it is all the other stuff..." In the tri-county area of Northeastern Washington State where he has been providing vocational rehabilitation services for 20 years, the other stuff is daunting for all jobseekers.

The area where David King's customers live includes two mountain chains and a national forest. In good weather it takes two hours to drive one-way from his office to the outlying communities. The area's largest ethnic minority is Native American. Members of the Colville, Kalispell and Spokane tribes live in the area and the Colville and Spokane people have reservations there.

Poverty is a big issue for residents of the tri-county area with and without disabilities. In August of 2011, the general unemployment rate for working age adults in Washington State was 9.1 percent. According to the US Census, in 2010, 13.4 percent of Washingtonians were living below the federal poverty line (latest available data). By comparison, in August 2011, the unemployment rate in Ferry County was 13.5 percent and 19.9 percent of residents were living under the federal poverty line. During the same period in Pend Oreille County the unemployment rate was 11.9 percent and 18.7 percent of residents were living in poverty. In Stevens County 11.3 percent of the general population of working age adults were without work and 16 percent faced poverty. According to David King, poverty is an issue that "overlays" the cases of three quarters of the people he serves. Many have long unaddressed medical needs. Now that Washingtonians who receive Medicaid are limited to three Emergency Room visits each year, even fewer people are receiving medical care to address their health concerns. King explained that it can be difficult to strike a balance between buying needed services and becoming more like a de facto insurance company than a vocational rehabilitation program.

The social service and transportation infrastructure available to residents of Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens County is sparse. There is no public transportation to speak of, just a van that provides transportation to non-medical appointments. The community-based mental health provider is unable to meet existing needs. There are only two private providers of treatment for people with psychiatric disabilities serving the three counties. The community college, which has historically been a resource for those seeking Adult Basic Education or an Associate's degrees, is understaffed and facing funding reductions.

In an environment where few jobs or comparable benefits exist, the choices available to counselors and customers are difficult. Mr. King said, "sometimes I talk with people about the possibility of relocating for work and that is not a pretty situation. Some people from this area have experience mining. There are opportunities to be found in that traditionally male field in Arizona, North Dakota, and Nevada. There are also opportunities for unskilled laborers associated with the mines, such as trucking, and people can send money home to their families."

In some cases distance learning is an avenue for Mr. King's customers to participate in training. While he understands that some online schools are well-regarded, Mr. King is skittish about investing in costly offerings from private, for-profit programs that sometimes leave students with debt but without the skills an employer requires.

Despite the web of challenging circumstances his customers face, Mr. King finds vocational rehabilitation to be, "the most complex and rewarding work I have ever done. Sometimes it is challenging after I review a file and look at the medical information it can be difficult to 'wipe the slate clean' and deal with situations and not personalities. People are the product of the environment they are wrestling with each day. Our challenge is to understand that environment." Mr. King concedes that when meeting someone once or twice a month it is unlikely that he can fundamentally change that environment, but he says, "When people say 'how are you going to get me a job,' I ask them what they are willing to do to become employed."

The WSRC regularly discusses why preserving comparable benefits is important. We hope as service reductions are being proposed and implemented, decision makers will look beyond discreet cuts to consider that some Washingtonians will face the loss of multiple services at once. The loss of multiple services acts as a force multiplier that increases barriers to employment, which makes the already tough road to employment harder still. Mr. King's presentation reminded us that even the most seasoned, skilled vocational rehabilitation counselors cannot help customers realize their potential unless other necessary resources are available.

## Review of the Specific Actions the WSRC Took to Achieve Our Mandates in 2011

### **Mandate:**

Title 1, Section 105, (h) and (f) of the Rehabilitation Act charge the Washington State Rehabilitation Council with garnering feedback from current customers of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation regarding their satisfaction with services they receive.

### **Action:**

The WSRC achieved this mandate in two ways in 2011: by holding quarterly customer forums and by designing, and conducting a survey to assess the satisfaction of DVR customers with the services they received.

## **Customer Forums**

### **Advance Work**

The Council takes several steps to increase the likelihood that customers will know that there is a quarterly forum, and can participate if they are inclined to do so. The steps include:

- Selecting a wheelchair-accessible forum location that is serviced by bus;
- Verifying that the nearest bus stop is accessible;
- Assuring that routes serve the stop in a timeframe that will support attendance;
- Sending notices of invitation three weeks ahead of time to customers with open cases where the forum will be held;
- Striving to foster a welcoming environment;
- Providing contact information for reasonable accommodation requests;
- Establishing structure and providing facilitation; and,
- Assuring that those with individual case concerns are connected with DVR staff or staff of the Client Assistance Program for follow up.

### **Forum Structure**

Since 2009 the Council has adopted a town hall structure for the quarterly forum. Jim Larson, who represents business and industry on the Council, serves as the facilitator of the forum. DVR staff and community partners also attend. Jim welcomes those in attendance, he introduces his Council colleagues and our purpose, he requests that those who offer comment focus on issues and refrain from disclosing the name of their counselor. We take comment in the order in which people sign in, for an hour and a half. The last half hour is reserved so that people can arrange follow up with DVR staff or staff of the Client Assistance Program.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Number of DVR Customers Invited</b>	<b>Number of DVR Customers who Commented</b>
January 21, 2011	Olympia	588	7
April 28, 2011	Bellingham	986	22
July 21, 2011	Tacoma	1227	16
October 20, 2011	Spokane	1900	17

### **The Substance of Comments made at the Customer Forums in 2011**

- In Olympia two of seven speakers were Deaf or hard of hearing and expressed that they had experienced barriers to communication during the vocational rehabilitation process that impeded their progress and success.
- In Bellingham and Tacoma we heard from parents of younger adults who were seeking supported employment, who explained that it became more difficult and frustrating for them to assist their sons or daughters to become employed while working with multiple systems such as DVR, the Division of Developmental Disabilities and Community Rehabilitation program staff in the process. These speakers encouraged stronger collaboration between partners, and clearer communication.

- In Spokane, forum participants who were working with WorkSource as well as DVR expressed that some of the classes offered at WorkSource were not meeting their needs.
- In 2011 we saw an increase in participation in forums from DVR customers facing additional barriers to employment created by conviction histories.
- We noticed more customers articulating a concern that age discrimination may be an additional barrier to employment for them.

***General Observations about Differences in Forum Feedback in 2011 than in Years Past***

- Our members noticed fewer comments expressing frustration with regard to timeliness of service provision than we have had historically.
- We heard fewer comments expressing general confusion about the vocational rehabilitation process.
- More customers expressed facing eviction, foreclosure, hunger, loss of benefits and general scarcity.
- We continue to notice customers with psychiatric disabilities who do not have access to mental health treatment on a regular basis, attributing their difficulties with the vocational rehabilitation process to other factors. While other factors may contribute to frustration, we are aware that reduced access to affordable, ongoing mental health services is a significant barrier to these customers. Currently 60 percent of the customers DVR serves have psychiatric disabilities. Of those customers, some identify the psychiatric disability as their sole disability, while others experience multiple disabilities including psychiatric disabilities.

***Customer Forum Follow-Up***

Each quarter the chair of the Customer Satisfaction and Program Evaluation Committee provides a written summary of what we heard at the customer forum to DVR's Senior Leadership Team and the Supervisors of the DVR offices in the county where the forum took place. Our intentions for creating the summary are to:

- Reflect on, document, and improve the Council's process of sponsoring the customer forums;
- Provide DVR with a record of what we heard while visiting the area;
- Recognize positive feedback received;
- Give local DVR staff an opportunity to assess if troubles shared by some who spoke are anomalies or whether they may represent systemic issues affecting a greater number of customers; and
- Invite local offices and DVR leaders in the State office to factor feedback gained from these forums as one data point to consider when undertaking quality improvement initiatives.

Summaries were provided on February 4, May 26, August 5, and October 25. Also, we shared customer feedback about the classes offered by the WorkSource in Spokane with Genie Ybarra, who represents DVR on Spokane's Workforce Development Council so that she could pass it on.

Members of the WSRC extend our appreciation to the customers of DVR who took the time to provide comment at the quarterly forums. We respect that the vocational rehabilitation process can be arduous and that sharing personal experience is a risk. We also appreciate Bob Huven and Jerry Johnsen of the Client Assistance Program and the staff of DVR who assist customer forum attendees to follow up on individual case concerns.

## Customer Satisfaction Survey

In 2011 the WSRC's most significant project was to conduct a survey to assess the level of satisfaction of DVR customers with the services they received. The Council's Customer Satisfaction and Program Evaluation Committee designed, led, and saw the project through to completion. The Committee is chaired by Martin McCallum and includes: Jeff Abe-Gunter, Sandra Carr, Susan Kautzman, Jerry Johnsen, and Leandro Razo. Going into the project the committee had three goals: first, to learn from customers for the purpose of making data driven recommendations about how service delivery could improve; second, to gather applicable information to aid in the development of the next State Plan; and third, to achieve our mandate under Title 1, Section 105(4)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act, which tasks us with analyzing customer satisfaction with DVR services.

### **Preparation**

The first step the committee took was to define what it wanted to know. They focused the project on learning whether customers felt that their DVR services were provided with respect and courtesy, and if the services they received addressed their barriers to employment. Next the Committee Chair and Council staff reviewed the survey instrument developed when the Council undertook a similar project in 2006, and DVR's own customer survey, to identify which questions might be transferable to the current survey project. Then each committee member was asked to contribute the top five questions he or she would like to include. After the questions were submitted, Council staff compiled a comprehensive list of questions and divided them into groups by topic. The committee reviewed the list and narrowed the list with the hope of deciding on 20 questions.

As the project evolved we decided that it would make sense to survey those who achieved employment after being served by DVR; those whose cases were closed without being employed;

and customers currently implementing their Individual Plans for Employment (IPE). We expected to ask them the same questions, with few exceptions. We then shared our project proposal, process, and draft survey questions with DVR's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) for their consideration and input in August. SLT members felt that the focus of the survey was appropriate and were supportive of the draft questions. Like the Council they thought it was sensible to survey people who had become employed, and those who had not. Rather than surveying one group of those currently receiving services, they suggested that we survey two groups so that we could compare and contrast feedback from those making progress through the vocational rehabilitation process at different speeds. The Council and the SLT analyzed data about the length of time DVR customers with plans for employment have open cases, to decide which cases to include in the survey sample based on their duration. Together we concluded that the random survey sample should include: those who achieved employment after being served by DVR; those whose cases were closed without employment, some customers with IPEs open for between 61 and 420 days, and the rest with an open IPE for between 961-1400 days. The SLT then agreed to fund the project.

Next the Council and DVR sought to contract with a partner with the technical expertise to conduct the research. Fortunately, our colleagues at the Research and Data Analysis Unit of the Department of Social and Health Services (RDA) were available to help.

We sought input from RDA staff about whether to conduct the survey on paper, online, or by telephone. We concluded that a telephone survey (with accommodations for Deaf customers or others who spoke languages other than English) would likely yield a high response rate. The drawback of the decision to survey by telephone was that a smaller sample of customers, 455 in all, would be invited to participate in the survey. We provided a \$20 gift card for groceries as an incentive for customers in the hopes of boosting our response rate.

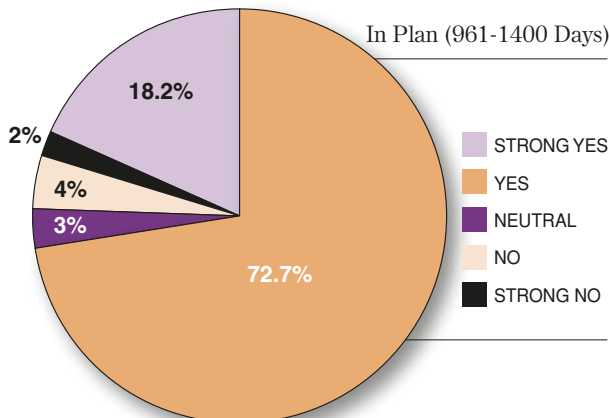
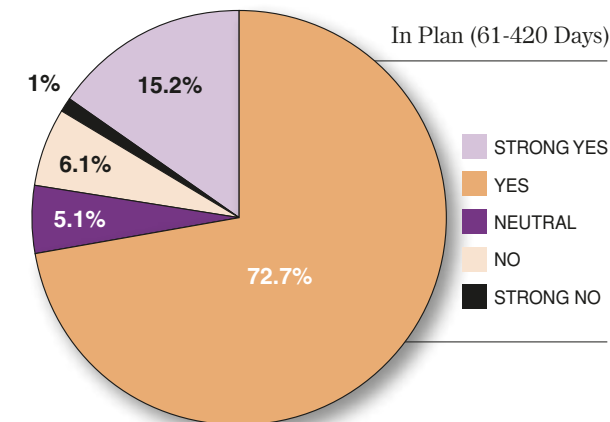
## Information on Survey Response and Data Analysis

The total number of DVR customers included in the survey sample was 455. The sample was randomly selected according to the parameters mentioned above. Of the 455 customers invited to participate in the survey, 404 responded. The response rate was 88.4 percent. This is an extraordinarily high response rate. Of those who did not respond, two were deceased, two moved out of state, and eight did not fully complete the survey because of issues related to comprehension. We do not yet know how many, if any, survey respondents utilized accommodations for non-English speakers or for people who are Deaf. We did not ask demographic questions about age, gender, race, and disability characteristics. We asked that when DVR provide the random data sample to RDA, that the full range of experiences of disability reflected in DVR's customer base be represented in the sample. For that reason we will not be able to provide an analysis that compares and contrasts responses of respondents by these characteristics. Importantly, we do not yet know the margin of error for the data collected. In some cases the sum of the graphs totals one tenth above or below 100 percent. We attribute this to a rounding function in the computer program that tabulated the data.

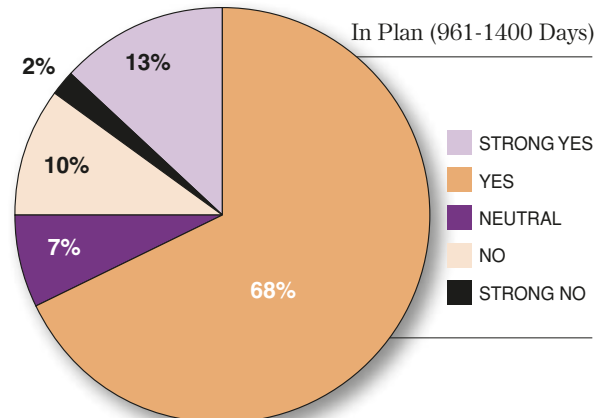
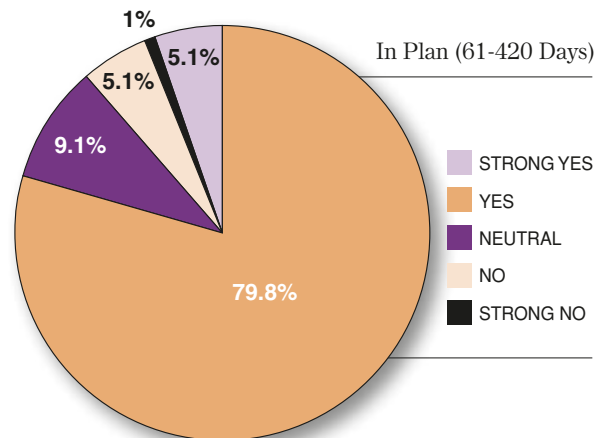
The preliminary analysis below was created in-house by Council staff. It is not the final survey report.

## An Overview of the WSRC's 2011 DVR Customer Satisfaction Survey Findings

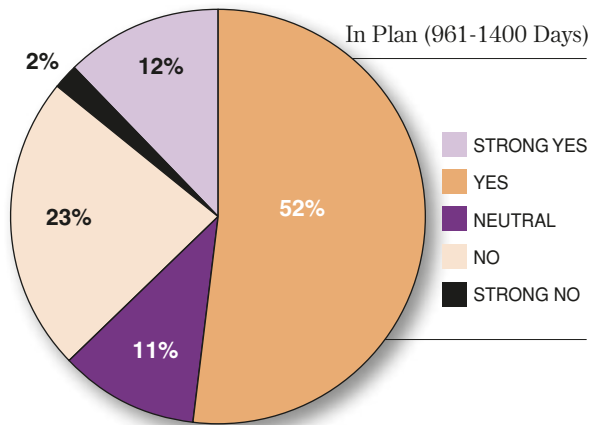
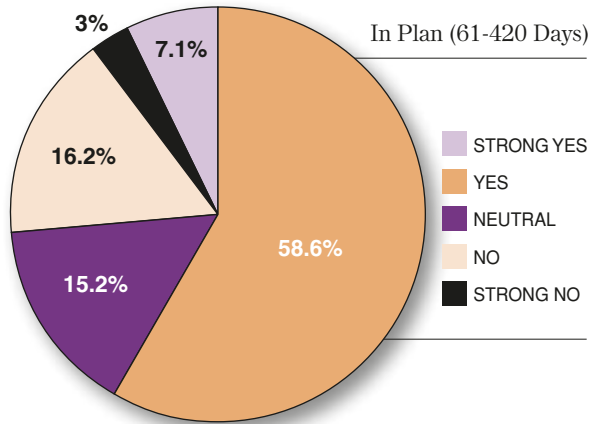
**Did the DVR orientation (or intake meeting) clearly explain the services DVR can provide?**



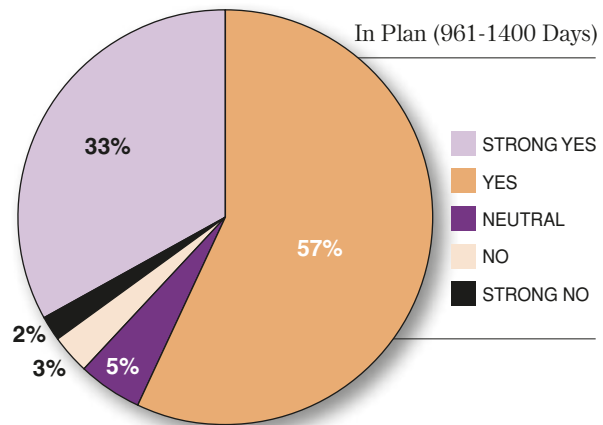
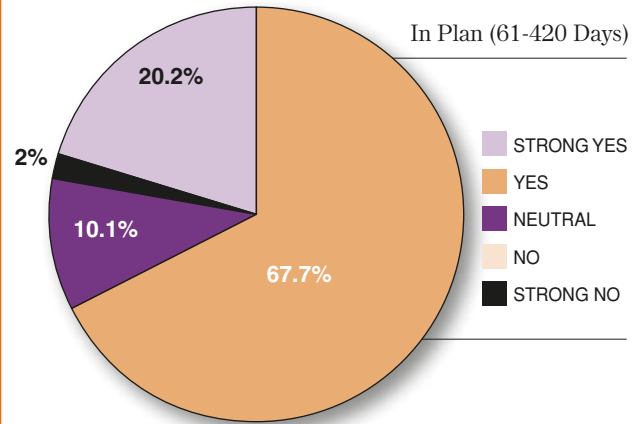
**Did your counselor tell you what your role would be in your DVR process?**



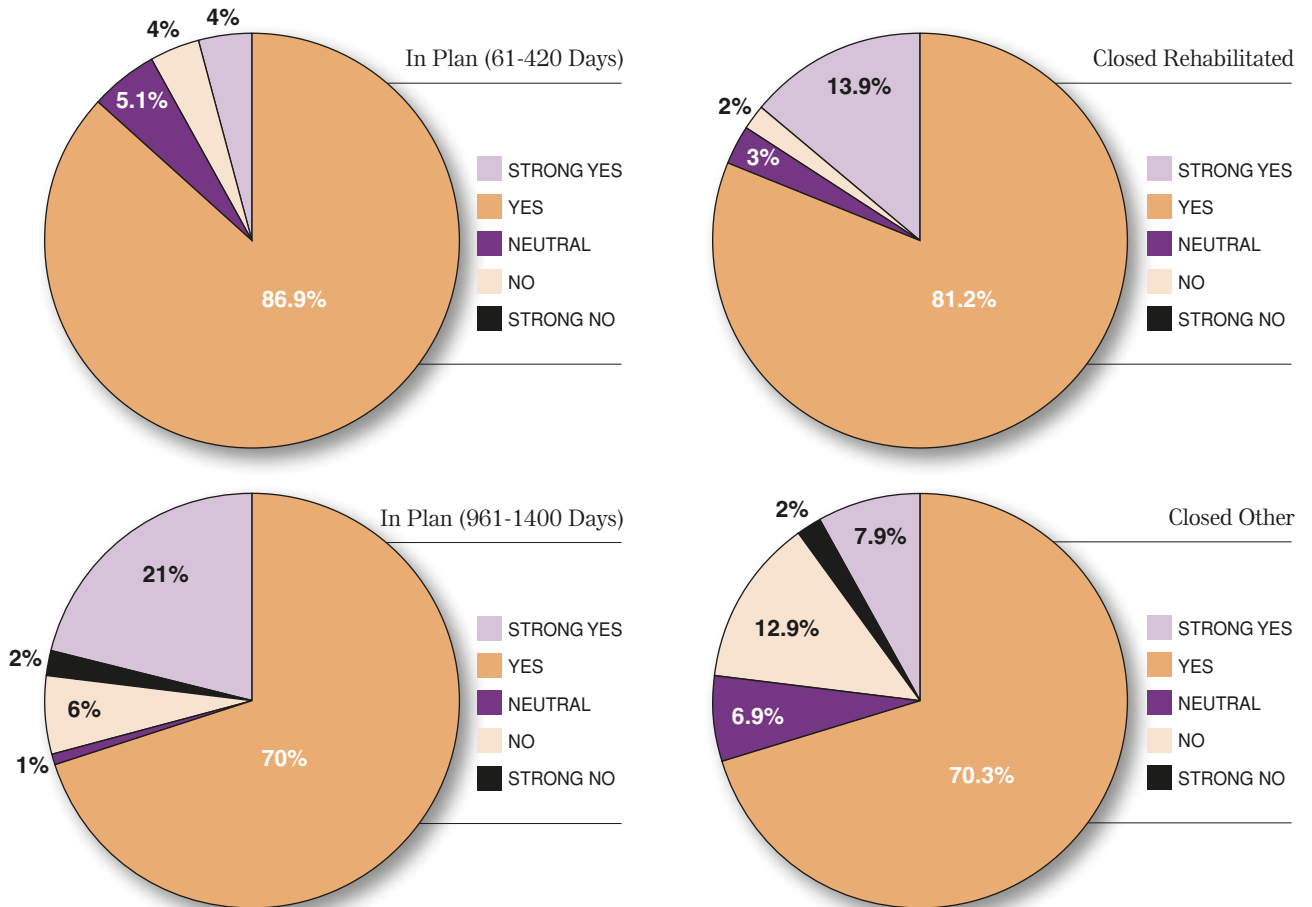
**Are you and your counselor clear about the next step you want to take in your employment plan?**



**Do you feel that your counselor wants you to succeed?**

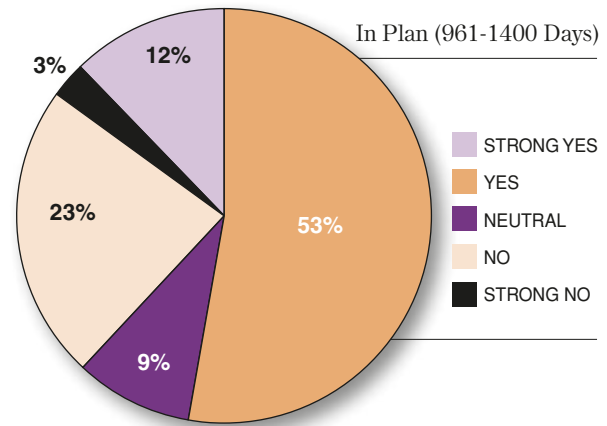
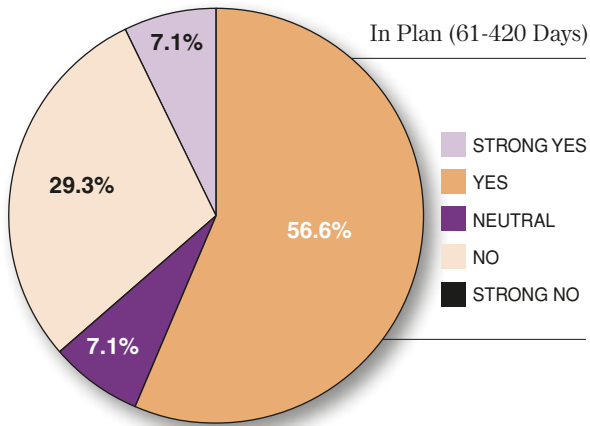


## Did you help to choose your employment goal?



The WSRC wishes to understand more about the relationship between three factors: length of time that a customer has an open plan for employment, whether the customer perceives that he or she is choosing their employment goal, and whether the customer achieves employment.

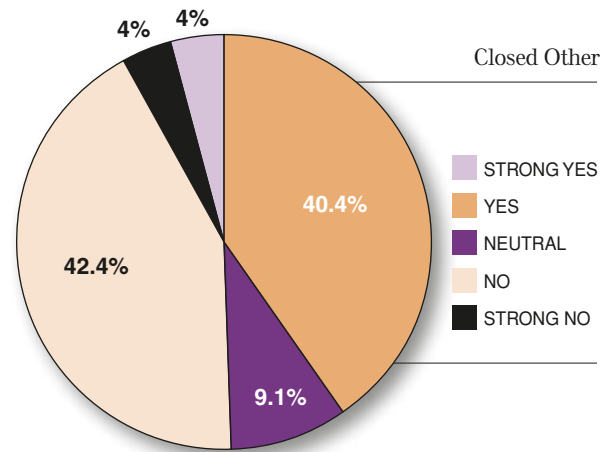
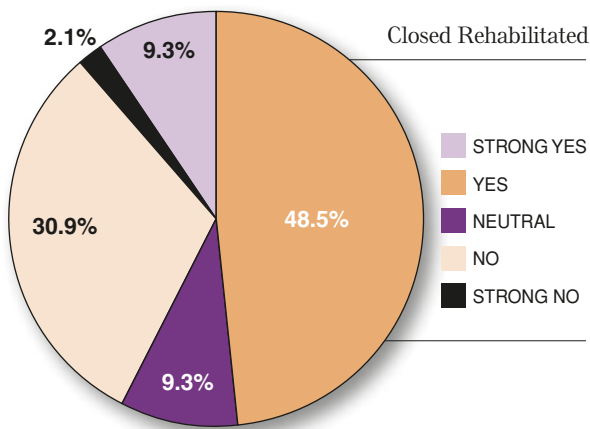
### Is DVR helping you learn skills that increase your chance to get and keep a job?



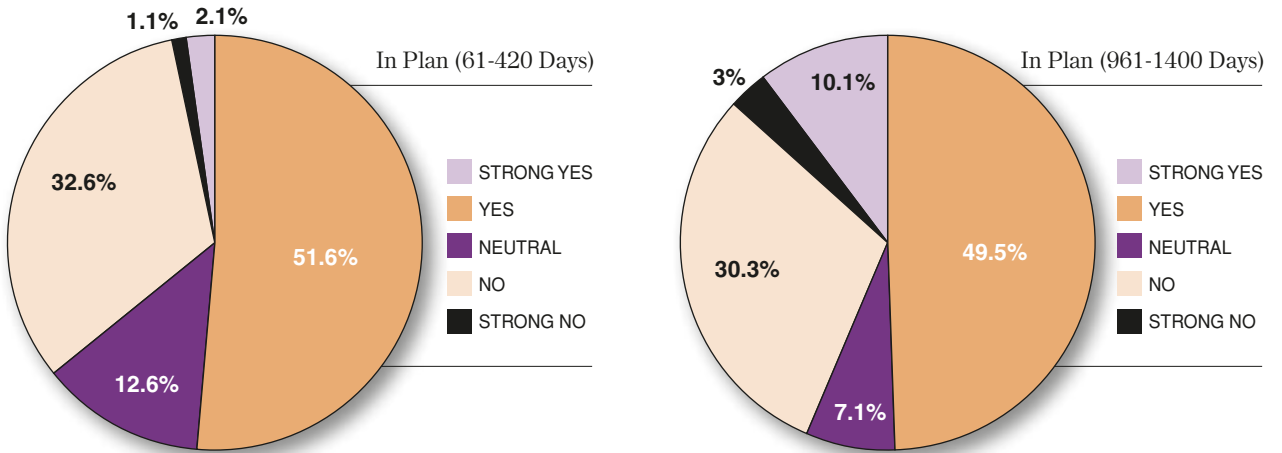
DVR customers possess varied skills when they apply for services. We do not know how survey respondents defined “skills.” We also do not know why the skills were not acquired during the rehabilitation process, or whether the acquisition of a particular skill would have increased the chance of getting or keeping a job.

The WSRC encourages DVR to conduct further research to explore the basis of this customer perception.

### Did DVR help you learn skills that increased your chance to get and keep a job?

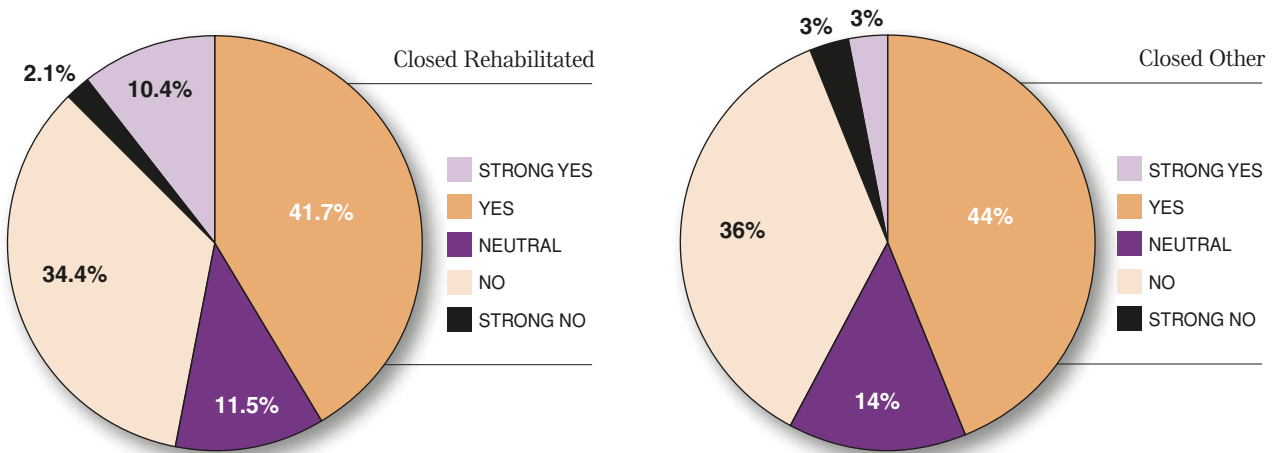


**Is DVR helping you work with disability issues that have prevented you from getting a job?**



Because those “in plan” are people still being served by DVR, they may yet receive supports or services in the vocational rehabilitation process to address the barriers to employment they face.

**Did DVR help you work with disability issues that have prevented you from getting a job?**

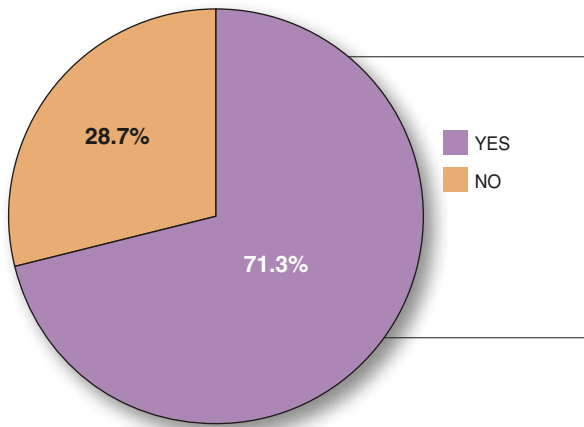


The barriers to employment that a DVR customer presents in his or her case are always individualized. Barriers may arise from more than one factor. The survey data we have do not provide enough information to understand why a high percentage of respondents do not think their barriers to employment were addressed.

The data do not tell us whether there is a correlation between diminished availability of comparable benefits and unaddressed barriers.

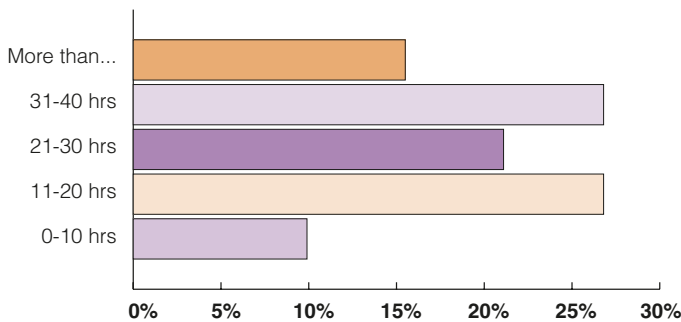
Because the purpose of vocational rehabilitation is to address barriers to employment, and because DVR's own internal statewide case review identified that progress could be made on addressing barriers to employment, the WSRC encourages DVR to conduct further research to understand more about the causes of this finding.

### Are you employed now?



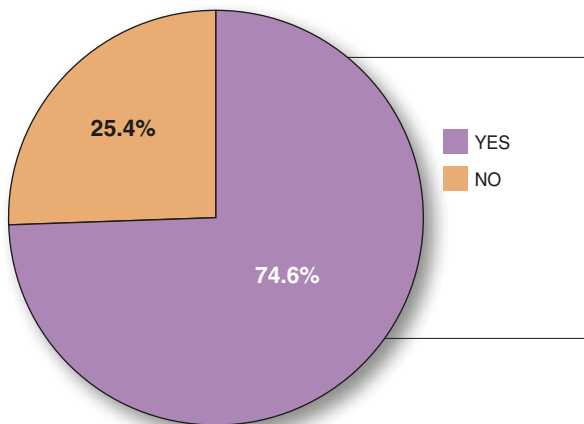
The WRSC does not know whether or not it is typical that 28 percent of customers who became employed after working with DVR would become unemployed. To meet the legal definition of achieving a successful rehabilitation, a DVR customer must get and keep a job for 90 days. The survey sample was pulled in September and research was conducted in October and November. The Council will be taking a closer look at how long people included in the sample had been employed before being surveyed. Assigning meaning to the data requires further investigation.

### How many hours per week are you working?



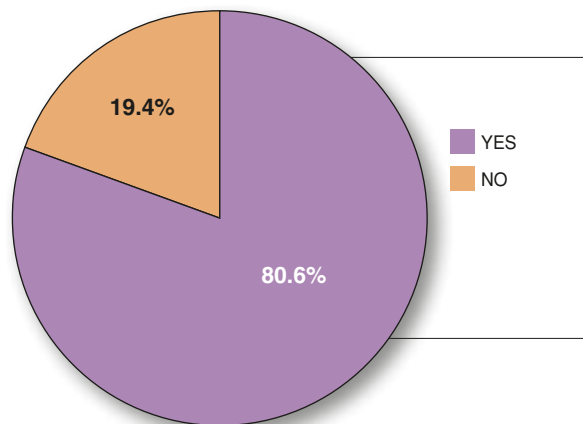
The WSRC did not include a question on the survey to determine whether or not respondents were receiving benefits from the Social Security Administration, therefore we cannot determine if there is a correlation between those working fewer hours, and those receiving Social Security benefits.

### Are you working as many hours as you want to work?



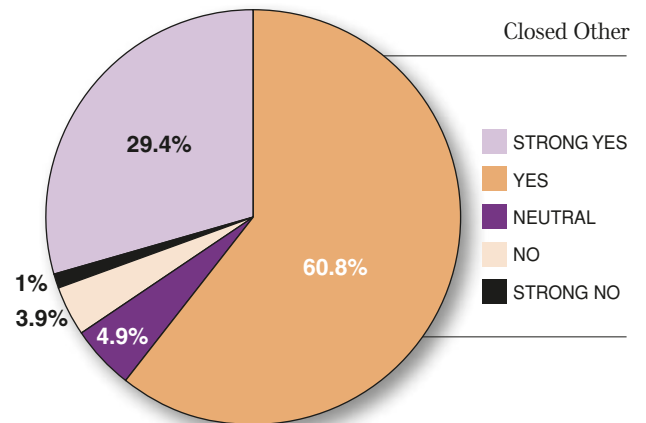
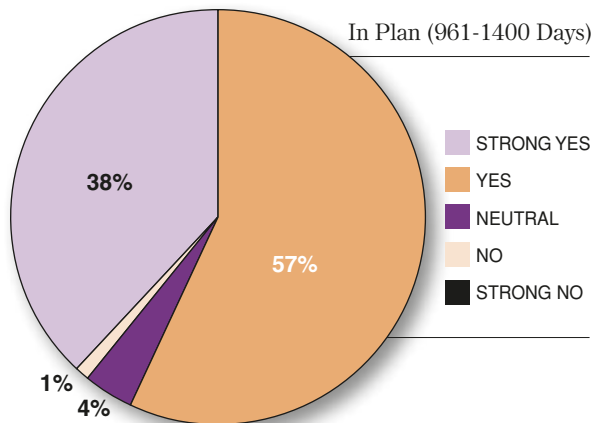
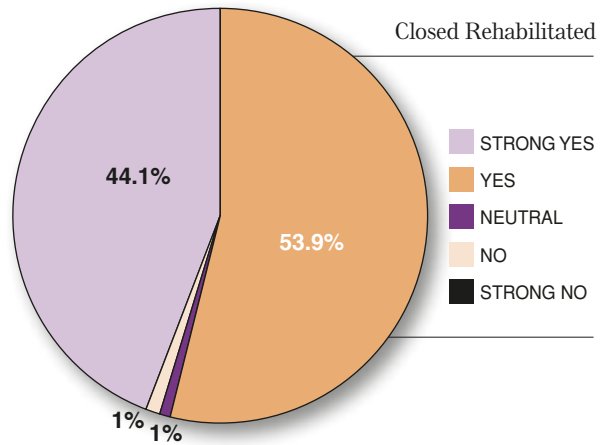
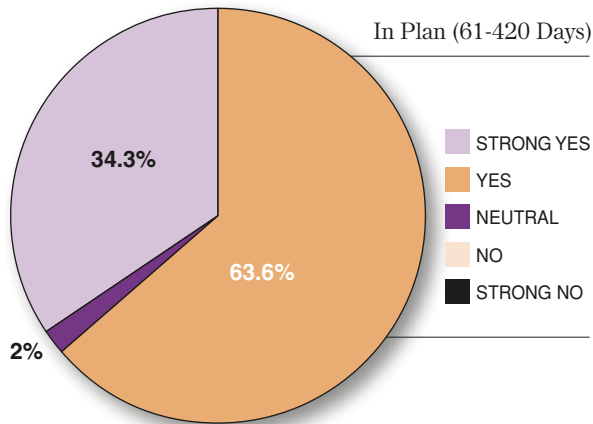
We do not have data to help us understand what, if any, influence the economy is having on the number of hours these customers are working.

### Are you better off financially than you were before receiving DVR services?



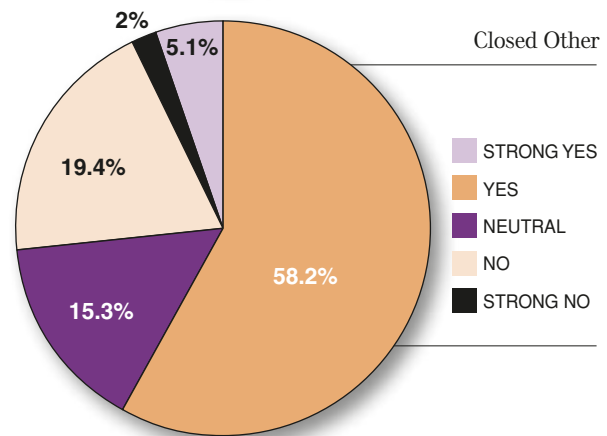
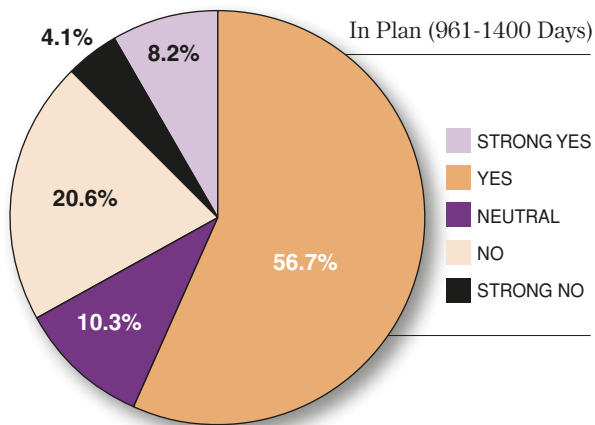
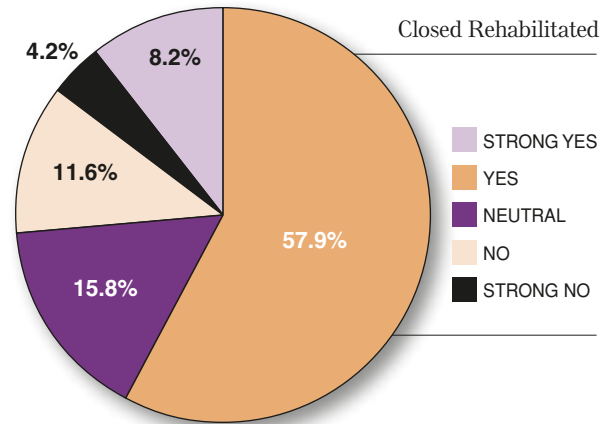
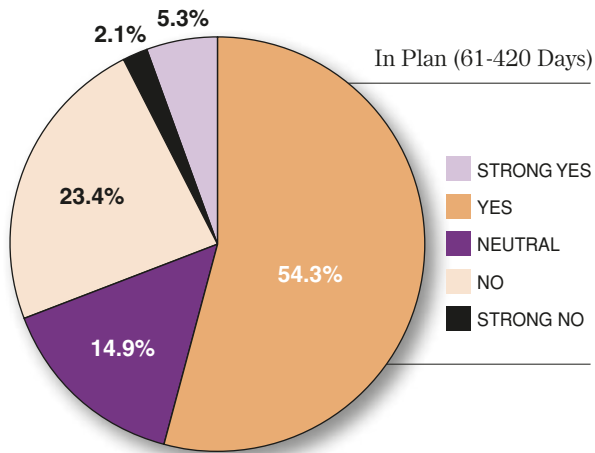
Customer wage at closure is one of the indicators RSA uses to evaluate Vocational Rehabilitation Programs. The Federal standard does not presume wage equality between workers with and without disabilities. It defines success as whether a person with a disability earns 52 cents on the dollar of the state average hourly wage. DVR has not met that standard for four consecutive Federal Fiscal Years. The WSRC wonders if there is a correlation between not passing the standard and the response of 19.4% of those surveyed.

**Do you think DVR Staff treated you with courtesy and respect?**



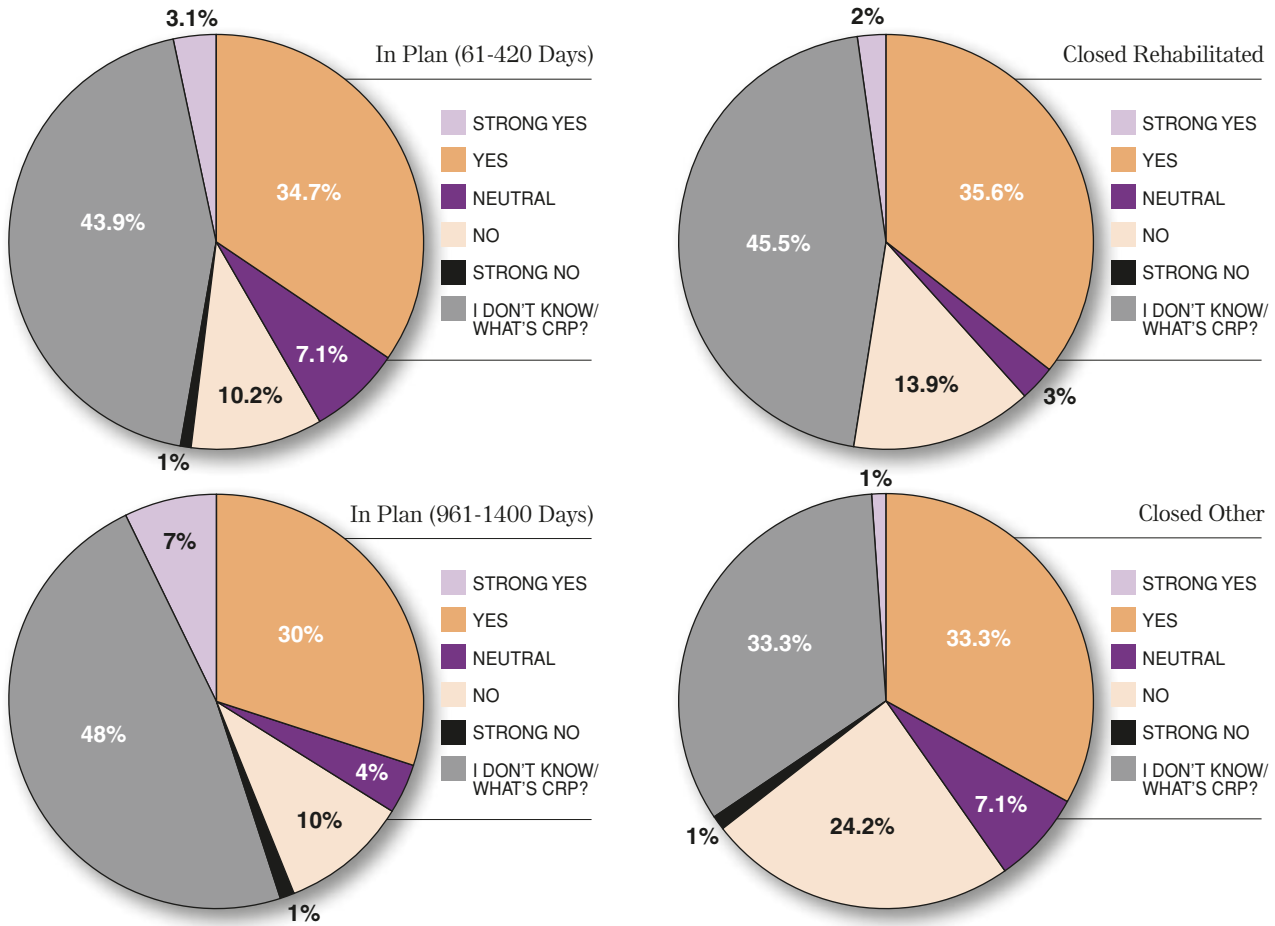
We found it notable that over 90 percent of survey respondents confirmed feeling treated with courtesy and respect by DVR staff.

**If you need services DVR doesn't offer, do/did staff tell you where you can get those services?**



We do not know what services customers sought. We do not know if necessary services were available to refer to.

**If you need services from a Community Rehabilitation Program provider (CRP), do/did you get to choose the CRP?**

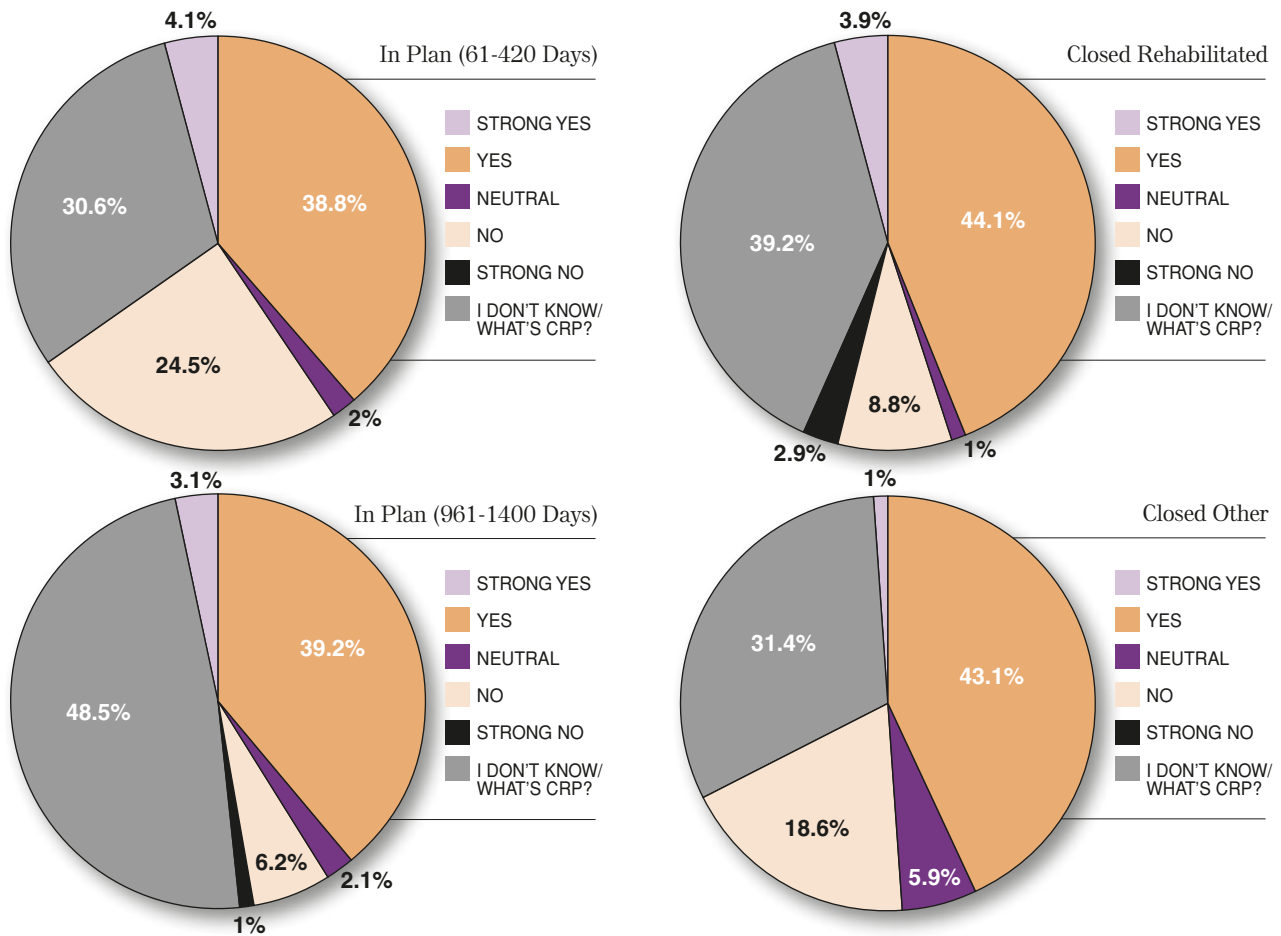


DVR currently contracts with 116 Community Rehabilitation Programs. A Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) is an organization (that can either be structured as a for-profit organization or a not-for-profit organization) which provides vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities to enable those individuals to maximize their opportunity for employment. The services that DVR contracts with CRPs to provide include:

1. Vocational evaluation services
2. Trial work experience or community based assessment services
3. Job placement
4. Intensive training services and
5. Job retention services

Typically the segment of DVR's customer base that is most likely to be served by CRPs are customers with developmental disabilities who are working to achieve supported employment. We notice that few survey respondents recognized what CRPs are, and the role they play in the rehabilitation process for some customers.

**Did staff tell you the Client Assistance Program (CAP) can help solve issues in your case?**



We notice that a high percentage of customers are unfamiliar with the Client Assistance Program. We do not know what to attribute the unfamiliarity to. There are at least three points in a vocational rehabilitation process where customers are to be alerted to the existence of the Client Assistance Program.

**Next Steps:**

In the coming months the WSRC will work with RDA to evaluate the data by area. A final report will be produced and findings will be shared with DVR and other interested parties. The WSRC will be happy to discuss our survey with any other State Rehabilitation Councils across the country working to develop their own survey project.

**Mandate:**

Title 1, Section 105, (c) (3) and (4) requires the Washington State Rehabilitation Council to partner with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to develop and conduct comprehensive needs assessments.

**Action:**

We did not conduct a comprehensive needs assessment in 2011. DVR and the WSRC last completed this project in 2009. The next comprehensive needs assessment will be conducted in 2012.

**Mandate:**

Under Title 1, Section 105, (c) (3), the Rehabilitation Act requires the Washington State Rehabilitation Council to make recommendations to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) for the purpose of improving service delivery. It further stipulates that the Council provide advice and recommendations to the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

**Actions:**

*Meetings between the WSRC and DVR Leadership*

The WSRC and DVR's Senior Leadership Team meet on a regular basis to discuss emerging issues. Because assuring ongoing communication is the basis of having the necessary access to offer guidance or recommendations, and because DVR has been increasingly open and available to communicate with our Council we want to document and commend their commitment to dialogue:

Meeting Date	Key Issues Discussed	Actions
January 24, 2011	Council election results, priorities Established by WSRC for 2011	
February 15, 2011	WSRC wants to understand whether staffing levels are meeting growing demand for service	SLT agreed to meet with WSRC to discuss program data reports as needed.
March 29, 2011	Employer Relations	Jim Larson, Chair of WSRC's Employer and Rehabilitation Partnerships Committee, presents WSRC recommendations on employer relations strategies for discussion. DVR shared additional actions taken.
August 22, 2011	Customer Satisfaction Survey Project	Identified parameters of survey sample, agreed on survey focus, draft questions and next steps.
September 26, 2011	Proposed reductions to comparable benefits	

## Recommendations and Guidance Offered to DVR by the WSRC:

### **Employer Relations**

In 2010, the WSRC's Employer and Rehabilitation Partnerships Committee focused on learning more about the approach DVR was taking to building relationships with employers. On March 17, 2011 we provided our analysis of the approach and offered recommendations. The text of our analysis and recommendations is excerpted below:

"Based on what we learned in 2010 we are writing to provide the Senior Leadership Team with two objectives:

1. To provide our analysis of DVR's current approach to employer relations; and
2. To make recommendations for your consideration.

Our purpose for providing analysis and recommendations is to assure that when the economy rebounds, DVR is well positioned to build strategic and effective relationships with employers that will yield an increased number of quantifiable job offers for DVR customers.

Our Analysis of DVR's Current Approach to Employer Outreach and Employer Relations

- DVR contracts with Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) across the state to undertake a significant portion of employer outreach, however, DVR is not engaging in ongoing dialogue or collaborative analysis with contractors to assess results or analyze practices;
- DVR's outreach efforts are event-based and focused on large employers;
- When DVR makes contact with the leadership of statewide or national employers, there is not a mechanism within the organization for quantifying the impact of that contact;

- In instances when statewide or national employers have franchises or affiliates in local communities, we could not identify a mechanism within DVR to leverage its statewide outreach efforts to identify local job opportunities and fill job openings;
- There does not appear to be a defined role for local DVR staff to play in connecting customers to employers; and
- DVR has little organizational capacity to conduct outreach with employers because it has chosen to have one DVR employee who is responsible for employer relations. The subcommittee is concerned that this does not promote sustainability.

### **Recommendations**

We respectfully recommend that DVR:

1. Develop and sustain ongoing dialogue with CRP partners for the purpose of analyzing specific practices and assessing whether the employer contacts DVR pays for, lead to job offers for customers.
2. Develop and implement outreach strategies targeting mid-sized and smaller employers on an ongoing basis.
3. Develop and implement tracking tools to quantify outputs and outcomes of all employer outreach activities and contacts.

For example, An Employer Relations Specialist makes one presentation to Boeing executives. During that contact he or she learns "x" information about upcoming openings in Everett, Renton or Kent. The Employer Relations Specialist shares specific leads with DVR staff in Everett and Kent offices to target job-ready customers with opportunities. The Employer Relations Specialists receives quarterly reports from each area quantifying how many specific leads resulted in customers applying for work, securing interviews, being hired, and achieving successful rehabs.

4. Define a narrow and streamlined role for local DVR staff which encourages them to take an active role in connecting customers and employers.
5. Give positive recognition and reinforcement to local counselors who develop the skills and relationships needed to connect customers with employers (during unit meetings, statewide management team meetings, publications, and during performance reviews).
6. Develop a revised organization-wide infrastructure for sustaining an outcome-based approach to building relationships with small, mid-sized, and large employers to implement at the first sign of economic recovery.”

During our meeting with the Senior Leadership Team on March 29, 2011, we discussed the analysis and recommendations. As the discussion unfolded, some on the SLT provided examples of actions DVR was taking that they hoped the Council would factor before drawing conclusions or formalizing recommendations. In some cases they contended that the WSRC's analysis was not correct. In subsequent months the Employer Relations position was vacated. This position remains unfilled. We look forward to ongoing dialogue about expanding relationships between DVR and employers in 2012.

### **Continued Follow –Up by WSRC on American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Expenditures**

Since 2009, when the federal government awarded states one-time funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), \$8.8 million was allocated to DVR. The WSRC has been closely following how the money was spent and has been interested in the outcomes achieved. On August 19, 2011 we sent a letter of inquiry to DVR asking:

- “1. If the funds were used to serve people with disabilities, how many people with disabilities is DVR anticipating serving per project?
2. How many jobs does DVR anticipate creating or saving per project?
3. How much does DVR anticipate spending per job saved or created?
4. How much money was spent on projects related to employer outreach?
5. If any of the projects were designed to support outreach to employers, how did DVR assess if the project was successful?”

DVR responded to our inquiry in September by furnishing us with a list of project titles and the amount of money allocated to each. Little in the way of anticipated outcomes was provided. Since contractors will be paying for project expenses through December 31, 2011, final outcomes are not yet known.

### Meetings between the WSRC and the Leadership of DSHS

Together with the DVR Director, the WSRC Chair and Director met with the DSHS Chief of staff to discuss the following issues in 2011:

Meeting Date	Key Issues Discussed	Actions
January 24, 2011	Introduction to WSRC's 2011 priorities	
March 17, 2011	Extended unfilled vacancies	Approval of DVR's hiring plan eight weeks after the meeting
December 13, 2011	Customer Satisfaction Survey Results	

#### Mandate:

Title 1, Section 105 (c)(3) requires the WSRC to contribute to the development of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's State Plan (a document required under federal law by the Rehabilitation Services Administration to identify the goals and priorities guiding service delivery for a three-year period) and tracking its implementation. Because DVR developed a full new state plan in 2009, RSA required it to undertake a State Plan Update only. This is a less involved process than developing a new State Plan.

#### Actions:

The WSRC took three actions to support the development of DVR's State Plan Update including:

- Submitting Section 4.2 (c) of the State Plan Update (the section in which we report on our policy partnership with DVR) on March 23, 2011;
- Providing written recommendations from our Planning Policy and Advocacy Committee to DVR about the process of updating the plan on March 24, 2011 (excerpted below); and
- Facilitating three State Plan Public Forums in Tumwater, Spokane, and Lynnwood during May and June.

Following are the recommendations we made about the process of completing the State Plan Update:

“As we look ahead to the next part of our participation in the development of the State Plan Update, which will be to offer comment of proposed changes to the plan, the Council recognizes that DVR is working with a short timeframe. We know that the staffer coordinating the submission of the plan is working half-time on multiple projects. With this knowledge we respectfully make the following recommendations:

1. The WSRC recommends that DVR update only those attachments that require changes to be factually accurate.
2. The WSRC recommends that DVR forego making substantive changes to the content of the attachments, particularly:
  - ATTACHMENT 4.11 (c) (1)—Goals and Priorities; and
  - ATTACHMENT 4.11 (d) — State Strategies and Use of Title 1, Innovation & Expansion Funds and Assoc. Activities.
3. The WSRC recommends DVR focus available staff time on updating ATTACHMENT 4.11 (e) (2) Evaluation & Report on progress in achieving goals.

4. The WSRC recommends that the Senior Leadership Team analyze the root factors which have helped or hindered DVR in making progress on the goals and priorities within the current plan for the purpose of getting an early and strategic start on the next Full State Plan.
5. The WSRC recommends that the Senior Leadership Team implement strategies for using the State Plan as a living document between updates, and;
6. The WSRC recommends DVR use the public input garnered from the May 2011 State plan forums to inform the development of the next Full State Plan.”

**Mandate:**

Title 1, Section 105 (C)(8) authorizes the WSRC to “perform such other functions, consistent with the purpose of this title, as the State Rehabilitation Council determines to be appropriate, that are comparable to the other functions performed by the Council.”

**Actions:**

*Sharing Our Work*

The WSRC produced and distributed quarterly online newsletters in January, May, August, and November. The newsletter is posted on the Council website and is sent to a distribution list that includes 448 people.

*Advancing 2011 Priorities*

The WSRC is not required to establish priorities for our work, but we thought it appropriate to do so this year. Here is our assessment of the progress we made on those priorities

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Status of Progress</b>
<i>Establishing common understanding with DVR about data points for program evaluation</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We initiated a discussion with the SLT about this topic on 3/29/11;</li> <li>2. We collected information on the customer survey to aid us in identifying germane data points.</li> </ol>		<b>Moderate</b>
<i>Educating decision makers about comparable benefits</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. WSRC Chair represents Council on mental health consortium;</li> <li>2. Council makes quarterly effort to learn about available comparable benefits;</li> <li>3. WSRC and DVR discuss importance of comparable benefits with DSHS in January and March; and,</li> <li>4. The WSRC followed cuts proposed by Departments and the State Legislature throughout the year.</li> </ol>		<b>Minimal</b>

<p>Conducting a survey to obtain customer input about how to improve vocational rehabilitation services</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Multiple meetings and conference calls;</li> <li>2. Proposed list of questions;</li> <li>3. Project proposal;</li> <li>4. Survey instruments;</li> <li>5. Memorandum of understanding with RDA;</li> <li>6. Raw survey data.</li> </ol>	<p>Findings to drive decision making about program improvement</p>	<p><b>Completed with Excellence</b></p>
<p>Advocating for the budgetary and programmatic integrity of DVR</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The sum of our 2011 work as a Council is the output for this priority.</li> </ol>	<p>Decision makers in DSHS are aware tht DVR has an outspoken program constituency.</p> <p>2. Decision makers in DVR know that the WSRC is not a rubber stamp. Customers who attended customer forums in 2011 were informed how their feedback would be shared for the purpose of program improvement.</p>	<p><b>Significant</b></p>

According to the Rehabilitation Act, in Title 1, Section 105, (c )(1)(A) (B) and (C), the Washington State Rehabilitation Council is mandated to analyze program and performance data to assess the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation’s performance on federal standards and indicators.

**DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES**

Standards and Indicators for Federal FY starting 10/01/2010 through 09/30/2011

<b>Evaluation Standard 1</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Pass/Fail</b>
<b>Indicator 1.1:</b>			
The number of individuals achieving employment outcomes during the current performance period compared to the previous performance period.	2,676	2,765	Pass
<b>Indicator 1.2:</b>			
The percentage of individuals receiving services under an individualized plan for employment who achieve employment outcomes.	55.80%	52.65%	Fail
<b>Indicator 1.3:</b>			
Competitive employment outcomes as a percentage of all employment outcomes.	72.60%	98.55%	Pass
<b>Indicator 1.4:</b>			
Competitive employment outcomes for individuals with Significant Disabilities as a percentage of all individuals with employment outcomes.	62.40%	97.10%	Pass
<b>Indicator 1.5:</b>			
The ratio of the Average VR Hourly Wage to the Average State Hourly Wage.	0.52	0.52	Fail
<b>Indicator 1.6:</b>			
The percent of individuals achieving Competitive Employment Outcomes who report their own income as Primary Source of Support at Closure as compared to at Application.	53.0	61.8	Pass
<b>Indicator 2.1:</b>			
Access to services for Minorities as measured by the ratio of the Minority Service Rate to the Non-Minority Service Rate.	0.80	0.92	Pass

## Advocating for Social and Economic Justice

The work of the WSRC could mistakenly be undervalued if one concluded that our purpose was to solely advocate on behalf of the vocational rehabilitation program. That is only part of our charge. Our larger purpose is to advance a cultural shift that empowers Washingtonians with disabilities to realize their full potential as they define it. Programs do not do that, people do.

One thing that grand notions and baby steps have in common is that they require the expenditure of more than motivation. Ideas need to be funded. That is why we advocate for an effective vocational rehabilitation program, because employment is a practical avenue for acquiring the resources. DVR is the program in Washington State with the greatest potential for helping people with disabilities to take a step toward that ultimate goal of realizing their full potential by taking the smaller step toward work.

In 2011 the WSRC thought it appropriate to act on our commitment to advance a cultural shift by standing with the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) in favor of assuring that all people with disabilities who want to work earn at least minimum wage and work in integrated settings. NDRN issued a report in January entitled, Segregated and Exploited: the Failure of the Disability Service System to Provide Quality Work (which can be found at: <http://www.ndrn.org/images/Documents/Resources/Publications/Reports/Segregated-and-Exploited.pdf>). Single entities do not create cultural shifts. Collective commitment to change can. The WSRC wrote a letter of support for NDRN's report. We also engaged our State General Vocational Rehabilitation program and the Community Employment Alliance, an industry organization of Community Rehabilitation programs to sign on in support of the report, a nationwide first.

Following is the letter of support we sent to NDRN:



**DVR**  
Division  
of Vocational  
Rehabilitation

**COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT ALLIANCE**



Curt Decker, JD  
Executive Director  
National Disability Rights Network  
900 Second Street, NE, Suite 211  
Washington, DC 20002

April 1, 2011

Dear Mr. Decker,

Thank you for your recently published report "*Segregated & Exploited: The Failure of the Disability Service System to Provide Quality Work.*" We applaud the National Disability Right's Network (NDRN) for drawing attention to the continued segregation of many American workers with disabilities and the sub-minimum wages they often earn. By proposing specific changes to laws and policies designed to eliminate discrimination, and assure that future generations of workers with disabilities will be employed in integrated settings earning competitive wages, NDRN has articulated a vision for a more equitable future.

Three Washington State organizations working to increase employment among people with disabilities have joined together to support the policy recommendations in your report: The Washington State Rehabilitation Council (WSRC), the Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the Community Employment Alliance (CEA). The WSRC is our state's leading advocate for the General Vocational Rehabilitation program and its customers; DVR is our state's General Vocational Rehabilitation program, and CEA is Washington's only membership organization of employment services providers advocating community-based employment for workers with disabilities.

Washington State is a national leader in advancing employment opportunities for people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. We attribute our successes to taking a range of cumulative actions that align with the vision expressed in the report. Notable developments include:

- Since 1998 DVR has prohibited job placements in segregated settings or job placements that pay sub-minimum wages from being counted as successful rehabilitations;
- In 2006 the Washington State Division of Developmental Disabilities implemented the *Working Age Adult Policy*, an "employment only" policy unique to our state; and

- Mutual commitment and resources provided by DVR and CEA members to serve jobseekers with the most significant barriers to employment.

The impact of these actions in Washington was published in the March 2010 issue of the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* by Robert Cimera of Kent State University. His study compared the Supported Employment results for individuals with intellectual disabilities between all state Vocational Rehabilitation agencies from 2002 through 2007. Cimera found that Washington State has the highest percentage of successful Supported Employment cases and offers individuals the highest benefit/cost ratio when they go to work. We are proud of this distinction.

We too decry "The bigotry of low expectations." Motivated employees with the most significant barriers to employment, who have access to appropriate supports and services, are proving every day that they can succeed in integrated settings and earn competitive wages in jobs they choose. Each time such an employee is hired to work in an integrated setting earning a competitive wage, he or she overcomes generations of low expectations and bias used to justify the existence of segregated employment in the first place.

While Washington has come a long way, there is progress to be made before the vision expressed in your report is fully realized in our state. Partners in Washington State are committed to a continuous process of improvement. We do not overlook our own history related to the issues outlined in the report. Our business practices continue to evolve in a manner that aligns with the values and vision expressed in your report. We know that positive changes can be achieved because we are achieving them.

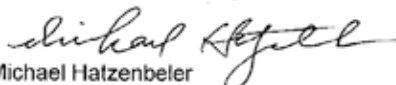
The policy recommendations outlined in "*Segregated & Exploited: The Failure of the Disability Service System to Provide Quality Work*," represent actionable steps to promote attitudinal change and service delivery practices in organizations, service systems, communities and especially among employers who could subsequently benefit from the skills of people with disabilities in integrated settings. By supporting the report and continuing to take actions that align with the realization of the changes it advocates, we hope to inspire colleagues across the nation to offer similar commitment to act in service to an equitable future.

Sincerely,



Andres Aguirre

Interim Director, Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation



Michael Hatzenbeler

Board President, Community Employment Alliance



Michael Hudson

Chair, Washington State Rehabilitation Council

## Final Thoughts

The people of Washington State have faced tremendously difficult economic times in 2011. In the midst of uncertainty, there was good work being done to assist the customers of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to become employed. Members of the Washington State Rehabilitation Council know that when Washingtonians with disabilities go to work, everybody wins. Supporting a greater number of people with disabilities to realize what they can achieve through employment motivates us to serve.

Some might question how our work leads to meaningful change. Vision and imagination matter. In the words of the late Czech playwright, and leader of the Velvet Revolution, Vaclav Havel, “Even a purely moral act that has no hope of any immediate and visible political effect can gradually and indirectly, over time, gain in political significance.”

As this report demonstrates the members of the Washington State Rehabilitation Council worked diligently in 2011.





Washington State  
Rehabilitation Council