



West Virginia State Rehabilitation Council 2023 WV SRC Annual Report

Our vision is to ensure that all people with disabilities are provided with an equal opportunity to receive the vocational rehabilitation services for which they are eligible.

2023 WV SRC Annual Report

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RehabilitationAct

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Advancing Access and Equity – Then, Now and Next

“Today marks the 50th anniversary of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, landmark legislation that changed the course of services and expanded the rights of individuals with disabilities throughout the nation.”

– West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (WV DRS) on September 26, 2023

“Signed into law 50 years ago today, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a strong foundation, which established purpose, policies and principles that have guided the vocational rehabilitation program for the past 50 years, especially by increasing access to and equity in employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Its guiding principles will continue for years to come.” – WV DRS on September 26, 2023

In Memory of Cindy Tucker

1957 - 2023



Loved by all who knew her
- husband and loving
caretaker, Bobby Tucker,
many family members,
her beloved pets, friends,
colleagues, and the
vocational rehabilitation
community.

Quotes by Cindy on the WV SRC:

“My experience as Chairperson of the State Rehabilitation Council has been very rewarding. Having the opportunity to provide input into the Unified State Plan and working closely with DRS to ensure services to West Virginians with disabilities are received appropriately is an honor.”

“My years associated with the State Rehabilitation Council have been an excellent opportunity to learn and grow both professionally and personally. This time has also allowed me to have input into service delivery to West Virginians with disabilities.”

“I was an ad hoc member of the State Rehabilitation Council for several years. Since my retirement from the (WV) Division of Rehabilitation Services, I have now been appointed to the SRC as a voting member and am anxious to be more active in helping bring change to WV. It has been exciting to be able to vote and have more of an impact on the council.”

Cindy Tucker, your life made a difference, and your memory brings smiles.

The WV State Rehabilitation Council and WV Division of Rehabilitation Services are forever grateful for Cindy's many years of service. Her efforts and legacy will continue to bring success in helping West Virginians with disabilities achieve their dreams. We thank you for sharing your kindness, passion, and dedication with us all.



"When I came for an interview at WV DRS in 2004, Cindy Tucker was the first person I met. She was working as a counselor in the Charleston Branch Office which at the time was located on the campus of the former Rehabilitation Center. I was waiting in the lobby to be interviewed and she introduced herself to me. I ended up getting the job and quickly got to know Cindy who became my mentor and then my supervisor but more importantly, my friend. Cindy was a remarkable human being, and she will never be forgotten." - Rich Ward



"Cindy is irreplaceable, in everyone's lives she knew. Her welcoming personality, passionate advocacy, and valuable knowledge were traits the council treasured. The WV SRC leaned on Cindy to be an active member and most recently, the Vice Chair. After many years as a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor and Branch Office Manager for WV DRS, Cindy continued working on community rehabilitation programs. She contributed on multiple boards, serving and representing people with disabilities. The world needs more people like Cindy." - Julie Justice





Scott Gossard

WV State Rehabilitation Council Chairperson

Greetings:

As the Chairperson of the West Virginia State Rehabilitation Council, I have had the privilege of working with the outstanding members of the Council. Our members share a passion for our mission of advising and providing support to the WV Division of Rehabilitation Services. It has been a privilege to be involved with the WV SRC for several years. I also serve on the WV Statewide Independent Living Council, Traumatic Brain Injury Councils, and the Human Rights Council of the Potomac Highlands Guild. This past year, I retired from the director position at the Upper Potomac Area Agency on Aging.

The Council continues to grow and persevere after the passing of our long-time director Sherry Taylor and our essential member, Cindy Tucker. We have pushed through to achieve our core objectives. Our new director, Julie Justice has gained knowledge and quickly developed in her position over the past year and a half. I am thankful for everyone on the West Virginia State Rehabilitation Council, from the past, in our present, and going into our future.

Likewise, I am grateful for our agency, the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services. WV DRS continues to be one of the country's most successful vocational rehabilitation service agencies. Director Bua-lam and his staff work diligently to make sure all West Virginians who qualify will receive what they need to get a job and maintain employment for a more independent future. I am proud to be a part of such an excellent agency.

Thank you,

Scott Gossard
WV SRC Chairperson



Julie Justice
WV State Rehabilitation Council
Executive Director

Hello from West Virginia:

I am so grateful for the West Virginia State Rehabilitation Council, our national supporters, and state partners. Serving on the Council as their Executive Director has allowed me to build relationships and learn from so many wonderful people with similar passions. I appreciate everyone involved in the vocational rehabilitation community. Each of us bring specialized knowledge to pour into our purpose, vision, and mission.

I recognize our Council members for their wonderful work and dedication. I truly appreciate the collaborative efforts through each experience and milestone. I am confident that the knowledge and connections we gained have created a platform for a successful new year as we go into 2024. I am excited as our Council continues to grow, advocate, and network to provide additional awareness and support for people with disabilities.

Our Council values the WV Division of Rehabilitation Services leadership, counselors, and entire staff who embody unique skills that fit together to create a culture of quality. Their dedication echoes throughout their services, which empower consumers' continued growth and success. It is rewarding to witness all that WV DRS accomplishes for the people they serve. They have several programs and partnerships across the entire state, and beyond. WV DRS continues to be recognized nationally as an exceptional vocational rehabilitation state agency. Our Council is honored to be aligned with WV DRS excellence.

Sincerely,

Julie Justice
WV SRC Executive Director



Pisnu Bua-lam
WV Division of Rehabilitation Services
Director

Dear Friends of the State Rehabilitation Council:

On behalf of the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), I share my sincere appreciation for the State Rehabilitation Council's partnership and support of the DRS mission, which is:

Together, we enable and empower individuals with disabilities to work and to live independently by providing individualized services to consumers and employers.

With the support of the State Rehabilitation Council members, DRS has been working to expand coordination and cooperation with our partners including Special Education, Career Technical Education, local schools and their administrators, community service providers and other partners to further enhance relationships and facilitate a systematic approach to jointly support students with disabilities in maximizing their potential.

Through heightened collaboration, DRS and essential partners are increasing access to and opportunities for individuals, especially students, with disabilities to participate and succeed in education and training programs that will lead to high-quality, integrated, competitive employment outcomes.

SRC members contribute vital experience and efforts to assist DRS in meeting its mission and helping West Virginians with disabilities to achieve their employment goals.

Thank you for your continued dedication and your hard work, which greatly benefits West Virginia's vocational rehabilitation consumers!

Sincerely,

Pisnu Bua-lam
Director

WV State Rehabilitation Council

Our Mission:

The West Virginia State Rehabilitation Council is to review, analyze and advise the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services regarding its program eligibility, performance and effectiveness in empowering individuals with disabilities to achieve their employment goals.

West Virginia State Rehabilitation Council Member Composition

The West Virginia State Rehabilitation Council is composed of at least 15 members, but no more than twenty-six (26) members, appointed by the Governor.

No member of the Council may serve more than two (2) consecutive three (3) year terms. The two-term limit does not apply to the consumer Assistant Program (CAP) representative, Parent Training & Information representative (PTI), Board of Education representative or Vocational Rehabilitation Director.

The knowledge and expertise of the Council members is a valuable asset in carrying out the mission and goals of the SRC. Members take their responsibilities seriously spending a great deal of time and effort to fulfill their duties. Monitoring and advising WV DRS on the issues, services, programs and policies which impact the lives of West Virginians with disabilities is essential.

The majority of SRC members must be individuals with disabilities. For purposes of SRC membership, an "individual with a disability" is anyone who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; has a record of having such an impairment; or is regarded as having such an impairment.

The Council must have members representing the following:

- at least one representative of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)—who must be either the chairperson or another designee of the SILC;
- at least one representative of a parent training and information center established pursuant to section 682(a) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
- at least one representative of the consumer Assistance Program (CAP) who must be either the CAP director or another individual recommended by the CAP;
- at least one qualified VR counselor with knowledge of and experience with the VR program, who serves as a nonvoting, ex officio member if he or she is employed by the DSA;
- at least one representative of community rehabilitation program service providers;
- four representatives of business, industry, and labor;
- representatives of disability advocacy groups: (a) representing a cross-section of individuals with physical, cognitive, sensory, and mental disabilities; and (b) representing individuals with disabilities who have difficulty representing themselves or are unable to represent themselves due to their disabilities;
- at least one former or current applicant for, or recipient of, VR services;
- at least one representative of the directors of AIVRS projects, if such projects are funded under section 121 of the Rehabilitation Act in the State;
- at least one representative of the State educational agency responsible for the public education of students with disabilities;
- at least one representative from the State workforce development board; and
- Director of the Designated State Unit (VR Agency) shall be an ex officio, nonvoting member of the Council.

WEST VIRGINIA STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

MEMBER ROSTER

- Beverley Jones, of Putnam County, represents the Statewide Independent Living Council (WV SILC).
- Brenda Lamkin, of Upshur County, represents the Parent Training and Information center (WV PTI).
- Megan Pigott, of Kanawha County, represents the Client Assistance Program (CAP): Disability Rights of West Virginia (DROWV).
- Veronica Bunch, of Kanawha County, represents a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, and this is a non-voting member of the council, as the counselor is an employee of the WV Division of Rehabilitation Services (WV DRS).
- Amber Hinkle, of Greenbrier County, represents a Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP), from Open Doors, Inc.
- Karen Haught, of Ohio County, represents a Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP), from The Seeing Hand Association.
- Fred L. Chandler IV, of Kanawha County, represents Business, Labor, and Industry, from the Charleston Building and Construction Trades Council.
- Robert J. Gray, of Kanawha County, represents Business, Labor, and Industry, from Thomas (Hospital) Health System.
- Travis Kline, of Harrison County, represents Business, Labor, and Industry, from Job Squad, Inc.
- Kevin Trippett, of Wood County, represents Business, Labor, and Industry, from Westbrook Health Services, Inc. (Behavioral Health Center) and a Certified Management Accountant.
- Ashley Skeens, of Putnam County, represents Business, Labor, and Industry, from Advocacy in Motion (co-business owner).

WEST VIRGINIA STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

MEMBER ROSTER

- Scott Gossard, of Grant County, represents Disability Advocacy Groups, from multiple councils for traumatic brain injuries, member of SILC, and the Upper Potomac Area Agency on Aging Inc.
- Dr. Janet Lintala, of Raleigh County, represents Disability Advocacy Groups, from Autism Health! Pllc., and multiple other councils.
- Angela Adams, of Cabell County, represents Disability Advocacy Groups, from Mountain State Centers for Independent Living.
- Jason Bailey, of Wood County, represents Current or Former Applicant for, or Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services.
- Nancy Cline, of Kanawha County, represents State Educational Agency, from the WV Department of Education.
- Dr. Julie Norman, of Kanawha County, represents the State Workforce Development Board, from WDB of Kanawha County.
- Pisnu Bua-lam, of Putnam County, represents the Designated State (VR) Agency, as the Director from the WV Division of Rehabilitation Services (WV DRS). This is a non-voting member of the council.
- Dr. Gregory Epps Sr., of Monongalia County, is Higher Education Representative, from West Virginia University (WVU).
- Teresa Cunningham, of Cabell County, is a Special Education Representative, from her teaching experience, and is a WV Gold Star Mother.

WEST VIRGINIA STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

Executive Committee Officers, Liaison & Staff

WV SRC Executive Committee

2023 Council Officers

Scott Gossard - Chairperson
Petersburg, West Virginia

Cindy Tucker - Vice Chairperson
Lewisburg, West Virginia
(Resigned before Passing in March 2023)

Bob Gray - Treasurer
South Charleston, West Virginia

Janet Lintala - Secretary
Beckley, West Virginia

WV SRC Liaison (non-member)

Richard "Rich" Ward
WV DRS Program Specialist

WV SRC Staff (non-member)

Julie Justice
WV SRC Executive Director

COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITIES AND PURPOSE

The West Virginia State Rehabilitation Council (WV SRC) is established in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (ACT), and 34 CFR 361.16 - 361.17 of its implementing regulations. The WV SRC gives advice to and works in partnership with the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (WV DRS).

In compliance with the guidelines of the 1998 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act, the WV SRC must perform the following functions, after consulting with the State Workforce Development Board:

In partnership with WV DRS, the Council:

- a. Develops, agrees to, and reviews WV DRS goals and priorities;
- b. Evaluates the effectiveness of their program and submit annual progress reports to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Commissioner;
- c. Conducts a statewide needs assessment of individuals with disabilities living in the State every three (3) years;
- d. Advises WV DRS regarding vocational rehabilitation activities;
- e. Serves as the Policy Consultation Committee for the Agency; and,
- f. Attends Agency functions, training events & national conferences.

The Council assists in the preparation of the State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation, amendments to the plan, applications, reports, needs assessments and evaluations, including those necessary for WV DRS to satisfy requirements.

COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITIES AND PURPOSE (Continued)

Responsibilities include: reviewing and analyzing the effectiveness of the programs, services and consumer satisfaction. All consumers with closed cases are sent a survey. This information is compiled by an independent consultant and provided to the Agency and Council. Data is posted on the Agency and WV SRC's websites.

An annual report is prepared and submitted to the Governor and RSA on the status of Vocational Rehabilitation services and the Council's activities for the year. This report is disseminated to all SRC's throughout the U.S. and territories and other state representatives. The information is posted on the Agency and WV SRC websites, and available to the public.

The WV SRC coordinates various activities with other partners to assist in educating the public on pertinent issues. The Council continually strives to enrich and maintain the working relationships between WV DRS, the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC), Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), WV Statewide Independent Living Centers (WVSILC), Centers for Independent Living (CIL) throughout WV and other partners.

Members of the Council and WV SRC staff perform other functions that are determined appropriate and comparable to other required functions, provided they are consistent with the purpose of Title I of the ACT and its implementing regulations.

COUNCIL ACTIVITY AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Meetings and Conferences: The Council meets four (4) times at minimum during the fiscal year. The WV SRC scheduled meetings were held with a hybrid approach, virtually and in person. Members reviewed and amended documentation; reported on collaborations with partners in consumer related events; recommended reappointments and new nominations for Governor appointments; and held votes according to council needs. Guest presentations, such as WV ABLE, offered valuable information on consumer services and networking relationships. The Council received State of the Agency presentations by WV DRS Director or their representative at each WV SRC meeting. Council was provided current information at each Council meeting regarding Agency financial status, performance benchmarks, changes in RSA regulations and any other information by VR staff. The Council is continually educated on the WIOA changes and the impact on the Agency. The WV SRC website continues to be maintained and updated. The Council has also established standing and ad-hoc committees to continue to meet all operational goals for the next fiscal year. The Council members and Executive Director, along with WVDRS staff, attended the national spring and fall Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) conferences.

State Plan Recommendations: One of the most important responsibilities of the State Rehabilitation Councils is to advise, make recommendations and assist the WV Division of Rehabilitation Services (WV DRS) in preparing their State Plan for Vocational Services. The overall purpose of the State Plan is to assure that State and Federal governments play a leadership role in promoting employment for persons with disabilities and to ensure a link between citizen participation and the legislative process. Council reviewed the WV DRS Combined State Plan for the upcoming fiscal year and provided our recommendations to WV DRS.

COUNCIL ACTIVITY AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS (Continued)

WV DRS Consumer Satisfaction Surveys: The Council is responsible for reviewing and analyzing the effectiveness and satisfaction of rehabilitation services provided by WV DRS from information gathered from the consumers. The Council does not assist in the resolution of any individual case issues. Consumer Satisfaction Surveys are mailed by the WV SRC to all consumers statewide whose case has been closed. The collected data is returned with only the consumer's district and category for the information to be compiled by an independent contractor annually. The Consumer Satisfaction Survey summary is presented orally and in writing to Council members and DRS staff by consultant Dr. Denetta Dowler. Pertinent information from the survey was documented in the Annual Report which is available on WV SRC and WV DRS websites; or upon request from the WV SRC office. For the upcoming Fiscal Year 2024, there will be a pilot approach to disseminate electronic versions of Consumer Satisfaction Surveys, in attempt to collect more valuable consumer feedback.

Annual Reporting: The WV SRC prepares an Annual Report highlighting the Council's past fiscal year's activities and accomplishments. This functions as a status report from the WV SRC of the vocational rehabilitation programs across our state that is submitted to the Governor, Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), State legislators and State members of Congress, various state officials, WV DRS staff and other SRCs throughout the United States and its territories. This report is also available on the WV SRC, WV DRS and NCSRC websites.

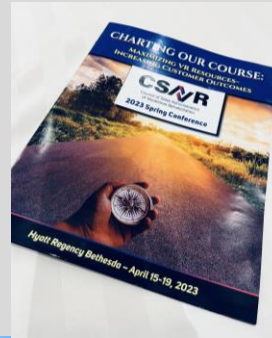
COUNCIL ACTIVITY AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS (Continued)

WV SRC EVENTS (Pictures in Following Slides):

- 2023 Spring and Fall Conferences: Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) conferences, the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC)
- Independent Living Day at the WV Capitol in Charleston, WV.
- Annual Disability History Essay Contest (WV SRC, WV DRS, WV SILC & Partners)
- WV DRS Sponsored Consumer Events and Job Fairs (Ex. Bridging Barriers, Second Chance Job Fair)
- WV SILC (and Partners) Freedom Car Show
- WV DRS Ability Works Recognition Ceremony

2023 NCSRC & CSAVR Spring Conference in Bethesda, MD

NCSRC Conference Presentations and Documents: <https://www.ncsrc.us/meeting-materials>
CSAVR Conference Presentations and Documents: <https://www.csavr.org/conference-presentations>



2023 NCSRC & CSAVR Fall Conference in Savannah, GA

“When the right connections are made, the road to recovery can begin. A person living with a significant disability, in a difficult situation without family support, not only needs to believe in themselves but they need others who believe in them also. They need a partner that has the knowledge to assist them with navigating the challenges, a partner with the resources to invest in them and give them the support that they need to learn to live again and a partner that simply cares. V.R. is that partner to people living with disabilities!”
– Lorenzo Brown, The Is-Able Center (2023 NCSRC & CSAVR Keynote Speaker: “The Power of VR”)



2023 Annual Disability History Essay Contest – State Winner



State Winner



Lingjian Zheng
Parkersburg South High School

*“Career Paths for Youth with Disabilities:
The Past, Present, and Future”*

Kailash Satyarthi once said: “the power of youth is the common wealth for the entire world. The faces of young people are the faces of our past, our present and our future.” From Stephen Hawking’s Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis and his magnificent academic achievements, to Steve Jobs’ dyslexia and his splendid technological innovations, it can be concluded that people who are regarded as having physical or mental impairments have their own unique strengths, capabilities, and talents like everyone else does. Therefore, they are quite capable of making good endeavors and succeeding in their career. Likewise, youths with disabilities are equal to their peers without impairments, and they together represent the faces of our entire world. However, people from the past might not recognize things in this way.

From the 1840s to the 1960s, “freak shows” and circuses were popular in America. Because people with disabilities had difficulties in getting work skills and finding jobs, these were sometimes the only job options people with disabilities had to choose from. To improve their harsh living conditions, they had to do such work to entertain those without a disability by exploiting their dignity and physical differences. By that time, discrimination against people with disabilities had lived in many people’s minds for a long time. Despite that, figures of people with disabilities were seen at work in every field of society (“Work”).

Things remained unchanged until the disability rights movement interrupted the dead silence. Numerous organizations and groups by and for people with disabilities exploded in popularity in the 1900s, such as the League of the Physically Handicapped, the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities, ADAPT (Americans Disabled for Accessible Public Transportation, later changed to Americans Disabled Attendant Programs Today), etc. With their protests and continuous efforts for years, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 finally became the law after being signed by President Carter in 1977, symbolizing the initial victory in addressing disability discrimination. In addition, more legislations were passed by the U.S. (United States) Congress after that. As the disability rights movement heated up, the greatest storm came in 1990. Protesters gathered in front of the United States Capitol building where the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) had stalled due to the lobbying efforts of public transit companies. Among the protesters, a group of disability activists, who were also individuals with disabilities, “tossed aside their wheelchairs, walkers, and crutches and ascended the steps (Meldon).” By dragging themselves up the stairs, they demonstrated their daily struggles and their imperative need for accessibility. Their feat, known as the “Capitol Crawl,” shocked the country, left its mark on history, and most importantly, lit the life of every American with disabilities. The ADA was eventually passed by the Congress in July of 1990 and signed by the President. It was the most comprehensive disability rights legislation in history, according to U.S. Department of Labor: “Its employment provisions prohibit discrimination in job application procedures, hiring, advancement, termination, compensation, job training, and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment.” Such great legal achievement crushed all the unfairness and discrimination hidden in the career paths of youth with disabilities, offering them massive new

Lingjian Zheng is a senior at Parkersburg High School. He started his high school career at Parkersburg South High School with English as his second language. He was an active member of the National Honor Society and the STARS community service group. He competed in Math Field Day and was recognized as a regional and state winner. As an active member of the National Honor Society, he assisted the American Red Cross with its blood drive

Mr. Zheng plans to attend WVU in the fall and major in biology. His aim is to expand the border of science through his future involvement in frontier research. ■



Lingjian Zheng’s Essay Snippet:

“With their protests and continuous efforts for years, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 finally became the law after being signed by President Carter in 1977, symbolizing the initial victory in addressing disability discrimination. In addition, more legislations were passed by the U.S. (United States) Congress after that. As the disability rights movement heated up, the greatest storm came in 1990. Protesters gathered in front of the United States Capitol building where the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) had stalled due to the lobbying efforts of public transit companies. Among the protesters, a group of disability activists, who were also individuals with disabilities, “tossed aside their wheelchairs, walkers, and crutches and ascended the steps (Meldon).” By dragging themselves up the stairs, they demonstrated their daily struggles and their imperative need for accessibility. Their feat, known as the “Capitol Crawl,” shocked the country, left its mark on history, and most importantly, lit the life of every American with disabilities. The ADA was eventually passed by the Congress in July of 1990 and signed by the President.”

2023 Annual Disability History Essay Contest - District 1 Winners

Emma Looney

Roane County High School

"Career Paths for Youth with Disabilities: The Past, Present, and Future."

Could you imagine being born a little differently than others, and being treated unfairly for it? Until I began researching the Disability Rights Movement, I was unaware of the challenges being faced by people with disabilities. This essay begins by discussing the word "disability". It then describes the discrimination and the legal action towards progress in the disability rights movement. Finally, it explores the challenges and triumphs of career paths for youth with disabilities and the support groups that are available.

People with disabilities face several challenges in their daily lives. Some have physical disabilities, while others have mental disabilities. Some of these disabilities are able to be seen, while others are invisible.

A disability is a condition, mental or physical, that prevents a person from hearing, moving, seeing, speaking, learning or living like others. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines a person with a disability as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. In the past, many people didn't understand the causes of disabilities. People with disabilities were feared or misunderstood.

Children who were born with disabilities were not always cared for and forced to live away from their families. This discrimination led to mistreatment and abuse. In the 1930s and 1940s, people with disabilities were some of the first to be harmed or killed when the Nazi party came to power in Germany. (Hayes).

Over time, people with disabilities and their families began to speak out against the discrimination. Most of the legal action towards progress in the disability rights movement began in the late 1900s. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was a very important piece of legislation for the

Disability Rights Movement. Section 504 stated that no federally funded program could discriminate against people with disabilities. It stated that these programs must meet the reasonable needs of people with disabilities, which was especially important for students with disabilities. Under this law, public schools had to meet the educational needs of all students with disabilities. (Hayes).

One of the major challenges for children with disabilities was access to education. When the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was passed in 1975, all children finally had a right to equal education. In 1990, this legislation was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It gave parents more rights when deciding what type of education their children should receive. (Temple).

Americans with disabilities celebrated a huge success in 1990 when the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) became law. The ADA is a federal law that ensures businesses and agencies provide accommodations so people with disabilities have equal opportunities for jobs and equal access to public spaces and services. (Hayes)

About 17% of people with disabilities never finish high school and less than

(See Looney p16)

District 1 First Place



Emma Looney is a senior at Roane County High School and took college courses through West Virginia University at Parkersburg. During her high school career, she was on the principal's Honor Roll every year.

She has been actively involved in Future Farmers of America (FFA) all four years of high school, and currently serves as the Chapter Vice President. She is a member of 4-H, National Honor Society, Take It from Us (TIFU), and the Vice President of Roane County 4-H Junior Leaders.

Emma has volunteered to work as a large animal vet assistant. She also has a hoof-trimming business where she travels to farms to trim goat hooves.

After she graduate Emma plans to attend Carver Career and Technical Education Center to work on an associate degree in their vet tech program.■



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District 1 Second Place



Madison Smith is a senior at Sissionville High School. She graduated with honors with a 4.0 GPA and an allocation of 14 college credits. She took honors classes throughout her high school career. She is an NJHS (National Junior Honor Society) member.

Her goal is to attend a college in the field of business management or analytic. She hopes to become a realtor one day and work her way into becoming a broker and owning her own brokerage firm in the future.

Ms. Smith has volunteered at shelters for community service. In her spare time, she enjoys painting, loves playing games like sudoku and zombies, and plays volleyball when she can.■



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Madison Smith

Sissionville High School

"How the Past Built the Future"

Robert. M Hensel once stated, "There is no greater disability in society than the inability to see a person as more." Youth with disabilities have not only been underestimated, but also undermined and neglected in the workforce for centuries. The laws and limitations set on the disability community was oppressive, which made it nearly impossible to maintain sustaining and satisfying pay. With justified retaliation and protest throughout the years, laws and acts were passed to ensure equality and respect within the work environment. Even though youth with disabilities still do not have the same access as their coworkers without a disability, there are currently a variety of careers available. Now the next question, "What future career opportunities lie ahead for youth with disabilities? How have the events in the past shaped the present and will shape the future?"

In the past, careers were nearly non-existent. It was not until the 20th century, more specifically the end of World War II, that people with disabilities stopped being tortured – much less receive a job. For example, during Adolf Hitler's reign, he ordered a secret medical order meant to euthanize people with disabilities due to their "impurity and hindrance" to his reign and the workforce [1]. This horrifying mistreatment was not just subjected to Germany. The employees of Willowbrook State School in New York were secretly documented and caught physically abusing and neglecting children in 1935. Many were beaten – one woman even killed. If not beaten, children and adults were neglected and even forced to sit in their own waste [2]. It wasn't until 1975 – forty years later – that the residents of the school were moved into small homes. It took forty years of abuse for something to happen.

The retaliation to decades of suffering, abuse, and rejection in the workforce was equivalent to whiplash. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) allocated The League for the Physically Handicapped in New York City in 1935 to combat discrimination against disabilities in both the workplace and society. Members held a sit in for nine days at the Home Relief Bureau and a weekend at WPA headquarters, which created 1,500 more available jobs for people with disabilities [3]. Paul Strachan founded The American Federation of the Physically Handicapped in 1940 , which was the first cross-disability organization that pushed for an end to job discrimination. They even called for "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week" (later held in 1947 in D.C).

The week dedicated was created into a permanent organization named the President's Committee on Employment of the Physically Handicapped in 1953, but later excluded "Physically" in 1962 in order to include people with cognitive disabilities [3]. Skipping ahead some odd years , the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination against race, gender, nationality, and ethnicity. However, it didn't seem to apply heavy to disabilities. People with disabilities were still faced with problems like less jobs and even inaccessible public transportation, which sparked the 504 sit-in of 1973 [4].

One of the most imperative acts passed for youths with disabilities is The American with Disabilities Act (ADA). Passed in 1990, the ADA was shaped by The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 504 in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 [3][5]. It provided full civil rights and protection of those rights for people with

(See Smith p15)

2023 Annual Disability History Essay Contest - District 2 Winners

Gabriella Selders Morgantown High School

Career Paths for Youth with Disabilities: The Past, Present, and Future

Throughout the years, youth with disabilities have fought tirelessly for their right to work and access equal paths to employment, from grappling against career discrimination themselves to paving the way for others' ability to be hired without any form of discrimination against them. Youth with disabilities wish to be seen in the workplace and continue to progress toward equality.

The past has been unkind to youth with disabilities regarding career pathways and treatment. Prior to 1972, state institutions housed individuals with disabilities in restrictive settings, and many families could not afford planning, placement decisions, or the ability for the individual to stay at home. Education was even harder; schools were allowed to deny children with any disability, ranging from visual impairment to developmental disabilities, from attending school. Lacking access to education is a non-starter in terms of employment, so the United States came to address the issue in *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* in 1972. The landmark court decision would place responsibility on the states and localities to educate children with disabilities. This case opened a doorway to possibility, as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) would be passed in 1975 to support states and localities in protecting the rights of, meeting the individual needs of, and improving the results for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and their families (A History of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act). National goals would be met with the new program as amendments would be added to IDEA throughout the years to address other issues affecting youth with disabilities, including employment. An important factor in youth with disabilities seeking career paths is transition services to assist the process of leaving high school to pursue a career or postsecondary education. Another landmark court decision in *Andrew F. v. Douglas County School District Re-1* emphasized that schools also must provide an Individualized Education Plan, IEP, reasonably calculated to allow a child to make progress appropriate to the child's circumstances. An IEP is crucial in the transition from high school to a career as it plans for appropriate employment and living objectives, suggests appropriate community agencies, and connects students with disabilities to community resources (Employment Considerations for Youth With Disabilities). With the additional push of the Disability Rights Movement in the 1980s, Public Law 98-527 and Public Law 100-146 would be passed to acknowledge goals and promote employment opportunities for anyone with disabilities. Though the past created many obstacles, youth with disabilities could push forward to access the education needed to hold a job. In the 2020-21 school year, more than 66% of children with disabilities were in general education classrooms for 80% or more of their school day (IDEA Part B Child Count and Educational Environments Collection). Nearly 7.5 million children with disabilities have been given services to meet their individual needs in the same school year.

Even with these advances, research still shows that those with disabilities are less likely to graduate from high school, attend college, and become employed. Thankfully, the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth created a guidepost to a successful transition out of high school; there needs to be more high-quality education, more opportunities to develop world skills, connections with supportive adults, and access to services are all required

(See Selders p19)

District 2 First Place



Gabriella Selders is a senior at Morgantown High School. Her high school career includes being on Morgantown High School's tennis team and president of the writers' club.

She volunteers at Cheat Lake Public Library writing book reviews and arranging book displays to inspire more children to read.

Her goal is to become someone who can assist her community such as a doctor or lawyer. She is certain that she will continue to write for the rest of her life.

She enjoys baking new recipes, writing short stories and essays, buying books, dinosaurs, museums, and exploring new experiences.

Gabriella is thankful to everyone who supported her projects. She believes she would not be where she is today without them. ■



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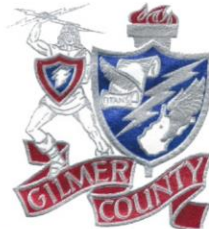


District 2 Second Place



David Brannon is a senior at Gilmer County High School. He maintained a GPA of 4.0 or greater throughout his high school years. During his high school career, he was Senior Class President, Mu Alpha Theta President, National Honor Society President, Student Council Representative, and a member of 4-H and FFA. Mr. Brannon took honors and dual credit classes throughout his high school years. As a result of his accomplishment, he was awarded the National Rural and Small Town Recognition Award by the College Board. Over the course of his high school career, he participated in a variety of community service activities.

David intends to pursue a degree in business or accounting at West Virginia University. ■



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David Brannon Gilmer County High School

Career Paths for Youth with Disabilities: The Past, Present, and Future

Laws do not change behavior, but enforcement does. Without protections, employment opportunities for disabled youth would be limited, and in some cases eliminated. One significant piece of legislation, the Americans with Disabilities Act, prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in many sectors of life, including employment. Enforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act has opened opportunities for disabled youth across the United States.

Before the ADA was passed in 1990, disabled Americans faced employment discrimination based solely on their disability ("Review laws, regulations & standards," n.d.). In office, and corporate settings, disabled Americans were often denied high level positions within companies. Even if they managed to move up the corporate ladder, they hit a glass ceiling, because many companies felt that having a disabled executive showed a weak corporate structure ("Employment for Youth with Disabilities: Past Challenges and Future Opportunities," n.d.). The Americans with Disabilities outlawed actions such as preventing opportunities when the disabled individual was perfectly qualified, and able to complete the job ("Review laws, regulations & standards," n.d.).

Disabled youth may be inspired by those in power with disabilities. The first quadriplegic to be elected to Congress was Rep. James Langevin of Rhode Island. Langevin uses a wheelchair for mobility, and has a long history of holding elected office at the state and federal levels. He sponsored legislation throughout his service to advance opportunities for people with disabilities throughout the nation ("Jim Langevin," n.d.). Senator Tammy Duckworth of Illinois faces combat-related disabilities, but she continues to fight for the people of Illinois, and people with disabilities across the United States. These members of Congress represent more than their constituents, they are fighters, and provide inspiration for disabled youth.

Protections start with education, the basis of any career. Elevators, ramps, and reasonable accommodations are required under Federal law, providing accessibility for a good education to everyone, including disabled youth. Basic accessibility features were not applied to many buildings until required after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Receiving the job does no good if you do not have access to the facilities you need. The protections that affect your career extend farther than only preventing discrimination within employment ("Review laws, regulations & standards," n.d.).

Nearly every career is available to disabled youth. Whether it's a politician, nurse, engineer, accountant, or CEO, it's achievable for disabled youth through protections like the Americans with Disabilities Act. Accessibility features provide access to features you may need within employment. Inspiration to disabled youth is present throughout society, from powerful figures such as Rep. Langevin, and Sen. Duckworth, to international figures such as Richard Branson of United Kingdom-based Virgin Group ("CEOs you never knew had a disability," 2020).

(See Brannon p17)

2023 Annual Disability History Essay Contest - District 3 Winners

Mariah Wilson

Parkersburg South High School

Career Paths for Youth with Disabilities: The Past, Present, and Future

People with disabilities have existed since the beginning of mankind. What is disability? A disability is something that is related to your hearing, cognitive, sight, or mobility abilities. Today, many people with disabilities do not necessarily identify themselves as disabled.

During Grecian times, it was typical of the culture to fixate on the idea of "perfection," so people with disabilities were ignored. Grecians did not believe people with disabilities could be cured, healed, or were worthy of being employed.

In the Early Middle Ages, most people with disabilities could not take care of themselves. The people of the town did not accept people who had disabilities, so they were often excluded from society and homeless. Families of children with disabilities would often send the child to the woods to be abandoned, or the children were hidden under houses. The families were often embarrassed if their child had a disability. In those times, the word "disability" did not exist. People with disabilities were referred to as "idiots." Many of the devout felt people with disabilities were evil and believed that they were sent by the devil. When people with disabilities did find work, which was very hard to do, they often had very dangerous jobs.

In the 1820's, people with disabilities could get work but only if they knew someone who needed some work done. It was generally manual labor. During World War I, people with disabilities were not fighting on the frontlines. However, many people with disabilities were working in the coal mines. The environment was very dangerous and not safe, in general. On top of this, their pay was not equal to that of their typically-functioning coworkers. Other types of professions people with disabilities had during the early to mid 1900's included farmers, "freak show" performers in the circus, shoemakers, street vendors, and carpenters.

World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam War all had an impact on the rights of people with disabilities because many servicemen and women were coming back home with injuries that permanently disabled them. This is what started a jump in activism for people with disabilities.

In 1973, Arlene Mayerson said, "Accommodating a person with a disability is no longer a matter of charity but instead a basic issue of civil rights." She wrote this in an article based on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act which went into effect in that same year. Section 504 ensures that organizations and employers are including people with disabilities when it comes to services and program benefits.

In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into effect by President George H.W. Bush. The ADA is very important to people with disabilities because it is very detailed and is said to be comprehensive. It protects people with disabilities in the workforce, in the public, and in schools. It also created a widespread awareness of the accessibility needs that people with disabilities require for their day-to-day lives. ADA and other key pieces of

(See Wilson p18)

District 3 First Place



Mariah Wilson is a senior at Parkersburg High School. Over the course of her high school career, she was consistently on the honor roll and on the principal's list. The West Virginia Deaf Services Center awarded her with the Good Attitude Award for her outstanding attitude.

She plans to complete her cosmetology requirements at WVU-Parkersburg and then attend Rochester Institute of Technology to obtain her business degree. Her career goal is to own and run her own salon one day. ■



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District 3 Second Place



Abbigail Kimble is a senior at Tyler Consolidated High School. She will graduate with a 4.359 GPA. During high school, she was an active participant in the award-winning Knights Marching Band playing the trombone, a member of the local 4-H, 2022 National Champion Land Judging Team, and the Runner-Up Champion Homesite Evaluation Team in Oklahoma City. She currently serves as the chapter President of the FFA organization.

Abbigail is an animal lover and has dreamed of becoming a veterinarian since childhood. Her love for animals started at a young age, growing up in a family of cattle producers and other various farm animals. Her home life and high school career motivated her to become a doctor who could treat animals and ensure their comfort. ■



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Abbigail Kimble

Tyler Consolidated High School

"Career Paths for Youth with Disabilities: The Past, Present, and Future."

Youth with disabilities throughout history have faced difficulties in getting work skills and finding jobs in their desired career paths. At certain times throughout history individuals with disabilities could only find work that exploited their mental and physical differences through freak shows and circuses in the late 1840s and early 1900s. Despite discrimination, people with disabilities have worked and been successful in every field given the right supports.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 emphasized employment as the primary goal of vocational rehabilitation. The purpose of the act was to mandate presumptive employability, meaning applicants should be presumed to be employable unless proven otherwise. The amendments state that eligible individuals must be provided choice and increased control in determining vocational rehabilitation goals and objectives, determining services, service providers, and methods of service provision.

Since 1975, students with disabilities were provided educational rights by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, also referred to as IDEA. The main purpose of IDEA is to ensure that all youth with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. Students with disabilities are guaranteed a more productive and functioning transition process. It is critical that this be taken seriously so students are not leaving high school unprepared to meet the challenges of their chosen career path.

In order to promote a productive transition, it is helpful to plan ahead. For students with disabilities, the first step in planning is developing a transition plan which is a section of a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) that outlines transition goals and services needed to meet those goals. An effective transition plan will not only take into consideration a student's goals, needs, and preferences, but also consideration of post-secondary education, career path and goals and adult living. This takes a team effort as the student, members of the family, teachers, and school administration must work together to guide a student through the transition process. The first step to the transition plan is an age-appropriate assessment. The intention of this assessment is to increase the student's self-worth, confidence and success while keeping the student's strengths and interests in mind. Some questions asked during this assessment may include: "What are my unique talents and interests?" "What do I want in life, now and in the future?" and, "What are some of life's demands that I can meet now?" This assessment is to be updated annually, as it is tied to the student's goals and needs that are represented in the student's Individualized Education Program.

Once this assessment is completed, the post-secondary goals can be formed to include employment, continuing education, adult services, and independent living as a part of transition. This allows students with disabilities to prosper and be able to identify their future goals. The goals must be realistic to where the student is currently functioning in life. The IEP team members must allow the student to demonstrate self-determination and decision-making by allowing the student to share their vision for the future.

(See Kimble p20)

2023 Annual Disability History Essay Contest - District 4 Winners

Sophia Raines

Independence High School

Career Paths for Youth with Disabilities: The Past, Present, and Future

Society has ingrained in us the need for equality; since primary school, the idea of the only thing being "fair" is everyone having the same resources has been drilled into our minds. Let me present a hypothetical to those who don't see an issue with this: if you have a six-foot wall and two people, one over six feet tall and the other under six feet tall, who are both trying to see over the wall, equality dictates we watch one look over with ease and the other struggle on their tip-toes to peer over the top. What our society needs is equity; provide the shorter person with a chair and observe them both being able to see (Juda). Equal outcomes are far more important than equal opportunities, and seeing that is something that our society has struggled and continues to struggle with. Career options for people with disabilities used to be severely limited, but there has been a revolution of change. While today's system still isn't perfect, the implementation of protection laws, education laws, and employment programs pertaining to those with disabilities have helped to lessen the gap.

Our society tends to see something/someone who deviates from the "norm" as vulnerable. While it is necessary for protection acts to extend to people with disabilities, this is to protect their right to live their lives, not to protect them from life. Normal is a man-made concept that fails to take ingenuity and uniqueness into consideration. I am not normal and you are not normal. For someone to be normal they would have to be exceedingly artificial; no one person is going to fit into the idea of society perfectly. In the past, authorities had trouble recognizing this, but things began to change for the better in the 1970s. Take, for example, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits federal programs from discriminating against "otherwise qualified individuals." (Disability Rights History in WV). If they are qualified, what was the point of contention in the first place? Is the fact of a person existing outside a cookie cutter perspective of society truly that preposterous? Of course not; hence the act protecting the individual's right to independence and not the individual themselves.

Part of what determines career options is the educational foundation of a person. This, too, was a hard fight to win. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975) established the right of children with disabilities to a public school education in an integrated environment; in 1976, a year later, an amendment to the Higher Education Act of 1972 provided services to students with physical disabilities entering college (Disability Rights History in WV). Sometimes to be on equal ground with their peers a student is going to need a little boost – which is, of course, completely okay under the rules of equity. I myself struggled with a speech impediment in my youth and needed extra classes to help me communicate with others. Taking these classes did not make me lesser than my classmates; finishing the classes did not make me feel superior to those still in them. They were just a ladder helping me climb a wall that was only a step up for some people. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 speaks to this by ensuring each school provides assistive technology devices and services needed for a student to obtain a free appropriate education (Office of Special Education). We're all running the race of life, some of us are just taking different routes.

Perhaps most beneficial to the fight for equity are the employment programs
(See Raines p20)

District 4 First Place



Sophia Raines is a senior at Independence High School. During her high school career, she was involved in student council, peer leadership, and served as treasurer of the National Honor Society. She was also the Future Business Leaders of America president and Beta president. She's been published in the international online literary journal *Write the World Review* (a literary journal publishing standout teen writers ages 13-19).

She plans to carry a double major in psychology and creative writing. During her free time, she enjoys volunteering as a coach, writing, gardening, and growing gourds when the weather permits. ■



District 4 Second Place



Bailey Caraway is a senior at Greenbrier East High School and has maintained a 4.0 GPA. During high school, she took several Honors, Advanced Placement, and Dual Credit classes. She also acquired several college credits and certifications. She participated in the Student Government Association and was Senior Class President. She is a member of the National Honors Society, and a member of HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America) serving as Vice President.

She has participated in gymnastics since she was three, which led her to try out for the Greenbrier East Cheerleading team her sophomore year. She plans to pursue a career in physical therapy by majoring in Biomechanics at Marshall University. Being a student-athlete has helped her develop a strong, well-rounded skill set, especially in healthcare.

She also plans to minor in psychology. ■



Bailey Caraway

Greenbrier East High School

"Career Paths for Youth with Disabilities: The Past, Present, and Future."

In the past, people with disabilities have had difficult times finding career paths that would be accepting and suitable for them. In the 1900s people with disabilities were often treated very unfairly. They weren't given the same opportunities as other people in America, at the time. Often, people with disabilities would be sent to hospitals specialized for their disabilities and were never given the chance to even attempt to take part in a job. While researching on this particular topic, I stumbled upon the article, *A Civil Rights History: Americans with Disabilities*, which stated, "Some states passed laws forbidding people with disabilities from marrying or having children, which sometimes provoked forced sterilization." However, later in the same article it was discussed how laws were passed to integrate war veterans back into the workplace. Why couldn't congress pass laws to help integrate people with disabilities into the workplace? These examples show true struggles that people with disabilities were presented with in the past.

Thankfully, in 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act had been passed. According to U.S. Department of Labor, "This act prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in several areas, including employment, transportation, public accommodations, communications and access to state and local government programs and services." I believe that the Americans with Disabilities Act is one of the biggest successes.

Today, I believe that there are certainly several career paths for people with disabilities. One of the biggest and expanding career paths is technology. Technology is also going to be vastly important in the future, so I believe that it is definitely a good path to go down. For a lot of technology jobs, you can work remotely which would provide a good career option for people with disabilities who might not physically be able to commute to a job. There are also several career paths that would be good for innovative people. Some of these include: graphic designing, producing art for art galleries, or maybe even architecture.

I believe that in the future, there will be even more choices for career paths. From what I have observed throughout my life, people with disabilities tend to work part-time jobs. However, in the future I hope to see more people with disabilities at college, working in hospitals, working as teachers or professors, and working even more important jobs.

In conclusion, people with disabilities should be able to pursue any career that they put their mind to. In the past people with disabilities were very limited on the career paths they could pursue. Compared to the past, there are many more options for people with disabilities to choose as their career. I hope that we can continue to work to create even more opportunities for people with disabilities in the future. Of course, this wouldn't be possible if it weren't for one of the first milestones: the Americans with Disabilities Act.

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2023 Annual Disability History Essay Contest - District 5 Winners

Grant Shumaker Spring Valley High School

*"Career Paths for Youth with Disabilities:
The Past, Present, and Future."*

There is no price tag to place on a person, but we all have value. Similarly, there is no store that sells dignity though we all deserve to own it.

I believe that all people are worthy of a dignified life that contains mutual respect regardless of abilities or appearance. My life experience, with people with learning or physical disabilities have provided me insight into the topic of youth with disabilities. My exposure to individuals with varying levels of disability has helped me understand the importance of respecting someone's life. This is something I consider regardless of a person's ability or inability to adapt to a situation. Everyone deserves to live their life and prosper through work. Their life is constructed of all things that are important to them and is made unique because of their skills, their experiences and their capabilities. Those three elements shape the past, present and future of how people with disabilities can pursue and excel in careers.

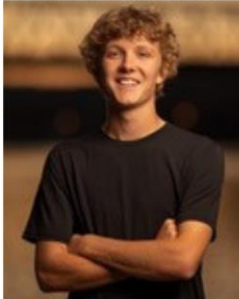
As a society we have heard the use of the term "glass ceiling" frequently regarding the equality shown to women pursuing career paths and social advancement. Perhaps that glass ceiling also once capped the potential for people with disabilities. With his signature on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, former President George H.W. Bush helped change the course of the opportunities available for people with disabilities, according to the US Department of Labor article titled "Disability and Employment: A Timeline." Although President Bush's act was promising for disabled workers, the businesses reacted in a way that did not allow these workers the same opportunities. Eight years after President Bush signed the ADA, President Clinton followed him by implementing a presidential task force that would deal with ensuring inclusiveness in business. In doing this, businesses across the country were immediately hiring workers with disabilities and they were given more equal opportunities.

For me as a young adult I have noticed that many of the disabled people that I have been surrounded by have special talents that are unique to them. I have noticed that they are creative people who can think outside of the box in ways others can't. We can learn a lesson from disabled workers because they are extremely intelligent, and they have a grittiness and willingness to work unlike many in our society today. In my personal experience from my community, we have a young man who works hard like no other. His life's love is coffee, and all varieties of it. His most predominate trait was how much he wanted to help. Shortly after graduating high school, he decided that he wanted to create a mobile coffee shop that would allow him to deliver coffee to elderly people who may not be able to get coffee on their own. For me, this taught me lessons that stuck with me and will continue to build me as a person sensitive to others' special talents. This young man never let anyone tell him what he could or couldn't accomplish. His greatest concern was helping people, which is a lesson that many of us could learn.

Going into the future, disabled workers can do whatever they wish, regardless of their disability. Technology has changed many things within our progressive world especially for people with disabilities. The 21st Century has allowed

(See Shumaker.p22)

District 5 First Place



Grant Shumaker is a senior at Spring Valley High School. In his high school career, he was the captain of the Varsity Baseball team, a Heisman Scholar Recipient, and the Mountain State Athletic Conference Student-Athlete of the Year. He was also an All-State baseball selection. The skills he possesses in terms of leadership and communication are remarkable.

Grant volunteers his time at OVP (Ohio Valley Physicians) Health and Facing Hunger Food Bank. He enjoys playing golf, watching movies, and spending time with family and friends. ■



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District 5 Second Place



Holley Riggs is a senior at Spring Valley High School. She maintained a 4.0 GPA throughout her high school career. For three years she has been involved with the Spring Valley High School dance team. She can clearly communicate her needs efficiently and is strong-minded.

Ms. Riggs volunteered her time helping with school-related activities and assisting neighboring communities when Eastern Kentucky was hit by a flood.

She enjoys spending her free time exercising and spending time with her family, friends, and dogs. She plans to attend Mountwest Community College to become a physical therapy assistant. ■



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Holley Jae Riggs Spring Valley High School

*"Career Paths for Youth with Disabilities:
The Past, Present, and Future"*

Up until the last twenty-five years of the twentieth century, America viewed children with disabilities as commodities to be accommodated rather than educated and integrated. Career paths for youths and young adults with disabilities were often limited to menial jobs with little to no hope of advancement, recognition, or fulfillment.

The Disability Employment Act of the 1940's promised some sort of security to people with disabilities. This act prohibited "covered employers from discriminating against people with disabilities in all employment-related activities, including hiring, pay, benefits, firing and promotions. Covered employers include private businesses, educational institutions, employment agencies, labor organizations, and state and local government entities with 15 or more employees" (www.dol.gov). Although this act did not eliminate all the obstacles they faced, it certainly benefited them until 1975.

In 1975, Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) to protect "the rights of, meeting the individual needs of, and improving the results for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and their families" (sites.ed.gov). This law's name became the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990 (sites.ed.gov).

People with disabilities were treated as less than. They were often institutionalized for their so called "conditions." Some were not even allowed to step foot into a school because of something out of their control. Consequently, this had a negative impact on their education, social skills, friendships, and their physical health. Although their disability may have been observable, often the most damaging effects were emotional. Not being granted with the same opportunities would make someone with a disability feel as if they do not belong in the same society they see around them day to day. They were often relegated to such menial jobs as janitors, dishwashers, and other low skilled jobs. They were too often seen as nothing more than their disability.

Now people with disabilities can be found in nearly field of endeavor. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 made it unlawful for employers to discriminate against people with disabilities in such areas as recruitment, pay, training, job assignments, and many others. Because of the leveling of this employment field, many of the constraints that people with disabilities used to face have been removed or reduced.

Today's society is becoming more equitable in opening access to the American Dream. No one should be denied the fruits of prosperity that should be promised to all Americans--both those with and without disabilities. Perhaps one day, we may elect a President with a disability because he or she will be the best person for the job. No more hiding like Franklin D. Roosevelt. ■

2023 Annual Disability History Essay Contest - District 6 Winners

Brooke Jacobs Frankfort High School

"Career Paths for Youth with Disabilities: The Past, Present, and Future"

You can be anything you want when you grow up! Many children hear this a million times throughout their childhood, but can they? Over the past 30 years the ADA has helped and supported numerous people with disabilities obtain, keep, and prosper in countless careers. As a type 1 diabetic, this topic impacts many facets of my life as I move from high school to college. I must be aware of all the precautions I should take before I head down my career path.

Knowledge and information solve most problems. In the past, many people with disabilities were not employed because companies were not in the know of the disabilities of those in search for jobs. Companies and employment agencies wouldn't hire people with a disability and look beyond their resume just because they saw that they had a disability. Without being in the know of those who have disabilities, companies didn't recognize that there were care plans and actions that could've been taken to make an accommodating workplace. The access to the internet also made this hard for companies to realize further actions were an option. Additional research into a certain disability in the workplace was also very hard to do since google wasn't a thing then.

As for today, people with disabilities are supported through numerous laws. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is an act that forbids intolerance against those with a disability. This law is heavily used and known throughout all employers and companies today. It is forced and utilized in industries throughout the United States. The ADA also protects those with disabilities and helps us advocate for our work life. Compared to the past, we know our rights and how we should be treated in and out of the workplace. With google being as prevalent as it is, companies, industries, and employers have more access to research and use google to understand those with disabilities. The technology and acts that have been made and invented throughout history have increasingly helped those with disabilities find and create better lives for themselves through their jobs.

In the near future, the technology that will be advanced, developed, and invented can ultimately change the world that people with disabilities have to face. With the technological world continually improving, the advancements could forever change and lessen the struggles that we face every day. Considering the amount of jobs that are expanding and opening to people with disabilities in the present, it is possible that all jobs will allow people like me to work in. ■

District 6 First Place



Brooke Jacobs is a senior at Frankfort High School. During high school, she achieved the titles of Student of the Month, Homecoming Queen, All Area, All PVC, and All-Region for Cross-Country, Cross-Country State Qualifier, and Track State Qualifier. In addition, she is a member of the National Honor Society, National Technical Honor Society, Mu Alpha Theta, Secretary, Falcon Fanatic, and Student Section Leader.

Brooke has completed more than 200 hours of community service. As a counselor-in-training, she served a group of eight young diabetic girls at Camp Kno Koma, a diabetes camp. Additionally, she was a counselor for 20 children at a local camp for 6th graders.

Since 2020, she has been running her own vinyl and sticker company, 1st Chance Designs. She plans to attend Davis & Elkins College to study Chemistry and also to major in Product Design. She plans to run for the cross-country and track teams. ■



District 6 Second Place



Jason Bednarski is a senior at Martinsburg High School. During high school, he was involved in the Student Council, ACE (Academic Competition of Excellence), and the National Honors Society (NHS). His greatest accomplishments include getting invited to ACE and getting scholarships to pay for college.

The ACE (Academic Competition of Excellence) and the NHS (National Honors Society) are two of the organizations where Mr. Bednarski volunteers. During his free time, he enjoys swimming, reading, and playing video games with his friends and family. ■



Jason Bednarski Martinsburg High School

"Career Paths for Youth with Disabilities: The Past, Present, and Future"

Historically, people with disabilities have been unfairly treated, from being forced to be sterilized, being killed, and being left out of important legislation. There are still many challenges people with disabilities face today. Luckily there have been many successes for people with disabilities like those from Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who is the first person with a disability to be elected president, and the Americans with Disabilities Act which helped people with disabilities get jobs.

For much of history, people that had physical or mental disabilities were separated from society, treated poorly, and looked down upon for something that they could not help. Some examples of these difficult times for people with disabilities include, in 1907, when the state of Indiana enacted the Eugenic Sterilization for People with Disabilities. This was a law that required anyone with a mental or physical disability to be sterilized in institutions, and then in 1927, compulsory sterilization was ruled constitutional. Another horrible thing that happened to people with disabilities was during World War II when Adolph Hitler ordered widespread "mercy killing" of the disabled. During this program 75,000-250,000 people with disabilities were killed. I became deeply saddened when I learned that these events had happened to people with disabilities just because they were different from others. Since I am a person that has a physical disability, Muscular Dystrophy, a degenerative muscle disease, this was hard for me to hear because I can just imagine if I were born and lived during World War II in Europe I potentially could have been killed or forced into an institution. Another disturbing thing happened when the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964 because even though it helped end discrimination against African Americans and women in the workplace, it did not include any provisions for people with disabilities. Therefore, people with disabilities continued to be discriminated against in the workplace and were denied equal opportunities to participate in and contribute to society. These were just some of the more recent struggles that people with disabilities have faced. Required sterilization, being systematically killed by the Nazis during World War II, and being left out when the United States passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, all left disabled people vulnerable, threatened and excluded. Thankfully there was a United States President, who lived with a disability, and was able to help shed light on the equal abilities possessed by people with disabilities, which helped to slowly change attitudes and bring change.

Even though 75,000-250,000 people with disabilities were killed by the Nazis in World War II. Successes for people who had disabilities started when Franklin Delano Roosevelt who was paralyzed from the waist down after contracting polio on a vacation was elected President in 1932. He was the first President to be elected that had a disability, which gave hope to everyone with a disability because they believed more legislation would be passed to benefit people with disabilities. Another immense success for people with disabilities happened on August 14, 1935, when President Franklin Roosevelt signed into law the Social Security Act, this is a program that established permanent assistance for adults with disabilities. Both successes were very encouraging for people with disabilities because they were now given support from the government, at least financially, even though they still could not be in the workforce equally with non-disabled people. Then in 1947 there was a National "Employ the

WV Division of Rehabilitation Services Recognizes Exemplary Employers and Partners



WV Division of Rehabilitation Services & Program Partner Fairs



**STATEWIDE
VIRTUAL
JOB FAIR**

**Wednesday,
September 6
1:00 - 3:30**

Registration is now open for West Virginia employers and job seekers!

**WorkForce
WEST VIRGINIA**
A proud partner of the
AmericanJobCenter network



2023 Freedom Car Show – WV SILC & Partners



2023 WV DRS Ability Works Recognition Ceremony - State Winner

Keonea Cooper, State Winner



Excerpt from Keonea's Article:

After graduating from Huntington High School, Keonea approached the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) because she was interested in getting a job. DRS Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Joy Winters explained that Keonea had a stroke when she was an infant, which left her with a learning disability and weakness in some of her extremities...

Keonea is happy with her job and plans to stay there indefinitely. She really enjoys helping people at the store, and she is proud of her accomplishments, the most recent of which was earning her purple belt in karate...

Keonea contributes a lot to the store. "Keonea just brings a shining light into the store. One of the things Keonea does is she's always eager to help and always eager to interact with the customers," Finster explained. "She's friendly and always has a smile on her face. Regardless of what kind of day you're having, Keonea is going to do something to make it brighter."

2023 WV DRS Ability Works Recognition Ceremony - District Winners



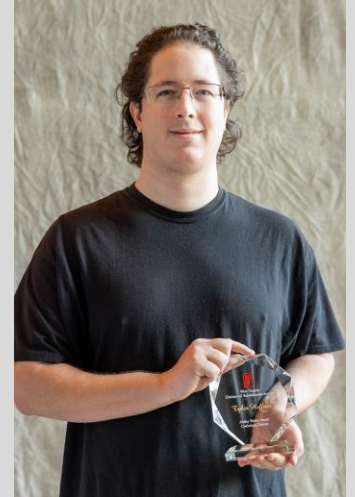
Amber Sweet

Ryan Willis



John McDowell

Andrew Rager



Tyler Heffner



WEST VIRGINIA DIVISION OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

Our WV State Rehabilitation Council values the WV Division of Rehabilitation Services leadership, counselors, and entire staff who embody unique skills that fit together perfectly to create a culture of quality which echoes throughout programs and services for consumers' success.

WV DRS stands on their mission, which states, "Together, we enable and empower individuals with disabilities to work and to live independently by providing individualized services to consumers and employers." It is rewarding to witness all that WV DRS accomplishes, not for recognition, but for consumers. WV DRS has several programs and partnerships throughout communities across the entire state, assuring the consumers have an array of opportunities to succeed. WV DRS continues to be recognized nationally as an exceptional vocational rehabilitation state agency, across numerous rankings. Our Council is honored to be aligned with WV DRS excellence.

WV DRS OVERVIEW:

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) assists youth and adults with disabilities (ages 14 and up) on their path to work and live independently. DRS can deliver a multitude of possibilities to empower successful work opportunities for individuals with disabilities throughout their lifetime.

DRS provides vocational services that help individuals with disabilities prepare for, obtain, regain, maintain or advance in employment. Through DRS' statewide field offices, vocational rehabilitation counselors help consumers assess interests and abilities, as well as explore career options to develop individualized employment plans that will empower each person to meet his or her unique employment goals.

Services include: • Career exploration activities • Vocational training • College assistance • Work-based learning experiences • Job coaching • On-the-job training, internships or apprenticeships • Résumé development • Job search assistance • Assistive technology • Workplace accommodations

DRS also supports employers in their quest to include people with disabilities in the workforce.

DRS' rehabilitation professionals also aid West Virginia's businesses and employers by being their leading employment resource to include or to retain people with disabilities in their workforce. DRS can help with staffing, job retention and disability-related employment issues, as well as accessibility evaluations of businesses and worksites.

WEST VIRGINIA DIVISION OF REHABILITATION SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT STATISTICS FOR FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2023

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF STATE REHABILITATION INDIVIDUALS IN FFY 2023:

NUMBER & PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUALS FROM EACH DISTRICT SERVED FFY 2023

District 1	2,111	17.3%
District 2	1,684	13.8%
District 3	1,368	11.2%
District 4	3,079	25.3%
District 5	2,555	21.0%
District 6	1,375	11.3%
TOTAL / STATEWIDE	12,172	100.0%

**EDUCATION AT TIME OF INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT (IPE) OF
INDIVIDUALS VOCATIONALLY REHABILITATED FFY 2023**

EDUCATION LEVEL	NUMBER & PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUALS	
High School Diploma, Equivalency, or Special Education Certificate	186	14.58
Enrolled in High School	138	10.82
One or More Years of Postsecondary Education	27	2.12
Attained Post Secondary Certification, License, or Educational Certificate (non-degree)	5	0.39
Associate's Degree	10	0.78
Bachelor's degree	16	1.25
Degree Beyond a Bachelor's Degree	6	0.47
Less than High School Diploma, Not Attending at Time of IPE	888	69.59
TOTAL	1,276	100.00

AGE AT APPLICATION OF INDIVIDUALS VOCATIONALLY REHABILITATED FFY 2023

AGE	NUMBER & PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUALS	
Less than 20	307	24.1%
20 through 34	191	15.0%
35 through 44	116	9.1%
45 through 64	484	37.9%
65 and over	178	13.9%
TOTAL	1,276	100.0%

RACE OF INDIVIDUALS VOCATIONALLY REHABILITATED FFY 2023		
RACE	NUMBER & PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUALS	
White or Caucasian	1,200	94.0%
Black or African American	51	4.0%
American Indian or Alaska Native	7	0.5%
Asian	7	0.5%
Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander	1	0.1%
Hispanic or Latino	7	0.5%
Other	3	0.2%
TOTAL	1,276	100.0%

GENDER OF INDIVIDUALS VOCATIONALLY REHABILITATED FFY 2023		
GENDER	NUMBER & PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUALS	
Male	633	49.6%
Female	642	50.3%
Did Not Self Identify	1	0.1%
TOTAL	1,276	100.0%

REFERRAL SOURCE OF INDIVIDUALS VOCATIONALLY REHABILITATED FFY 2023	NUMBER & PERCENTAGES	
Adult Education and Literacy	2	0.2%
Centers for Independent Living	1	0.1%
Community Rehabilitation Programs	6	0.5%
Consumer Organizations or Advocacy Groups	2	0.2%
Corrections/Other (Adult 18+ NOT direct referral by WV	0	0.0%
Div of Corrections to DRS/Corrections prog.)	1	0.1%
Educational Institutions (elementary/secondary)	199	15.6%
Educational Institutions (post-secondary)	62	4.9%
Employers	14	1.1%
Family/Friends	195	15.3%
Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Providers	1	0.1%
Jobs and Hope	1	0.1%
Medical Health Provider (Public or Private)	257	20.1%
Mental Health Provider (Public or Private)	27	2.1%
Other One-stop Partner	8	0.6%
Other Sources	28	2.2%
Other State Agencies	5	0.4%
Other VR State Agencies	2	0.2%
Other WIOA-funded Programs	3	0.2%
Public Housing Authority	1	0.1%
Self-referral	458	35.9%
Social Security Program (DDS)	2	0.2%
Welfare Agency (State or Local Government)	1	0.1%
Total	1,276	100.0%

PRIMARY DISABLING CONDITION OF INDIVIDUALS VOCATIONALLY REHABILITATED FFY 2023

<u>SENSORY/COMMUNICATIVE IMPAIRMENTS:</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
Blindness	11	0.9%
Other visual impairment	24	1.9%
Deafness, Primary Communication Visual	6	0.5%
Deafness, Primary Communication Auditory	32	2.5%
Hearing Loss, Primary Communication Visual	7	0.5%
Hearing Loss, Primary Communication Auditory	622	48.7%
Other Hearing Impairments (Tinnitus, Meniere's Disease, hyperacusis, etc.)	6	0.5%
Deaf-Blindness	0	0.0%
Communicative Impairments (expressive/receptive)	3	0.2%
<u>PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS:</u>	-	-
Mobility Orthopedic/Neurological Impairments	50	3.9%
Manipulation/Dexterity Orthopedic/Neurological Impairments	11	0.9%
Both mobility and Manipulation/Dexterity Orthopedic/Neurological Impairments	17	1.3%
Other Orthopedic Impairments (e.g., limited range of motion)	28	2.2%
Respiratory Impairments	7	0.5%
General Physical Debilitation (fatigue, weakness, pain, etc.)	28	2.2%
Other Physical Impairments (not listed above)	53	4.2%
<u>MENTAL IMPAIRMENTS:</u>	-	-
Cognitive Impairments (impairments involving learning, thinking, processing information and concentration.	204	16.0%
Psychosocial Impairments (interpersonal and behavioral impairments, difficulty coping)	162	12.7%
Other Mental Impairments	5	0.4%
Total	1,276	100.0%

COUNTY OF INDIVIDUALS VOCATIONALLY REHABILITATED IN FFY 2023 (1 of 2)

Barbour	11	0.9%
Berkeley	21	1.6%
Boone	12	0.9%
Braxton	5	0.4%
Brooke	13	1.0%
Cabell	59	4.6%
Calhoun	1	0.1%
Clay	2	0.2%
Doddridge	3	0.2%
Fayette	50	3.9%
Gilmer	9	0.7%
Grant	22	1.7%
Greenbrier	41	3.2%
Hampshire	21	1.6%
Hancock	24	1.9%
Hardy	61	4.8%
Harrison	57	4.5%
Jackson	42	3.3%
Jefferson	9	0.7%
Kanawha	108	8.5%
Lewis	11	0.9%
Lincoln	7	0.5%
Logan	40	3.1%
Marion	38	3.0%
Marshall	23	1.8%
Mason	8	0.6%
McDowell	21	1.6%
Mercer	47	3.7%

COUNTY OF INDIVIDUALS VOCATIONALLY REHABILITATED IN FFY 2023 (2 of 2)

Mineral	25	2.0%
Mingo	17	1.3%
Monongalia	61	4.8%
Monroe	13	1.0%
Morgan	6	0.5%
Nicholas	19	1.5%
Ohio	21	1.6%
Pendleton	11	0.9%
Pleasants	2	0.2%
Pocahontas	10	0.8%
Preston	12	0.9%
Putnam	19	1.5%
Raleigh	44	3.4%
Randolph	34	2.7%
Ritchie	6	0.5%
Roane	10	0.8%
Summers	8	0.6%
Taylor	4	0.3%
Tucker	10	0.8%
Tyler	6	0.5%
Upshur	26	2.0%
Wayne	16	1.3%
Webster	6	0.5%
Wetzel	9	0.7%
Wirt	3	0.2%
Wood	36	2.8%
Wyoming	35	2.7%
Out Of State	41	3.2%
TOTAL WV	1,276	100.0%

OCCUPATION OF INDIVIDUALS VOCATIONALLY REHABILITATED IN FFY 2023

Management Occupations	97	7.6%
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	40	3.1%
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	12	0.9%
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	13	1.0%
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	15	1.2%
Community and Social Services Occupations	67	5.3%
Legal Occupations	7	0.5%
Education, Training, and Library Occupations	99	7.8%
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	16	1.3%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	122	9.6%
Healthcare Support Occupations	73	5.7%
Protective Service Occupations	35	2.7%
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	67	5.3%
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	50	3.9%
Personal Care and Service Occupations	45	3.5%
Sales and Related Occupations	64	5.0%
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	128	10.0%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	6	0.5%
Construction and Extraction Occupations	60	4.7%
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	58	4.5%
Production Occupations	82	6.4%
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	118	9.2%
Military Specific Occupations	0	0.0%
Randolph-Sheppard Vending Facility Clerk	0	0.0%
Randolph-Sheppard Vending Facility Operator	2	0.2%
Homemaker*	0	0.0%
Unpaid Family Worker*	0	0.0%
Total	1,276	100.0%

**OCCUPATION & EARNINGS OF CONSUMERS VOCATIONALLY
REHABILITATED IN FFY 2023**

Number of individuals rehabilitated (with an employment outcome)	1,276
Number (Percent) of vocationally rehabilitated individuals placed in competitive employment	1,276
	(100%)
Number of individuals with significant disabilities served	10,480
Total number of clients served	12,172
TOTAL ANNUAL EARNINGS OF THOSE RECEIVING VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES	
	ffy2023
AT REFERRAL	\$32,436,898
AFTER REHABILITATION	\$48,381,736
Percentage increase in annual earnings due to rehabilitation	49%

WV SRC REPORT OF SURVEY FINDINGS

WV DRS CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

OCTOBER 2022 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2023

WEST VIRGINIA STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

PREPARED BY DENETTA DOWLER, ED. D. DECEMBER 2023

WV SRC Report of Survey Findings

WV DRS CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

(October 2022 – September 2023)

OVERVIEW:

The WV State Rehabilitation Council coordinated with the WV Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) to conduct a survey of consumer satisfaction with DRS services in West Virginia. The Council developed an instrument that asked consumers to rate their level of agreement with statements about the services they may have received through WV DRS. Consumers were also asked about specific information related to jobs and to their rights as a consumer. A final section included open-ended items designed to determine the consumers' opinion about program changes or improvements that could be made. The surveys were distributed during the year to consumers whose cases were closed in Status 26 (successful closure) or Status 08, 28, 30, or 38 (unsuccessful closure) during October 2022 to September 2023.

The composition of the sample for this year is similar to the previous year in terms of age of respondents and disability category. The impact of hearing-related services for that population leads to very high levels of satisfaction with services. Several responders indicated that receiving hearing services improved both their work life and their quality of life overall. As evidenced by the results of this survey, the ability of WV DRS to provide hearing-related services contributes greatly to the ability of older West Virginians to remain in the workforce.

Report of Survey Findings

WV DRS CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

SUMMARY OF DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

DEMOGRAPHICS INFORMATION:

District. In this sample, District 2 was above the expected percentage of the total at 24%. Districts 5 and 6 had the lowest percentage of respondents at 12% and 13%, respectively. The 227 respondents who reported county information represent 46 of the 55 counties in West Virginia.

Disabling Condition. People most often reported having sensory disabilities at 60% of the 233 people who responded to this question. Other disability categories included Motor (8.6%), Cognitive (15%), Mental Health (3.9%), and Other/Various (11.6%).

Closure Status. In this sample, 71.7% (185 people) had successfully completed their rehabilitation plan (Status 26). Status 08 represented 2.7% of the sample; 17.1% were closed in Status 28; and 8.5% were Closure Status 30. There were no Status 38 closures in this sample.

Age of respondents. Of the 235 surveys returned with age information, 18% were 24 years old or younger; 23% were in the 25 to 50 age group; 46% were between 51 and 70 years old; and 13% were more than 70 years of age. There is a trend over the past few years toward older respondents. Again, this year, more than half of the respondents (59%) reported they were more than 50 years old at the time they completed the survey.

Work Status of Respondents. Work status was provided by 243 people. Of these, 71% reported that they were working at the time of the survey. Four percent of responders said they were looking for work, 8% said they were unable to work, 6% were in school or training, 10% reported that they were retired, and less than 1% said that they don't want to work.

Report of Survey Findings

WV DRS CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

SUMMARY OF RIGHTS INFORMATION AND SATISFACTION SCALE ITEMS

RIGHTS INFORMATION:

The consumers were asked to indicate the rights information they were given. There were 221 individuals who responded that at least one right had been explained. Of these, 42% indicated that all rights were explained. Most individuals indicated that they had received several rights explanations. Thus, 85% of consumers recalled having been told 68% of the possible rights information. This represents a 5% increase in rights information provided over the previous survey period.

SATISFACTION SCALE ITEMS:

The level of satisfaction for the other items is somewhat lower for the 2 years. Overall, 3 items were rated at less than 80% agreement and 5 were rated at 90% agreement or higher.

The number of people who responded for each item is listed in the table along with the number of people who said an item was not applicable to their case (NA). It is interesting to note that the items that had the lowest rating were also the items most often marked as NA. For example, 111 people rated Item 3 (identify an appropriate career) at 79% agreement and 112 people said it was NA.

There are dramatic differences in satisfaction level for the Transitioning Youth group versus the All-Others group. Transitioning Youth have traditionally expressed a lower level of satisfaction with services. This year, the mean satisfaction level across all items was 74% for Transitioning Youth versus 92% for All-Others.

Report of Survey Findings

WV DRS CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

SUMMARY OF OPEN-ENDED ITEMS

OPEN-ENDED ITEMS:

Which service(s) offered by DRS did you find the most helpful? There were 197 responses to this question with 14 people saying “all” of the services were helpful and 19 people saying none of the services were helpful. The others listed Hearing-related services (96 people), Access/Process-related services (17), Education/Training related (13), Employment related services (13), Equipment related (9), or Other/Various services (8).

What needs do you have that were not addressed by DRS? Of the 180 people who responded, 136 said they had no additional service needs and 6 people said none of their needs were met by DRS. The other comments could be categorized as needs related to Employment (11), Education (7), Hearing (4), and Other/Various needs (16).

How could the Division of Rehabilitation improve services? Of the 126 responses to this item, 64 people said that they had no suggestions or that they were satisfied and/or no improvements were needed. There were 62 suggestions for improvements in the areas of Communication (15), Staffing (9), and Advertising (6), Employment (5), Hearing services (4), Transportation (4), Timeliness (3), and Other (16).

Do you have any other comments? There were 96 responses to this question. They could be categorized as Positive Comments (64), Negative Comments (15), Explanations (6), and Suggestions (6). People expressed gratitude for specific services they received, but the positive comments were largely expressions of appreciation for the quality of DRS counselors and staff.

WV DRS District Offices

West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services 304-356-2060 or 800-642-8207

District 1: Charleston

- Charleston District & Branch Office
601 57th Street SE, Charleston, WV 25304
304-356-2371
- Point Pleasant Branch Office
2807 Jackson Ave. Ste. 200, Point Pleasant, WV 25550
304-675-0867
- Ripley Branch Office
206 Stone Drive, Ripley, WV 25271
304-373-0313
- Spencer Branch Office
321 Market Street, Spencer, WV 25276
304-927-0954
- Teays Valley Branch Office
115 Liberty Square, Hurricane, WV 25526
304-760-7082

District 2: Clarksburg

- Clarksburg District & Branch Office
153 West Main St. Suite F. Clarksburg, WV 26301
304-625-6044
- Elkins Branch Office
1025 North Randolph Ave., Elkins, WV 26241
304-637-0205
- Fairmont Branch Office
416 Adams St., Suite 240, Fairmont, WV 26554
304-367-2714
- Morgantown Branch Office
Sabraton Plaza 1415 Earl Core Rd.
Morgantown, WV 26505
304-285-3155
- Weston Branch Office
306 Market Place Mall, Weston, WV 26452
304-269-0547

District 3: Wheeling

- Parkersburg Branch Office
State Office Bldg. 400 5th St.,
Parkersburg, WV 26101
304-420-4580
- New Martinsville Office
WV Northern Community College Itinerant Office
141 Main Street,
New Martinsville, WV 26155
304-455-4688
- Wheeling District & Branch Office
1324 Chapline St., Suite 200,
Wheeling, WV 26003
304-238-1092
- Weirton Branch Office
100 Municipal Plaza Suite 200,
Weirton, WV 26062
304-723-5311

District 4: Beckley

- Beckley District & Branch Office
800 New River Town Center,
Beckley, WV 25801
304-256-6900
- Lewisburg Branch Office
3293 Jefferson St. N. Suite 105
Lewisburg, WV 24901-5733
304-647-7515
- Princeton Branch Office
195 Davis Street,
Princeton, WV 24739
304-425-1256
- Summersville Branch Office
830 Northside Dr. Suite 113
Summersville, WV 26651
304-872-0813

WV DRS District Offices

District 5: Huntington

- Huntington District & Branch Office
2699 Park Ave. Suite 200,
Huntington, WV 25704
304-528-5585
- Marshall University
Prichard Hall, Room 113,
Huntington, WV 25755
304-696-2394
- Cabell Midland High School
2300 US Route 60 East,
Ona, WV 25545
304-743-7496
- Huntington High School
Highlander Way,
Huntington, WV 25701
304-528-6511
- Logan Branch Office
130 Stratton St. Suite 231,
Logan, WV 25601
304-792-7060
- Mullens Branch Office
316 Howard Avenue,
Mullens, WV 25882
304-294-5653
- Welch Branch Office
110 Park Avenue,
Welch, WV 24801
304-436-3175

District 6: Martinsburg

- Keyser Branch Office
67 North Tornado Way,
Keyser, WV 26726
304-788-2313
- Martinsburg District & Branch Office
489 Mid Atlantic Parkway, Suite 2
Martinsburg, WV 25404
304-267-0005
- Moorefield Branch Office
151 Robert C. Byrd Industrial Park RD, Ste 3
Moorefield, WV 26836
304-538-2701
- Romney Branch Office
WV Schools for the Deaf and Blind
301 E. Main Street,
Romney, WV 26757
304-822-4806



NCSRC

NATIONAL COALITION OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCILS, INC.

NCSRC MISSION

On behalf of people with disabilities, our national membership coalition will advocate for and work in partnership with the national public vocational rehabilitation system's continual quest for excellence.

NCSRC VISION

NCSRC will be the premiere national organization of the consumer voice to enhance the employment opportunities of persons with disabilities through the public vocational rehabilitation system.

NCSRC CORE VALUES

INTEGRITY - We are honest and straightforward in all that we do. We treat everyone with dignity and respect. We act responsibly with resources entrusted to us. We are accountable and act in accordance with these values.

COMMITMENT – We support the full implementation and enforcement of disability non – discrimination laws, particularly the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended and the American with Disabilities Act of 1990.

EXCELLENCE – We trust that customers of public vocational rehabilitation will be empowered to make choices which lead to ultimate independence.

ADVOCACY – We will work to educate and inform the public and government policy makers regarding issues affecting people with disabilities

DIVERSITY – We will uphold a broad definition of diversity that honors and appreciates disability alongside race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, and religion as an integral part of the human experience.

LEADERSHIP – We will foster leadership among people with disabilities that upholds excellence, quality and inclusive opportunities.

NCSRC

In November 2005, a handful of people affiliated with their State Rehabilitation Councils (SRC), including West Virginia, shared lunch during the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Conference in San Diego, California. The group began considering the benefits and drawbacks of establishing a national organization. Those present were not elite, some were Governor-appointed volunteers serving on their respective Councils; others were staff with the sole responsibility of working for a Council while some were agency staff assigned to provide support to their respective SRC.

There was also diversity in the structure of those Councils – those who were well-resourced while others had no budget. The various states and territories included representation from agencies with Blind and general programs as well as those with combined programs. Despite the notable differences, there was a great deal in common.

That common ground and the power of the collective potential is what led a motivated core of individuals to move forward from brainstorming to organizing. A Board of Directors was formed and with the support of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) has convened national conference calls of the SRCs on a quarterly basis focusing on topics members have requested to enhance their Councils.

NCSRC provides quarterly free conference calls with topics requested by members. These calls are facilitated by a Board member(s) or guest speaker to provide training, resources and networking for Councils. The topics are posted on the NCSRC website and emails are sent prior to the calls to Council Chairpersons & liaisons to share with their members. These calls are for any SRC member or VR staff person. In addition, the Board of Directors meets on a monthly basis to further the structure and development of the NCSRC.

For the past several years prior to each CSAVR Conference in the spring and fall, the NCSRC has been providing two (2) full days of training for Council members to become more educated, opportunity to network with other states, given outlines of detailed responsibilities and the tools needed to have an effective Council. Attendees offer topics areas in which they would desire more training during conference calls and at each training.

Special Acknowledgments

The WV SRC would not be as successful and knowledgeable without the relationship, guidance and expertise of the leadership and staff of WV DRS (Agency). We are grateful for the continuous Agency information you give us, Agency presentations, involvement in State and National events, inclusion with CSAVR and your support for our role with the NCSRC. WV SRC respects WV DRS' devoted support and services for every milestone throughout consumers' vocational rehabilitation and successful careers, breaking one glass ceiling after the next. We are grateful to each of the Agency for providing us the opportunity to be recognized as a national model. Your daily support is astounding.

Special thanks to:

- Pisnu Bua-lam, Director
- Richard Ward
- Zeke Hampton
- Michelle James
- Julie Daff
- Sarah Bias
- Candice Ward
- Angela Bearfield
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