

2014



Healthy People. Healthy Communities.

GOVERNOR'S REPORT MONTANA'S STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

7,755

Individuals served by Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services (VRBS)

1,108

Individuals served by Independent Living Services

838

Individuals served by Montana Telecommunications Access Program

620

Individuals served by Older Blind Services

82

Individuals served by Visual Medical Services

309

Individuals served by Extended Employment Services

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION & BLIND SERVICES (VRBS) STATS AT A GLANCE

Successful Closures	
Year	# of Closures
2012	830
2013	896
2014	860

Average Wage of Closures	
Year	Hourly Wage
2012	\$11.90
2013	\$12.16
2014	\$11.94

Disability Type Summary	
Type of Disability	Percentage of those served in 2014
Physical Disabilities	32%
Mental Disabilities	57%
Sensory Disabilities	11%

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STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (SRC)



MESSAGE FROM THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

In order to meet its mission, the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) actively promoted and supported the funding and operation of Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services (VRBS) through many activities across the state during the past year. This report highlights many of those activities.

The dignity, pride and sense of purpose gained through employment of individuals with disabilities are incalculable. The financial gain afforded VRBS program participants, along with the corresponding tax and other benefits to Montana are significant. Through this report, we confirm the commitment of the SRC members to work diligently on behalf of individuals with disabilities. We will continue to assist and advise VRBS to empower all individuals with disabilities to achieve competitive employment and independence in their communities to the benefit of themselves and Montana.

Rick Heitz, SRC Chairperson

Mission: The State Rehabilitation Council advises and works with the Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services Program to improve policies, programs, delivery of services to consumers, and methods for reaching potential consumers and employers.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Shaunda Albert - Pablo	Rick Heitz, Chair - Kalispell	Tom Osborn - Black Eagle
Mona Amundson - Glasgow	Chanda Hermanson - Helena	Michelle Pickell - Lolo
Amy Capolupo - Missoula	Rosalie Hollimon - Great Falls	Frank Podobnik - Helena
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Charlotte Harasymczuk - Billings	Jim Marks, Ex Officio - Helena	Mike Woods, Vice Chair - Billings
Robin Haux - Montana City	Lois McElravy - Missoula	Linda Zermeno - Billings

For more information on VRBS, please visit our website: www.vocrehab.mt.gov

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SUCCESS STORY



A 24 year old man with a cognitive disability from a rural community with an unemployment rate of 17% came to VRBS for assistance in gaining employment. With the help of a job developer a work experience was arranged with the local grocer.

The employer was very interested in assisting the young man to be effective at the worksite, and worked with the counselor to concentrate on a specific set of skills. All of the co-workers were very helpful and supportive, which really pleased the young man.

At the end of the 40 hour work experience, the man was offered a job to work as a courtesy clerk for 20 hours per week.

Of particular importance in this case was the concept of job carving. Positions in this small store usually involved working multiple duties. However, the employer was willing to job carve specific courtesy clerk duties for this young man, which was a critical factor in his success.

BLIND SERVICES SUCCESS STORY

A man with congenital blindness needed extensive training in the area of independent living, mobility, and work skills. He applied for services after returning to Montana from living in California. It was arranged for the man to attend a comprehensive training program for the blind. In addition, a referral was made for supported living services.

After completing comprehensive training, the man began to work with a local job developer. Soft skills, transportation, mobility instruction, job development, and short term job supports were provided. These efforts resulted in a job with a local hotel working about 8 hours a week.

Later, the counselor was notified that the man had the opportunity to increase his hours in employment. The case was opened in post-employment services and additional training was provided. The man took on additional janitorial duties and was able to work 16 hours per week.

He is very pleased. He has a job he likes, has transportation arranged to go to work, his Social Security benefits are intact, and he lives in his own apartment with supports. As a result of his own efforts and comprehensive VR services he is significantly more independent and has a great job.



TRANSITION SUCCESS STORY



For youth, the most common transition is the change from being a student to becoming a worker. This is an example of such a transition. It begins with educational services, merges with cooperation between school personnel and VRBS, and then continues with successful job placement through coordination with a community rehabilitation program.

This story starts when the student was in the 8th grade. While attending middle school, she began her transition services through completion of work experience at the school store. This was the first step in her learning the skills required for future employment.

As she continued the transition process and began high school classes, she was encouraged to participate in similar work experience opportunities within the school setting.

Direct support from her case manager and her transition coordinator provided assistance with identifying work interests, increasing awareness of her skills and abilities, enrolling in classes designed to develop work skills, and providing opportunities to participate in further work experience. She participated in a social skills group to help her understand appropriate social interactions. Work experience placements were provided with increasing amounts of responsibility to develop work readiness. She progressed from delivering attendance sheets and hall passes to making mochas in the school store. When she identified a strong interest in child care, services were customized to develop these skills. She completed courses in child development and volunteered in the exceptionalities class.

During her senior year, her transition services continued with the added support of a VRBS counselor. She was assisted with counseling and guidance, use of the Montana Career Information System, and a review of training options. Her potential impediments to employment were identified and ways to address these barriers were discussed with her and school staff. Her Individualized Education Plan and her Individualized Plan for Employment were coordinated to help achieve her work goals. The transition coordinator placed her in a community work experience with Head Start, and provided individualized bus training for her to access work. She was mentored throughout her work experience placement. The case manager helped to ensure that the student understood employer expectations and reinforced appropriate work behavior. All the transition team members worked with her to reinforce the behavior and skills needed for successful employment.

Upon graduation from high school, her transition services continued. VRBS assisted with referral to workshops at the local Job Service. VRBS funded her participation in a self-advocacy class. She was assisted in job seeking and on the job supports.

She was hired as a child care provider. Her successful transition was made possible through coordination with the various members of her transition team including school personnel, her VRBS counselor, and her employment specialist.

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Recommendations:

- Complete analysis of potential groups of unserved/underserved populations. Also, do an analysis of local population data sets that are now available through the census. Using this information, compare the distribution of disabilities throughout Montana with the distribution of VRBS resources throughout the state.
- Strengthen networking between VRBS and other agencies. The Director of Field Services will continue to report on networking with the Developmental Disabilities Program, businesses, and chambers of commerce (and related organizations) once a year.
- Ensure VRBS staff receive adequate training and support related to major agency changes such as the new database system and changes related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, particularly the changes that relate to youth and students with disabilities.
- Continue to utilize one SRC meeting a year as an opportunity to interact with unserved/underserved populations and exchange perspectives and ideas.
- Have a VRBS regional report on transition activities at one SRC meeting each year.
- VRBS should develop brochures and/or other informational packages that can be targeted specifically to employers and school personnel.

State Rehabilitation Council Achievements:

- The SRC was presented with a report of transition activities at a local office and recommended that this information should be included in the annual report.
- The SRC has reviewed progress on the strategic plan and commented on the progress and is preparing for the development of a new strategic plan.
- The SRC continues to emphasize that VRBS be a model of an accessible workplace for its employees. They recognize that the purchase of a new case management system was a necessary step in achieving this goal. They are awaiting activation of the system to assist with the assessment of the system's accessibility to employees with disabilities.
- A member of the SRC committed to pursuing additional support for students of the School for the Deaf and Blind to have opportunities that increase awareness of post-secondary institutions in Montana.
- The SRC continues to emphasize communication with businesses and began exploring options of developing public relations materials that focus specifically on businesses. It also made a commitment to begin similar discussions and actions with regard to working with school personnel.
- The SRC reviewed and approved the policy on transportation services.



FBVRP Staff: Jim Fox, Heather Earthboy, Teri Hawley and Annette Horn

TRIBAL VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROJECT

Each year, this report highlights one of the six Native American Vocational Rehabilitation projects located in Montana. These projects are funded directly by the federal government to provide VR services to Native Americans residing on or near reservations.

The Fort Belknap Vocational Rehabilitation Program (FBVRP) is located on the Fort Belknap Reservation and serves 60 consumers a year. In the past year, FBVRP has exceeded their goal and served more than the projected 60 consumers for the year. FBVRP had consumers participate in work experience, job training, post-secondary education

and starting small businesses. About half the participants started small businesses.

Throughout the years, FBVRP has had numerous successful clients who have graduated from colleges and universities, gained full time or part time employment in areas such as: educational coordinators, computer technicians, security officers, maintenance workers, cashiers, Tribal Council members, certified nursing assistants, and other vocational fields to meet their individual goals. FBVRP partners with the State VR program, local tribal departments, other service organizations, and business owners in the community to provide training to our consumers in order to meet their goals.

FBVRP has four staff positions which include the director, two counselors, and an administrative assistant. They are housed in a section of the Red Whip building on the Fort Belknap Reservation.