

2012



GOVERNOR'S REPORT MONTANA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNCIL

8,144

Individuals served by
Vocational Rehabilitation/
Blind and Low Vision Services

1,235

Individuals served by
Independent Living Services

907

Individuals served by
Montana Telecommunications
Access Program

632

Individuals served by
Older Blind Services

99

Individuals served by
Visual Medical Services

325

Individuals served by
Extended Employment Services

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

For more information on the Montana Vocational Rehabilitation/Blind and Low Vision Services, please visit our website: <http://www.vocrehab.mt.gov>

MONTANA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNCIL



MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL

In order to meet its mission, the Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Council actively promoted and supported the funding and operation of MVR through many activities across the state this 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 Montana Vocational Rehabilitation/Blind and Low Vision Services (MVR/BLV) program participants, along with the corresponding tax and other benefits to Montana are significant. Through this report, we confirm the commitment of the Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Council members to work diligently on behalf of individuals with disabilities. We will continue to assist and advise MVR/BLV to empower all individuals with disabilities to achieve competitive employment and independence in their communities to the benefit of themselves and Montana.

Nina Cramer, Council Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Shaunda Albert – Pablo	Anna Gibbs - Billings	Dale Mahugh - Butte
Mona Amundson - Glasgow	Mary Hall - Missoula	Jim Marks, Ex Officio - Helena
Prairie Bighorn - Billings	Charlotte Harasymczuk - Billings	Lois McElravy - Missoula
Amy Capolupo - Missoula	Rick Heitz - Kallispell	Quentin Schroeter - Helena
Nina Cramer, Chair - Missoula	Chanda Hermanson - Helena	John Senn - Billings
Michael DesRosier - Browning	Rosalie Hollimon – Great Falls	Marla Swanby - Helena
Kate Gangner – Great Falls	Robin Johnson – Great Falls	Mike Woods - Billings
	Bob Maffit – Helena	

REHABILITATION SERVICES SUCCESS STORY

A young single mother first applied for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services in 2000. She had a head injury and bipolar disorder. She was also abusing drugs. Over the course of the next six years, she was involved with VR three times. However, she was unable to keep working towards a vocational goal. Despite the setbacks, she did not give up on her dreams and her VR counselor did not give up on her.

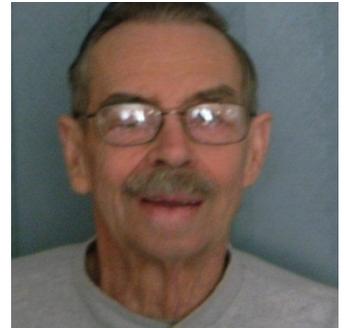
In 2006, she had committed herself to a sober lifestyle, and again became involved with VR. She chose a vocational goal of being a teacher. The transition was difficult, but she adjusted well to academic life, often making the Deans' list. VR provided financial and counseling support while she was in training. She also was involved in a number of other services that assisted in her journey. She graduated from college in 2010 and began substitute teaching, and is now a full-time teacher. She states that while other community resources were invaluable to her sobriety and keeping her family together; it was VR that allowed her to see her own potential and achieve her goal.

OLDER BLIND SERVICES SUCCESS STORY

A 78 year old retired farmer, with significant vision loss in one eye; and prosthesis for the other eye had successful results utilizing the services of Blind and Low Vision Services (BLV). When he applied for services he could no longer drive, but refused to give up his favorite activities, such as reading, fabricating barbed-wire wall hangings, and gardening.

BLV assisted the man to explore numerous low vision devices. A hand-held pocket magnifier, provided by BLV, allowed him the freedom, while on-the-go, to read such items as restaurant menus, church programs, and grocery store prices. With the use of a closed circuit television reading machine (CCTV), furnished by BLV, he will be able to read and write with ease. The CCTV enables amplification of his limited vision and allows him continued independence in carrying out his daily business and leisure-time reading/writing activities. NOIR sunshields, provided by BLV, reduce and/or prevent glare from the sunlight. This allows him continued independence while gardening or participating in other outdoor activities.

Lastly, he expressed much gratitude for the services he received from BLV, "I am enjoying that reader machine. That really works out good for me. And, I do thank you. I couldn't be happier."



TRIBAL VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROJECT

Each year, this report highlights one of the six Native American Vocational Rehabilitation projects located in Montana. Providing vocational rehabilitation services to Native Americans, these projects are funded directly by the federal government to the Tribes. This year the Chippewa Cree Vocational Program is featured.

The Chippewa Cree Vocational Program serves approximately 25 consumers per month. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program has provided services for over 12 years to eligible tribal members on the Rocky Boy's Indian reservation. Currently the program has three staff members. Evelyn Oats is the program coordinator/counselor, Carol Oats is the transition/benefits counselor, and Marilyn Morsette is the administrative assistant/counselor.

The Vocational Rehabilitation program staff assists tribal members with disabilities in obtaining and/or retaining employment. Services are consistent with their individual strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and informed choice; so that they may prepare for and engage in gainful employment, including self-employment, telecommuting and business ownership.

The coordinator obtains, analyzes, and evaluates pertinent medical, psychological, social, vocational, and other data to determine eligibility for services; manages a caseload budget; makes decisions for the expenditure of funds to meet specific individual consumer needs; reviews case plans prepared by the other staff; and approves justifications for recommended expenditures to meet the specific individual consumer needs. The coordinator evaluates consumer progress and makes modifications to the rehabilitation plan when necessary, performs on the job analysis to determine job modification or job readiness, and also provides post-employment services.

Staff provides counseling and guidance to consumers with disabilities to formulate a rehabilitation plan that eliminates or creates more tolerable barriers to suitable employment. Staff develop and maintain records of progress; timetables and training schedules; monitor service costs within standards for budget management; and document procurement of services. Staff also market the Vocational Rehabilitation program to employers and other tribal organizations.

50 copies of this DPHHS public document were published at an estimated cost of \$2.17 per copy, for a total of \$108.50, which includes \$108.50 for printing and \$0 for distribution.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Develop an action plan for identifying and addressing unserved and underserved populations. This should include populations with poor outcomes, not just groups which are unserved. Residents of rural areas should be reviewed as an underserved population.
- With regard to collaboration with tribal rehabilitation projects, continue review of current criteria and procedures for joint cases and transfer of cases; report out on best practices.
- Strengthen networking between Montana Vocational Rehabilitation/Blind and Low Vision Services (MVR/BLV) and other agencies such as Mental Health, Job Services, Developmental Disabilities, Independent Living Centers, Veterans' Services, Department of Corrections, Office of Public Instruction, Worker's Compensation, and University System.
- Support and enhance policies and procedures to sustain an effective process of in-service training, professional development, and staff retention.
- Conduct activities that increase awareness and understanding of the Council and MVR/BLV staff of populations with unique needs. This would include planning one council meeting a year that focuses on this issue. These activities would also allow interaction with representatives of populations with unique needs that could raise their awareness of MVR/BLV and issues of persons with disabilities.
- Increase transportation options that expand employment opportunities for Montanans with disabilities.
- Continue to expand and improve transitions services to youth with disabilities.
- Increase the public understanding of MVR/BLV and the services provided by the agencies. Because of the employment focus of the agencies, these efforts need to include outreach to businesses and employers.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

- The Council provided input on MVR/BLV's changes to address the needs of youth with disabilities transitioning from high school to the adult service system. This included reviewing and providing input on the development of the transition video and on the "adopt-a-school" initiative.
- The Council has provided strong and consistent requests related to the issue of identifying and developing plans to serve unserved and underserved populations. This year, the Council reviewed an initial model of the data sets proposed for the identification process and provided input to guide the full review of caseload data.
- The Council provided input and guidance to the development of a new format for the annual report, which led to a more attractive document. The council is now providing guidance on moving the document to an electronic/paperless document that will be more accessible to all populations.
- The Council is actively involved in the ongoing monitoring of activities of MVR/BLV's 3-year strategic plan and is providing input that is assisting in the achievement of the goals and objectives of the plan.
- The Council had provided strong input on the need for MVR/BLV's need to model an accessible workplace for its employees. They are monitoring the progress in this regard that includes accessibility reviews of all offices, and updating the case management system to include needed accessibility features.

MVR/BLV STATS AT A GLANCE

SUCCESSFUL CLOSURES	
YEAR	# OF CLOSURES
2009	799
2010	716
2011	776
2012	830

AVERAGE WAGE OF CLOSURES	
YEAR	HOURLY WAGE
2009	\$11.03
2010	\$11.09
2011	\$11.46
2012	\$11.90

DISABILITY TYPE SUMMARY	
TYPE OF DISABILITY	PERCENTAGE OF THOSE SERVED IN 2012
Physical Disabilities	37%
Mental Disabilities	52%
Sensory Disabilities	11%