

***Presentation to the 2019 Health and Human Services  
Joint Appropriation Subcommittee***

**Disability Employment and Transitions Division  
Economic Security Services Branch  
Department of Public Health and Human Services**

***The following topics are covered in this report:***

- Overview
- Summary of Major Functions
- Highlights and Accomplishments during the 2019 Biennium
- Funding and FTE Information
- Change Packages

## Overview

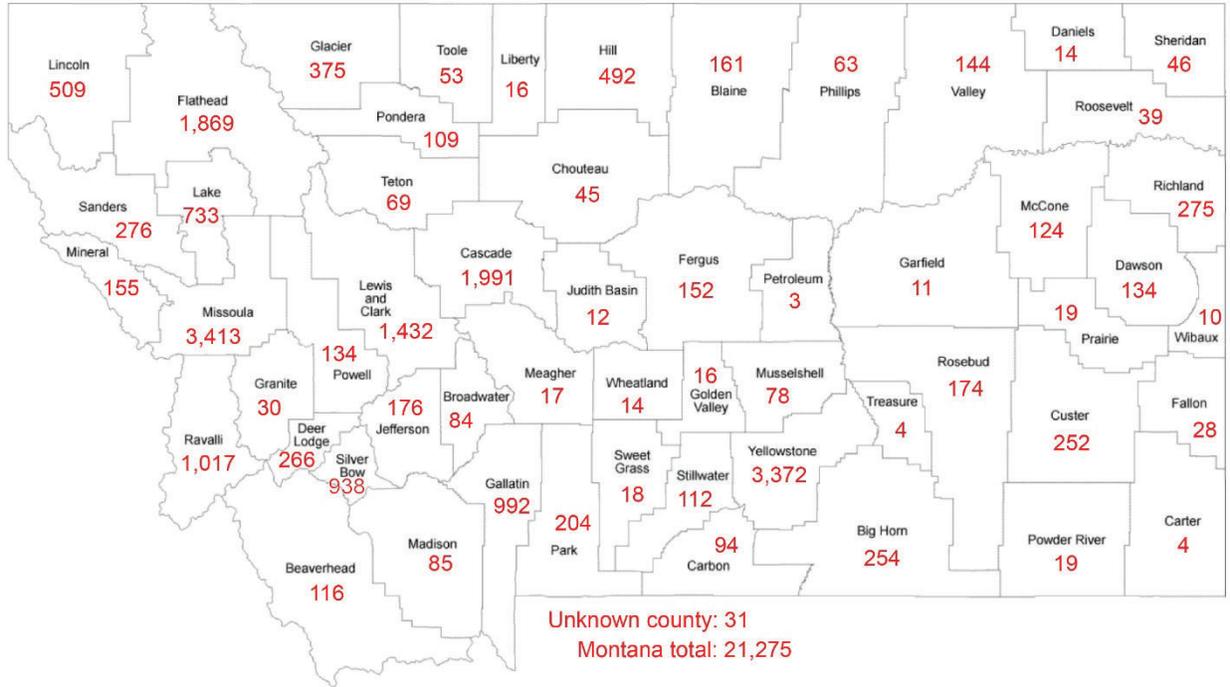
The Disability Employment and Transitions Division (DETD) provides more than 21,000 Montanans with disabilities access to services to strengthen their economic and social well-being across their life span. Montanans living with disabilities want to be dynamic and integrated contributors to society, actively benefiting from and participating in mainstream life. Citizens with disabilities encounter many barriers to employment and independence that prevent their full and equitable inclusion in society, including negative attitudes about what it means to have a disability, discriminatory practices that deny or limit access, inadequate economic choices, and shortcomings in disability skills and resources, among others.

This division aims to encourage individual and family stability, support a person's ability to work and to be self-sufficient, and maximize the opportunity for independence, well-being, and health for people with disabilities. DETD carries out its work according to the values of promoting informed client choice, independent living, and self-advocacy to ensure that people with disabilities are integrated into society in every aspect of their lives.

Montanans with disabilities count on DETD and its network of nonprofit disability service partners to overcome these social and economic problems. The transition from dependence to independence is a long-term investment that strengthens Montana's diverse communities, not merely the individuals served. The public Vocational Rehabilitation program in Montana has a return on investment of \$3.31 for every dollar spent.

Over the last biennium, DETD expanded engagement with clients and enhanced collaboration with stakeholders to deliver programs and services that allow individuals living with disabilities to be fully integrated into society. New leadership in DETD has worked to implement strong controls to ensure programs are maximized within budgets, to provide greater access to services for all persons with disabilities, and to forge partnerships with the Montana Department of Labor and Industry, Independent Living Centers, and Community Rehabilitation Providers in communities across Montana.

DETD provides services to individuals in every county. The chart on the next page lists the number of citizens benefitting from DETD services in each county.



## **Summary of Major Functions**

DETD consists of two bureaus: Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services (VRBS) and Disability Determination Services (DDS). In addition, DETD includes the administratively-attached Montana Telecommunications Access program (MTAP) and multiple smaller programs.

### **Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services**

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#### **General Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

Vocational Rehabilitation provides individualized vocational rehabilitation and supportive services to assist eligible individuals with disabilities to obtain, maintain, and advance in jobs compatible with their skills and abilities.

#### **Independent Living Services for the Older Blind**

These services provide older visually impaired or blind individuals with the ability to live more independently in their homes and community.

#### **Montana Business Enterprise Program**

This program assists and supports visually impaired individuals in securing and operating vending opportunities on federal and state properties.

#### **Pre-Employment Transition Services**

Pre-Employment Transition services are offered to all school-enrolled students with disabilities aged 14-21 in Montana. These services provide students an early start to job exploration and instruction in self-advocacy. We provide these services in partnership with local education agencies, community rehabilitation providers, and independent living centers.

#### **Business Services**

Staff with Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Services work with business to understand their unique needs and to offer customized services. We help Montana businesses become aware of key disability issues, fill open positions with qualified job seekers with disabilities, assess the workplace, job descriptions and recruitment and application processes to remove barriers, and provide training and accommodation assistance.

### **Disability Determination Services**

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The Montana Disability Determination Services (DDS) handles the medical eligibility for Social Security Disability claims. These determinations are based on federal rules and regulations.

## **Other Services**

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### **Montana Telecommunication Access Program**

MTAP oversees the Montana Relay program, which offers assistive equipment and services to Montanans whose disabilities make it difficult for them to use the phone.

### **Independent Living Services**

Independent living programs provide Montanans with disabilities the services needed to achieve their desired way of life. These services include core services, such as information and referrals to appropriate organizations, independent skills training, individual and systems change advocacy, and peer mentoring. Other services provided include benefits counseling and planning, housing information, help with accessibility issues, and personal care assistance.

### **Extended Employment Program**

For some consumers receiving Vocational Rehabilitation services, additional support is necessary for them to continue working. Extended Employment offers guidance and follow-up services to help these individuals maintain employment.

### **Achieving Success by Promoting Readiness for Education and Employment (ASPIRE)**

ASPIRE is a research study for youth ages 14-16 who receive Supplemental Security Income to help compare services and supports to find what works best for youth and families.

### **MonTECH Assistive Technology Program**

MonTECH provides free information about assistive technology devices and services for Montanans. Assistive technology is any item, piece of equipment, software, or product system used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of persons with disabilities.

### **Public Transportation Coordination**

The Public Transportation Coordinator analyzes all public and private aspects of transportation to assess whether they meet the needs of traveling Montanans. The Coordinator works with agencies within DPHHS and across the state to improve transportation and works with consumers to explain their transportation options.

**DETD includes three citizen councils, the members of which are appointed by the Governor. They are:**

- State Rehabilitation Council
- State Independent Living Council
- Committee on Telecommunications Access Services by Persons with Disabilities

## Highlights and Accomplishments During the 2019 Biennium

### Pre-Employment Transition Services

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Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services continue to design and implement a first-of-its-kind Pre-Employment Transition System (Pre-ETS) to serve Montana students with disabilities. Recent amendments to the Rehabilitation Act require vocational rehabilitation agencies to devote no less than 15 percent of their federal grant to provide, or arrange, for the provision of pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities moving from school to postsecondary education programs and employment in competitive integrated settings. These services include:

- Job exploration counseling,
- Work-based learning experiences,
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs,
- Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living skills, and
- Instruction in self-advocacy.

DETD has traditionally served this population through the general Vocational Rehabilitation process. However, with the implementation of these new services, we can engage with Montana's high school students in new ways to ensure they have opportunities to receive training and other services necessary to achieve competitive integrated employment. Many states are still struggling to implement the required programs. In Montana, these new mandates provided an opportunity to fortify existing programs that have allowed 7,448 high school students with disabilities to receive pre-employment transition services.

### Serving Business

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Montana VRBS has developed a team of counselors to serve business partners statewide. The team adopted a dual-customer philosophy, making information about engaging business key to better serving DETD consumers. The model is based on the premise that DETD interaction with employers and other workforce development and education organizations will result in measurable improvement in desired outcomes for all parties. Business engagement can range from purely advisory interactions to long-term strategic partnerships. VRBS is poised to become Montana's premier provider of careers for people with disabilities and workforce solutions for business. By developing these innovative strategies, our program adds value to all communities in Montana by bridging the gap between employer demand, an educated and skilled workforce, and the supply of workers with necessary skills for the labor market. Addressing this gap

through business engagement is critical to the growth of Montana's economy and to ensure employment and advancement for all Montanans.

Through these partnerships Montana VR can meet the following business needs:

- Access to a new talent pool of qualified candidates for employment
- Access to a team of employment specialists and VR counselors with knowledge and expertise regarding the employment needs of people with disabilities
- Guidance and consultation regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act, accommodations, and accessibility
- Disability awareness and attitudinal training
- Creation and funding of a range of work experiences, including on-the-job training and internships
- Opportunities for collaboration with community colleges, community rehabilitation programs, and other organization responsive to workforce needs of businesses.

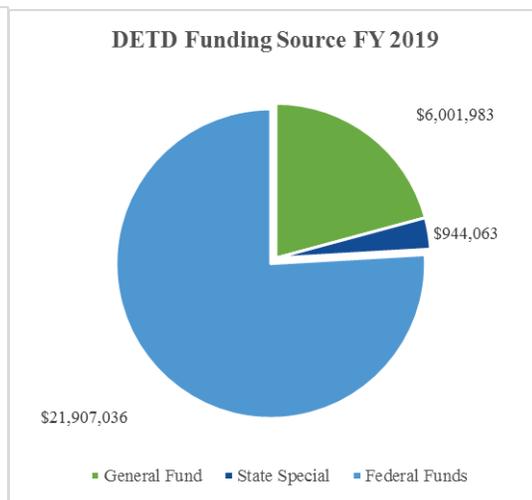
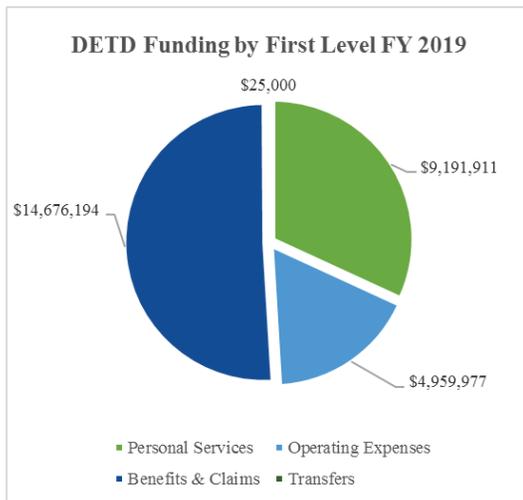
### **Ensuring competitive integrated employment**

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Section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act was developed to ensure that individuals with disabilities have access to information and services that will help them to achieve competitive integrated employment in their communities. Career counseling, information, and referral services by the Vocational Rehabilitation program enable individuals to explore, discover, experience, and attain competitive integrated employment in the community. Through these efforts, Montana Vocational Rehabilitation has reduced the number of individuals earning subminimum wage.

## Funding & FTE Information

<b>Disability Employment and Transitions</b>	<b>FY 2019 Budget</b>	<b>FY 2020 Request</b>	<b>FY 2021 Request</b>
FTE	140.97	140.97	140.97
Personal Services	\$9,191,911	\$9,487,718	\$9,486,498
Operating Expenses	\$4,959,977	\$4,961,626	\$4,962,024
Benefits & Claims	\$14,676,194	\$14,717,475	\$14,802,000
Transfers	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>	<b>\$28,853,082</b>	<b>\$ 29,191,819</b>	<b>\$ 29,275,522</b>
	<b>FY 2019 Budget</b>	<b>FY 2020 Request</b>	<b>FY 2021 Request</b>
General Fund	\$6,001,983	\$6,124,483	\$6,160,696
State Special	\$944,063	\$930,463	\$931,026
Federal Funds	\$21,907,036	\$22,136,873	\$22,183,800
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<b>\$28,853,082</b>	<b>\$29,191,819</b>	<b>\$29,275,522</b>



## Change Packages

### Present Law Adjustments:

#### SWPL – 1 – Personal Services

The budget includes \$295,807 in FY 2020 and \$294,587 in FY 2021 to annualize various personal services costs including FY 2019 statewide pay plan, benefit rate adjustments, longevity adjustments related to incumbents in each position at the time of the snapshot, and vacancy savings.

Fiscal Year	General Fund	State Special	Federal Funds	Total Request
FY 2020	\$104,351	(\$13,600)	\$205,056	\$295,807
FY 2021	\$104,014	(\$13,037)	\$203,610	\$294,587
<b>Biennium Total</b>	<b>\$208,365</b>	<b>(\$26,637)</b>	<b>\$408,666</b>	<b>\$590,394</b>

#### SWPL – 3 – Inflation/Deflation

This change package includes an increase of \$1,649 in FY 2020 and \$2,047 in FY 2021 to reflect budgetary changes generated from the application of inflation to specific expenditure accounts. Affected accounts include those associated with the statewide Motor Pool operated by the Department of Transportation.

Fiscal Year	General Fund	State Special	Federal Funds	Total Request
FY 2020	\$337	\$0	\$1,312	\$1,649
FY 2021	\$418	\$0	\$1,629	\$2,047
<b>Biennium Total</b>	<b>\$755</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$2,941</b>	<b>\$3,696</b>

### New Proposals:

#### NP – 1001 – PRI – Vocation Rehabilitation

This new proposal requests a 0.91% provider rate increase in FY 2020 and a 1.83% increase in FY 2021 for vocational rehabilitation and extended employment providers in the Disability Employment and Transitions Division. This percentage increase in rates is the same percentage applied in the Executive Budget to K-12 Schools, Office of Public Defender providers, and

Corrections services providers. This change package requests \$143,187 in total funds over the biennium and \$56,766 in general fund.

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>General Fund</b>	<b>State Special</b>	<b>Federal Funds</b>	<b>Total Request</b>
<b>FY 2020</b>	\$14,025	\$0	\$21,351	\$35,376
<b>FY 2021</b>	\$42,741	\$0	\$65,070	\$107,811
<b>Biennium Total</b>	\$56,766	\$0	\$86,421	\$143,187

**NP – 1002 – PRI – Independent Living**

This new proposal requests a 0.91% provider rate increase in FY 2020 and a 1.83% increase in FY 2021 for independent living centers in the Disability Employment and Transitions Division. This percentage increase in rates is the same percentage applied in the Executive Budget to K-12 Schools, Office of Public Defender providers, and Corrections services providers. This change package requests \$23,900 in total funds over the biennium and \$15,327 in general fund.

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>General Fund</b>	<b>State Special</b>	<b>Federal Funds</b>	<b>Total Request</b>
<b>FY 2020</b>	\$3,787	\$0	\$2,118	\$5,905
<b>FY 2021</b>	\$11,540	\$0	\$6,455	\$17,995
<b>Biennium Total</b>	\$15,327	\$0	\$8,573	\$23,900