

2015



MONTANA'S STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL GOVERNOR'S REPORT

7,419	Individuals served by Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services (VRBS)
1,119	Individuals served by Independent Living Services
659	Individuals served by Older Blind Services
59	Individuals served by Visual Medical Services
338	Individuals served by Extended Employment Services

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION & BLIND SERVICES (VRBS) SUCCESSFUL JOB PLACEMENTS

2013	896
2014	860
2015	734

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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 Montana 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

Mona Amundson - Glasgow	Robin Haux – Montana City	Frank Podobnik - Helena
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For more information on VRBS, please visit our website: www.vocrehab.mt.gov

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VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION BLIND SERVICES (VRBS) SUCCESS STORY



This is actually a success story of two men with visual impairments. The first man is totally blind due to diabetic retinopathy. He also has a learning disability. The second man has nystagmus (uncontrolled rapid eye movement). This causes significantly blurred vision. The men met at the Summer Orientation Program for the Blind. Through that experience, they became



friends based on a mutual interest in computers and assistive technology.

Services for each started with their individual needs and vocational preferences. The common bond of friendship and mutual interests led them to a common vocational objective. That objective was to develop an assistive technology consulting company. The company would provide training for visually impaired individuals on how to use screen reading and screen enlargement technology. In addition to services that each man received related to their individual vision loss, they received assistance in starting their own business, including start up equipment and supplies.

Their business has become quite successful. In addition to general consultation work, the men now teach assistive technology each year at the Summer Orientation Program; have become a vendor for the Veteran's Administration; and are trainers for ICanConnect which focuses on services for deaf blind individuals.

TRANSITION SUCCESS STORY

Project Search

Dream Big... Reach High... Work Hard... GET PAID!



The transition success story features best practices assisting youth with disabilities to transition from high school to the adult world. This year's feature relates to a model that has been successful nationally since 1996, but was just implemented in Montana last year.

Montana Project Search launched in September 2014 at Bozeman Deaconess Health Services in collaboration with community partners, including VRBS. This ten month internship provides motivated young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities the opportunity

to learn relevant, marketable skills to pursue the career path of their choice. The ultimate goal of Project SEARCH is for each intern to attain meaningful, competitive employment. The program features classroom training in basic work skills, on the job work experience in a variety of work stations at the host site, and job placement after completion of the internship experience. Although the internship just finished, 5 of the 6 participants in last year's internship obtained employment.

Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR)

Each year, this report features one of the six TVR programs located in Montana. The Chief Dull Knife College VR Program (CDKCVRP) is featured this year. CDKCVRP is an American Indian VR program that serves Northern Cheyenne Tribal Members with disabilities on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation (NCR). The program is housed under the Chief Dull Knife College (CDKC) through a cooperative agreement between the Northern Cheyenne Tribe and CDKC. The CDKCVRP office is located in Lame Deer, MT. The program serves an area encompassing a 25-mile radius of the reservation. The program serves the following communities: Muddy Cluster, Busby, Birney, Ashland, Lame Deer, and Colstrip. CDKCVRP is federally funded through September 2020. At which time it will be required to compete for another five years of grant funding. CDKCVRP has been successful in previous federal grant competitions and has been a stable program on the NCR for fifteen years. Story continued on back page.

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (SRC) RECOMMENDATIONS: INTERNAL CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- Review VRBS quality assurance procedures. The procedures should focus on measuring results.
- Reduce staff overload.
- Make the problems related to the new case management system a short term emergency priority and develop an action plan to alleviate impact on staff as much as possible.

PROVIDE 21st CENTURY QUALITY SERVICE

- Make sure consumers can financially benefit from going to work.
- Improve the VRBS image in electronic media.
- WIOA is a significant change in direction for VR nationally. VRBS needs to develop a clear set of statements on VRBS's plans related to the primary changes.

NETWORK WITH OTHER AGENCIES & EMPLOYERS

- If VRBS again closes categories of service due to order of selection, consumers should be given direction on what other agencies are available to provide assistance.
- VRBS should partner more with education.
- Complete a brochure targeting employers in order to make them aware of employer services available to them through VRBS.

SRC ACHIEVEMENTS:

- The Council was renamed the Montana State Rehabilitation Council to align more closely with language in WIOA.
- The Council developed and approved a new mission statement to align more closely with WIOA.
- The Council held a meeting at the Parent Training Center, Parents Let's Unite for Kids.
- The Council held a joint meeting with the Special Education Advisory Council.
- The Council had more interaction with other agencies and stakeholders such as the Developmental Disabilities Program and Society for Human Resources Management.
- The Council assisted with plans for more presence in the schools.
- A Council representative attended the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation and the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils national meetings.



Tribal VR Program (continued)

CDKCVRP provides individual and group services that prepare and assist consumers to obtain competitive community employment. The majority of local employment opportunities available are small self-employment businesses. The VR counselors and job developer and consumers are very creative when developing small businesses that serve the local community. In addition, consumers are assisted in obtaining employment at local businesses, within tribal positions, and BIA positions. Also, CDKCVRP assists eight

to ten consumers in pursuing post-secondary education as part of their employment plan each year.

CDKCVRP employs five staff: the program director, two vocational rehabilitation counselors (VRC), an employment specialist, and an administrative assistant. Each VRC is responsible for two communities in addition to splitting the consumers who live in Lame Deer. The VRC case loads are around fifty consumers each. The employment specialist assists individuals in obtaining community employment and establishing self-employment. CDKCVRP currently has a job club that provides the consumers with skills and tools to pursue employment on their own. CDKCVRP serves around 150 consumers on an annual basis.